

White Exploitation, Dehumanization and Racial Identity: The History
of Slavery and Race Relations in William Faulkner's *Go Down,
Moses*.

Merethe Eliassen-Bakkejord



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Institute of Culture and Literary Science
Faculty of Humanities
University of Tromsø
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INTRODUCTION

*They cannot degrade Frederick Douglass. The soul that is within me no man can degrade. I am not the one that is being degraded on account of this treatment, but those who are inflicting it upon me.*¹

Ever since I first encountered William Faulkner's "The Bear" as an undergraduate I have never been able to forget the tragic fate of Eunice, the black slave woman who in her desperation and despair saw no other option but to end her life in the creek, when it became evident to her that her daughter was pregnant by the same man who fathered her girl 22 years before, when Eunice herself was the victim of his sexual abuse. The shame and grief I imagined Eunice must have felt and the hopelessness of her situation made a lasting impression on me. Moved as I was by her death, I was equally shaken by the reaction of Ike McCaslin's father, as it was recorded in the family ledgers. It expressed the frame of mind of the Southern white man whose attitude to blacks was so prejudiced that he did not believe Eunice emotionally capable of suicide. It struck me then that although her personal story is never told in the novel, her life and legacy—like that of Carothers McCaslin— had dramatic consequences for the black and white descendants at the McCaslin plantation.

However, although I found "The Bear" to be a remarkable novella, it was not until several years later, when I found myself deeply engaged in reading African American literature and the history of blacks in America, that my thoughts wandered back to Eunice and her marginal, yet crucial presence, in Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*. Having read through the early slave narratives as well as the classic accounts of such figures as Olaudah Equiano, Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, I realized that there was a whole genre of literature that explored the condition of African Americans and race relations in the US at the beginning of the twentieth century. I noticed, however, that comparatively little had been said on the matter by white writers. And then I remembered Eunice. What separates the story of Eunice and her descendants from other accounts of slavery in the US is that it is written from the white perspective. In *Go Down, Moses*, Faulkner traces the shame and grief that led the black woman to kill herself, from the time of her death in 1832 and into the 1940's, as it affects the lives of the black and white descendants of Carothers McCaslin and the black slave woman.

¹ Frederick Douglass in Booker T. Washington's: *Up from Slavery* (47-48).

In my thesis I want to explore the relationship between the black and white characters of Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*. I have chosen to focus my reading of the book on the two novellas that in my view serve as its core, and in which life at the McCaslin plantation and the relationships between the black and white descendants of old Carothers are most thoroughly explored: "The Fire and the Hearth" and "The Bear." These are also the stories that are dominated by the two characters over whom Carothers seems to have the greatest influence and power, namely his two grandsons: the black Lucas [McCaslin] Beauchamp and the white Isaac McCaslin. Thadious M. Davis observes that Carothers' grandsons are the two descendants "whom provide the dual lense through which he [Carothers] assumes substance and meaning" (Davis 1990, 139). According to Davis, Ike and Lucas both respond to "a social script with a scene of shame as the main site of familial and social history," thus their actions reflect their different attitudes towards Carothers and his legacy (Davis 1990, 139). By following the lives of these two characters, one white and one black, Faulkner makes painfully clear to the reader the crucial part that race and social conditions play in the Jim Crow South. As both men are inheritors of the same paternal blood, one cannot help but notice the irony of the situation: the legitimate grandson who wants to repudiate his grandfather's heritage, and the repudiated black grandson who wants to claim his. As Eric J. Sundquist notes: "Ike and Lucas, separated as they are in the stories they dominate, are in this respect fraternally united by the paternal blood that one denies (though he has every right to it) and the other embraces (though he has no legal right to it at all)" (Sundquist 1990, 171).

In "The Fire and the Hearth" we get a thorough look into the life of the black grandson, Lucas Beauchamp, and witness first hand Faulkner's exploration of the injustice that the blacks had to suffer at the hands of the whites. As large parts of the novella are focalized through Lucas, Faulkner seeks to explore the racial conflict from a black point of view. In the story of "The Bear," we follow the life of the white grandson Isaac McCaslin in his struggle to break away from his Southern heritage and his attempt to expiate the past sins he discovers that his predecessor has been guilty of. Whereas "The Fire and the Hearth" is in large parts focalized through Lucas, most of "The Bear" is focalized through Ike, which allows us to experience the racial conflict from a white point of view.

I have divided my paper into three main chapters: The first chapter is devoted to the story "The Fire and the Hearth," and deals with racial awareness and racial identity. In this chapter I want to explore how family and the social structure of the South complicate the race relations between the black and white characters of *Go Down, Moses* and show how slavery

dehumanizes both sides of the racial conflict. As “The Bear” follows two separate storylines, I have devoted chapter two and three of my paper to each of its respective narratives. In chapter two, “The Story of the Great Hunt in ‘The Bear,’” I will focus my discussion on the hunting narrative of the novella and Ike’s relationship to the characters that have the greatest impact on his life and shape him into the person he becomes as an adult. The experiences Ike has in the wilderness lay the foundation for the moral and social conscience he displays later in life. I am, however, going to argue that Ike, despite his best efforts to expiate the sins of his predecessors, is never able to free himself of his Southern heritage—not even in relations to Sam Fathers, whom he genuinely cares for and admires.

In the third and final chapter of my paper: “The History of Slavery and the White Exploitation of African Americans,” I will focus my attention on the fourth section of “The Bear.” The fourth section is the most difficult and complex chapter of *Go Down, Moses*, in which (as the title of my chapter reveals) Faulkner seeks to explore slavery and white exploitation from a historical perspective. In this section he places the racial conflict in a sociocultural context, and the discussion between Ike and Cass is interrupted by references to contemporary historical events. It is also in this section that Ike takes his final stand against the moral degradation that he sees in his white relatives, and repudiates his heritage. I will attempt to show, however, that despite Ike’s moral development and his rejection of the plantation life, the actions he takes and the choices he makes do in actuality accomplish nothing and instead renders him lonely and disconnected. He takes on the role as “guardian of morality,” yet it lends him no credibility as he proves, despite his best efforts, unable to elevate himself above his shameful heritage.

It must be noted, that although I have focused my attention on the two novellas “The Fire and the Hearth” and “The Bear,” I will, when it becomes necessary to provide particular knowledge about the major characters found elsewhere, supplement my discussion with references to other stories of *Go Down, Moses*. I find that due to the complex structure of *Go Down, Moses*, information vital to the understanding of the characters are interspersed throughout the book. For instance, I have in my analysis of Sam Fathers included a passage from “The Old People” that is particularly important to understand his relationship to his racial heritage. Likewise, I have in my discussion of Ike analyzed passages from “Delta Autumn.” The quotes from *Go Down, Moses* that are part of my analysis will throughout my thesis be marked only by page numbers, so that when no other information is provided, these are references to Faulkner’s book.

Before I begin my analysis of “The Fire and the Heart” and “The Bear,” however, I

will give a brief general introduction to *Go Down, Moses* that can prepare the ground, so to speak, for my specific analytical focus.

The World of *Go Down, Moses*

*Go down Moses
Way down in Egypt land
Tell ole Pharaoh
To let my people go*

*When Israel was in Egypt land
Let my people go
Oppressed so hard they could not stand
Let my people go*

*“Thus spoke the Lord”, bold Moses said
“If not, I’ll smite your first born dead
Let my people go²*

Go Down, Moses is an episodic novel or story composite consisting of seven stories, all of them set in Faulkner's mythical Yoknapatawpha, a fictional Southern county located in north-western Mississippi. Born in Mississippi in 1897, Faulkner grew up in a society with strict racial segregation where the Jim Crow laws were making it increasingly difficult for black people to settle down and find work. He was deeply concerned with the South in his writing and painfully aware of the tension between blacks and whites. At the heart of *Go Down, Moses* is a critical portrayal of the social conventions of the institutionalized racism that were governing Southern life at the time. The traditions and social economy involved in life at the Southern plantations seem to be of particular interest to Faulkner, and in several of his works he refers to these traditions and the thwarted morals that followed in their wake as the “Curse of the South.” As Lee Jenkins notes, Faulkner has throughout the body of his story a clear social theory that the racial conflict the South went through and the tensions that resulted in the Civil War, were the result of God’s retribution on man for having sinned against him. According to Jenkins, the sins of man have left the land cursed by God (Jenkins 1981, 1). Or as expressed in the words of Isaac McCaslin in “The Bear:” ”This whole land, the whole South, is cursed, and all of us who derive from it, whom it ever suckled, white and

² “Go Down Moses” is an American [Negro spiritual](http://www.negrospirituall.com/news-song/go_down_moses1.htm) that refers to the Exodus in the [Old Testament \(Exodus 5:1\)](#). <http://www.negrospirituall.com/news-song/go_down_moses1.htm>

black both, lie under the curse” (266). The curse he refers to is of course the institution of slavery. He seeks to illustrate how slavery and its aftermaths tore apart not only the abused party but also the abusers. The motif of ownership is a recurring theme throughout the book. For Faulkner it is the white man's perverted idea that he can claim ownership not only of land but even of other people, that lies at the root of the problem. This is what makes the land cursed.

With the history of the South as his subject Faulkner constructs the stories in *Go Down, Moses* around the patriarch and plantation owner, old Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin (1772-1837). At the McCaslin plantation, the curse begins with old McCaslin as he sexually abuses one of his female slaves. The abuse results in an unwanted pregnancy and the female slave gives birth to a daughter of mixed blood. When the daughter comes of age, McCaslin sexually abuses her as well and becomes the father of yet another child of mixed blood to whom he is not just the father but also the grandfather. As the head of the plantation old McCaslin is free to treat his black slaves as he sees fit not only because they are considered to be of an inferior race, but because they are his personal property. As Thadious M. Davis argues: “Carothers exercises absolute power in an incestuous narcissistic violation. As his property, Tomasina must surrender her will in obedience to his” (Davis 2003, 92). In her discussion on the white man’s “uncontrolled authority” of his slaves, Davis refers to the decision in the *State v Mann* trial, in which Chief Justice Rufflin wrote: “This discipline belongs to the state of slavery. It constitutes the curse of slavery both to the bond and free portion of our population.” Thus, Faulkner’s characterization of Carothers McCaslin is unfortunately a highly realistic and apt description of what life was like at the Southern plantations during the times of slavery.

As Faulkner thoroughly explores in *Go Down, Moses*, in the wake of this curse follow miscegenation, broken families, incest and sexual abuse as well as complex and indeterminate family relations. These consequences are suffered by both the black and white descendants of old McCaslin for generations. The book with its broken-up, non-chronological structure and multiple focalization allows Faulkner to explore the effects of slavery and the changing relationship between blacks and whites from different angles as he traces the black and white branches of the McCaslin family tree through three generations of whites and four generations of blacks, from the Civil War and into the 1940's.

The McCaslin Dynasty

The McCaslin family tree can be divided into three separate branches of descendants; the male branch, the female branch and the black (illegitimate) branch. First there is the male branch of descendants, who are the only descendants entitled to carry on the family name of McCaslin. This branch springs from old Carothers' son Theophilus, (“Uncle Buck”) but ends only two generations removed from old Carothers as Bucks' son Isaac “Ike” McCaslin (1867) does not have any children of his own. The second branch is the female branch that derives from old Carothers' daughter Carolina. The descendants of Carolina take their name from their mother’s side and carry on the surname of Edmonds. The Edmonds descendants are the ones that end up running the plantation after the death of Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy in 1870, and remain in control after Isaac’s relinquishment of the property, passing it on from father to son the following three generations of Edmonds men between the years of 1870-1942. The third branch of McCaslin descendants is the black branch of the family tree that stems from old McCaslin Carothers’ abuse of the black slave women of the plantation before the Emancipation. Born by black mothers and being of mixed blood, these children are never acknowledged as his legitimate children and are never given the status or privileges that his white descendants automatically are entitled to. Denied the last name of McCaslin, the black branch of the family tree takes their surname from their mother’s side and so they carry on the surname of Beauchamp after Lucas's mother Tennie Beauchamp (1838). The branch carrying the McCaslin name ends with Ike as a result of his childless marriage, but life at the McCaslin plantation continues with the black and white descendants living and working together side by side on the farm, with the Edmonds branch as owners and the Beauchamp family as part of the work force.

The complex and broken-up family structure combined with racial prejudice and the patriarchal structure of the society is taking its toll on the McCaslin descendants, blacks and whites alike. They live close together, yet they are simultaneously separated through racial discrimination and cultural traditions. As Eric J. Sundquist notes: “If *Go Down, Moses* is evidence, it would seem the manumission and abolition, far from vitiating the intimate dependence of masters and slaves, on the contrary served to increase it in more comprehensive, more ambiguous forms” (Sundquist 1983, 165). The consequences for everyone affected are pervasive. The confusing and unclear family relations combined with socially imposed dividing lines make it very difficult for all the McCaslin descendants to relate to one another in a society that sends them such contradictory messages. From the

minute they are born, both blacks and whites are asked to find their place within the hierarchies of race and gender. Interestingly enough, even though the challenges they are faced with in life differs drastically for the white and the black descendants, as the blacks are continuously suppressed and discriminated against, they all seem to suffer from a similar type of identity crisis and experience the same difficulties when it comes to forming and building a mature self.

What Faulkner does in *Go Down, Moses* as a whole is to take the Southern racial conflict between blacks and whites and shift the main focus away from society and the public arena, and place it within the boundaries of the family unit. By placing the conflict within the more intimate and personal sphere of a typical Southern plantation family home, he wants to illustrate how slavery and its aftermaths destroyed the society of the South from the inside and disrupted the family structure for both blacks and whites.

The Legacy of Slavery

Upon the death of the patriarch old Carothers in 1837, his twin sons take over the responsibility of the plantation. Together they run the family business for over thirty years until they both die within the same year, in 1870. Traditionally speaking, Isaac McCaslin, the only remaining male McCaslin, is supposed to inherit the property when he reaches the age of twenty-one, but after having discovered in the family ledgers the shameful truth about the old patriarch and his abuse of his black slave women, Isaac decides he does not want any part of his heritage. He relinquishes his inheritance and leaves the plantation to his second cousin Carothers Cass Edmonds. However, as Cass is the son of the twin's sister Carolina he does not carry the family name of McCaslin. Thus, Ike's act of relinquishment does not happen without consequences as the plantation is now in the hands of a "woman-made" McCaslin instead of a "man-made" one.

According to the patriarchal character of the old South, it is a common belief that the strength and power of the old head of the family is passed on from generation to generation through the male descendants. Although just as much blood relations, the female descendants are considered weaker links to the progenitor. Lee Jenkins argues that Faulkner in *Go Down, Moses* expresses his own belief in the patriarchal superiority, referring to the scene between Roth and Zack in which the latter "when questioned by the young Roth, accepts his putative inferiority as a matter of course, as a result of being a descendant of the female McCaslin" (Jenkins 1990, 221). Ironically it is the black illegitimate branch of the family tree that proves

to be the most potent and strongest line out of the three McCaslin branches, in *Go Down, Moses*, but in the Jim Crow South of the novel they can have no legal claims to the land.

One of the main issues problematized in the novella is the complex and changing relationship between the black and white descendants of old Carothers, and Faulkner illustrates how the patriarchal structure of the society aggravates and complicates the situation even further. Of course this conflict takes place in a society with strict racial segregation at a time where even the suspicion that someone is carrying one single drop of black blood is enough to classify them as black and thus as racially inferior. It is therefore never even a question of whether the male descendants of the black branch of the family tree should be given their birthrights or not, but within the ranks of the family itself the knowledge that the black family members are being passed over in terms of inheritance is adding weight to the conflict between the black and white McCaslin relatives. The strife consequently runs even deeper in the minds of the descendants, black and white alike. This proves particularly difficult for the Edmonds men that are running the plantation.

Era of the Edmonds

As illustrated through the relationships between the oldest living relative of the McCaslins remaining on the plantation, Lucas Beauchamp, and the males of the Edmonds family, Cass, Zack and Roth, who one after the other inherit the plantation, the conflict between the black and white relatives is not just a question of race, it is also a question of bloodlines, heritage and manhood. Although Faulkner situates part of the racial conflict within the context of the society and the local community that the descendants live in, as illustrated by for instance Lucas's meetings with the Court and the Sheriff, it is through the relationship between the three generations of Edmonds men and Lucas and his wife that the racial conflict is most thoroughly problematized.

As the black people gradually begin the process of reconstructing their lives after slavery it naturally affects the dynamics between the two races. When their social roles are no longer as clearly defined as they previously were within the institution of slavery and the dividing lines become more blurred, it proves increasingly difficult for both blacks and whites to relate to one another and equally difficult to figure out how they are to relate to their past. The changes in the political climate in the South in the years following the Emancipation also greatly influence the way that the races interact, something which is also reflected in the behaviour of Faulkner's characters. As Thadious M. Davis explains, although chattel slavery

ceased to exist in Mississippi with the Emancipation proclamation of 1863 and was legally abolished with the 13th amendment to the constitution, legislative attempts were made in order to deny blacks their freedom (Davis 1990, 142). During the Reconstruction Era between the years of 1863-1877 there was a period where the US focused on abolishing slavery and where ex-slaves were temporarily given civil rights and the right to vote, but this soon changed with the help of the Jim Crow laws that were enacted from 1877 to the Second World War. The segregation laws made life increasingly difficult for blacks in the South, and the ambivalent attitudes of the white male McCaslins and Edmonds men towards their black relatives mirror what public opinion was like at the time and the development in society as a whole. After the Emancipation there seems to be a tendency that the relationships between the relatives get worse and more tense the further away from slavery they get. As the general consensus in society changes from the time of the Emancipation to the enactment of the Jim Crow laws and forward, there is a noticeable difference in how the different generations of Edmonds men relate to Lucas and the question of race, and an equally distinct difference between how Lucas views the three men Cass, Zack and Roth as they are further removed from slavery.

In my exploration of the changing and complex relationship between the black and white characters of *Go Down, Moses*. I would like to begin my analysis by taking a closer look at "The Fire and the Hearth." It is a combination of two previously published stories "A Point of Law" and "Gold Is Not Always." The story deals with the post Civil War South and is set in a society that is deeply polarized in its views on miscegenation and racial segregation. As the storyline spans the years of 1890-1940, I would like to analyze its portrayal of the changing race relations from a historical perspective. By focusing primarily on characterization and plot, I want to examine the effects of social and political changes on the relationships between the black and white descendants on the plantation.

CHAPTER 1: “THE FIRE AND THE HEARTH”

The novella “The Fire and the Hearth” is set in the 1940's but with a fragmented storyline and flashbacks to the late 1890's. When the story begins, one hundred years have passed since the death of old Carothers McCaslin, but his legacy lives on causing complications in the lives of his descendants. As the story unravels we get to learn about life at the plantation and the tensions that occur between the black and white descendants of the old plantation patriarch. Faulkner is concerned with the institution of the family and shows how deeply slavery interfered with and destroyed the core values of family life and love for both blacks and whites. After slavery had ended, the social economy at the time forced many blacks to continue living at the plantations under slave-like working conditions. The black men would often work the land while the women would work as housekeepers and nannies in the white households. For many years it was a common practise in Southern households to have a black housekeeper/nanny, most often referred to as a Mammy. As illustrated in “The Fire and the Hearth,” the black and white descendants of old Carothers live together under similar conditions. The illegitimate grandson of old Carothers, Lucas Beauchamp, has been given a piece of land to live off and take care of for as long as he is able or wants to, and his wife Molly works as a housekeeper in the white household just as Lucas’s mother Tennie did before her. Traditionally the black women took care of the white children as well as their own. As a result the black and white children were raised like foster brothers and sisters following Mammy around as she went back and forth between the white and the black households keeping up with her chores.

This is exactly what life has been like between the black and white descendants at the McCaslin plantation for several generations, but not without complications. The children are raised on a paradox; by this way of life they are asked to follow two conflicting ideas: On the one hand they are experiencing loving and intimate relationships through their shared family situations, but on the other hand they are being told by society that the races should be strictly separated and are not considered to be of equal worth. As Edmond L. Volpe notes, the problem the white McCaslins are faced with in “The Fire and the Hearth,” is “not only the white Southerner’s inherited racial bias but the white race’s heritage of accumulated guilt” (Volpe, 232). The complexity of the family structures combined with this conflict of being same and other, makes it very difficult for the people in *Go Down, Moses* to relate to one another.

Narrative Technique

Faulkner has constructed the novella in a non-chronological fashion and through multiple focalization. We get to meet the characters and learn their different stories as the plot moves back and forth in time. This narrative technique provides the reader with a more in-depth look into the complexity and complications of the Southern racial conflict, and at the same time we see the different sides of the conflict from the focalized perspectives of different characters, which give us a better overview of the situation. As a middle-aged, middle-class Southern white man growing up in a deeply racially segregated society, Faulkner had no doubt personally gained a lot of insight into the white experience and the white perspective of the racial conflict following the Emancipation. In his writing he shows us how devastating and dehumanizing slavery was for black people but at the same time he also offers his readers some insight into the negative consequences that slavery had on white people as well. Faulkner seemed to have a need to explain the racial conflict and wanted to understand what it had to be like as experienced from the other race's point of view. Philip M. Weinstein argues that "Faulkner's blacks are recurrently the medium through which he imagines—with both longing and repugnance—how it might feel to be not-white" (Weinstein 1986, 170). It is, however, evident that Faulkner himself was aware of his limited understanding of the African American experience. It is therefore noteworthy yet not surprising that, with the exception of Lucas Beauchamp who is perhaps the most substantial black character of the novella, most of the McCaslin saga and its characters are presented to the readers as experienced from a white point of view.

The story is written as a third-person narrative and is told by an anonymous narrator, but Faulkner makes use of extensive focalization which allows us to get into the heads of several of the characters and provides us with an insight into their innermost thoughts and feelings. The story "The Fire And The Hearth" is particularly interesting in the sense that out of the seven novellas collected in *Go Down, Moses*, this is the only story about the McCaslins in which we at least in part get to experience the conflict from a black point of view. Large parts of the story are focalized through Lucas Beauchamp, the illegitimate grandson of old Carothers, the family patriarch.

The Negro Problem

In many ways the character of Lucas in “The Fire and the Hearth” appears almost as constant and persistent as the racial conflict itself. No matter what the white descendants do, they cannot escape the fact that old Carothers committed an act of transgression. Lucas is there at the plantation both as proof of the black people's suffering in the past and of the injustice of the present. In many ways he serves as a reminder of the long-term and lasting effects of slavery. How the white relatives handle the situation, however, and how they decide to treat Lucas differ greatly. We learn for instance from the narrator about how Lucas on his twenty-first birthday turns to Isaac to collect his heritage in the form of the money that old Carothers in his time had left to Lucas's father Terrel in his will. Lucas thus has the money ready to be able to leave when or if he pleases. In the same passage we are also told how Cass does his part for Lucas and his wife: “McCaslin Edmonds built a house for them and allotted Lucas a specific acreage to be farmed as he saw fit as long as he lived or remained on the place” (106). Nonetheless, Cass holds a dual position at the plantation. As Annette Bernert notes, although he has given Molly and Lucas a house and land he also “holds the ends of “the two threads frail as truth and impalpable as equators yet cablestrong to bind for life them who made the cotton to the land their sweat fell on”” (Bernert, 185).

It seems that the older generations of McCaslin men—old Carothers himself, his grandson Ike and his grandson Cass—all have in common that they provide for their black relatives in terms of at least a minimal financial security. Although Carothers does not acknowledge his illegitimate children, he leaves a thousand dollar legacy to his black son in the will for the time when he comes of age. This way Carothers believes the boy's future is secured and more importantly it allows the old patriarch to wash his hands of the affair by buying his way out of the situation. When it comes to Cass we know very little of what motivation he has for taking care of Lucas's needs, whether he does it to respect the wishes of the old patriarch, or whether he does it out of sympathy or guilt. Still, we learn enough about Lucas and Cass to understand that they have reached some sort of understanding with each other. We get some insight into their relationship through the thoughts of Lucas, now in his sixties, as he is reminded about the past:

But they were the old days, the old time, and better men than these; Lucas himself made one, himself and old Cass coevals in more than spirit even, the analogy only the closer for its paradox: - old Cass a McCaslin only on his mother's side and so bearing his father's name though he possessed the land and its benefits and responsibilities;

Lucas a McCaslin on his father's side though bearing his mother's name and possessing none of the responsibilities. Better men: - old Cass, a McCaslin only by the distaff yet having enough of old Carothers McCaslin in his veins to take the land from the true heir simply because he wanted it and knew he could use it better and was strong enough, ruthless enough, old Carothers McCaslin enough; even Zack, who was not the man his father had been but whom Lucas, the man McCaslin had accepted as his peer to the extent of intending to kill him ... (43-44).

The passage reinforces the importance of the patriarchal family structure in the South. It is apparent that for Lucas the question of patrimony and heritage is much more important than the question of skin colour and race. He sees the old family patriarch as a role model not because he was white or even despite the fact that he was white, but because he was the head of the family and because he was a strong man, archetypically male. He was the man that went out into the world, conquered the land and secured the family of their heritage, and a man of his calibre demands to be respected. It seems that whenever someone's social status or rank is in question, Lucas measures them up against old Carothers, whom Lucas ironically enough seems to regard as a prototype of what a man should be. According to Lee Jenkins: "Lucas shares attributes with Carothers that are the basis, not merely of their psychological identification, but of their shared exemplification of the masculine self-assertive principle" (Jenkins 1990, 219). Consequently, even though Lucas is personally deprived of his inheritance based on the colour of his skin, he is himself able to see beyond the racial differences and instead assesses his white relatives based on their qualities as men. Cass is considered a worthy heir to the plantation by force of inhabiting the strengths and qualities of the old patriarch. Despite the fact that Cass's property rights are woman-made, Lucas clearly respects his white relative. However, the question of manhood is a major source of conflict between the white and black relatives and one of the reasons why the relationship between them is so complicated. Whereas Lucas places the issue of manhood and lineage above the issue of race, his white relatives do the opposite.

The Theme of Manhood

Zackary "Zack" Edmonds (1874) and Lucas Quintus Carothers McCaslin Beauchamp (1874) are born on the plantation the same year, a few years after the Emancipation. After she is freed, Lucas's mother Tennie continues working in the Edmonds household as a housekeeper and a nanny taking care of both boys along with the rest of her children. Consequently the two boys, one white and one black, grow up like brothers. The position that

the black women were given in Southern households and their roles as the primary nurturer and provider for also the white children, is at the root of the Southern racial problems and one of the reasons why the conflict between Zack and Lucas grows so bitter and painful for them both as they get older. It is typical of Southern race relations, that the relationship between the two men is destroyed because they fail to understand and see each other. In a flashback to the late 1890's we learn through the thoughts of Lucas how he at one point nearly ended up killing Roth in a fight over Molly. Through the character of Zack and his actions we understand just how deeply rooted the problem with racism is in the Southern community and how it is integrated into every part of normal life. Even though Zack has lived with Lucas a lifetime, he is still unable to differentiate between the demeaning racial stereotypes of the South and the actual human nature of his black relative, and he treats Lucas accordingly. When Zack's wife goes into labour, he sends Lucas away to get the doctor. The white woman, however, unexpectedly dies in childbirth and so Zack immediately moves Molly into his own house to care for his newborn child and take care of the household chores. How this arrangement affects the lives of Lucas and Molly is something Zack does not even consider; he does not expect anyone to mind. After having risked his life in the flooded river to get hold of a doctor for the white woman, Lucas returns to the plantation only to find his house empty and Molly and his own child living in the white man's home. It is not until this moment that Lucas realizes what Zack thinks of him and how he perceives the black man to be. For Lucas this is a defining moment in his life:

So even before daylight he was in the water and crossed it, how he never knew, and was back by dark with the doctor, emerging from that death ... which he had entered not for his own sake but for that of old Carothers McCaslin who had sired him and Zack Edmonds both, to find the white man's wife dead and his own wife already established in the white man's house. It was as though on that luring and driving day he had crossed and recrossed a kind of Lethe, emerging, being permitted to escape, buying as the price of life a world outwardly the same yet subtly and irrevocably altered (45-46).

For a strong, proud man like Lucas the theft of his wife, and more importantly, to be treated by his foster brother like he is nothing but a simple "nigger," are more than he can handle. For Lucas this is like having someone stepping all over his pride and his manhood. He likens the experience of crossing the flooded river to having crossed his own personal Lethe. According to Greek mythology, the Lethe is one of the five rivers in Hades whose water caused forgetfulness of the past in those who drank it, and this is in many ways exactly what happens to Lucas. His relationship to Zack can never be the same again after this, as if their

shared past is now erased from Lucas's memory.

With his description of the worst drenching downpour of rain that the country has seen for decades, Faulkner uses the imagery with the flooded river Lucas has to cross, as an allusion to the story of the great flood, as referred to in the Book of Genesis.³ Faulkner makes extensive use of biblical references in *Go Down, Moses*, as is also revealed by the title of the novel. The title itself refers to an old Negro spiritual about the Old Testament story of the Bible where God spoke to Moses and told him to demand from the Pharaohs of Egypt that the Jews be released from bondage. Both in the title and in the last story of the novel which is also titled "Go Down, Moses," Faulkner draws a comparison between the enslavement of the Jews in Egypt and the blacks in America. As Thadious M. Davis explains, the spiritual "Go Down Moses" became part of the antislavery movement and was first printed in the *New York Tribune* where it took on greater immediacy at the onset of the Civil War. According to Davis, "the metaphorical code of the spiritual is submerged in Faulkner's novel, so that, taken as a whole, the spiritual reiterates the conflicting codes within the text" (Davis 2003, 24).

In connection with Faulkner's extensive use of biblical references it is also interesting to note the similarities between the way he describes "The curse of the South," inherited and passed on from generation to generation, and the Christian doctrine of the "original sin." According to the doctrine, the sin of Adam is passed from generation to generation and the only thing that can save mankind from this fallen state is the grace of God. Edmund L. Volpe also notes Faulkner's firm belief in the original sin and explains how in *Go Down, Moses* "the white southerner is born into a heritage of guilt, and in the same way, the whole human race is born into a heritage of accumulated guilt since the first man and woman sinned" (Volpe, 233). The moral and ethical side of slavery and the religious aspect of the situation are extensively probed in the discussion between Isaac and Cass McCaslin in the story "The Bear," but both allusions and direct references to biblical stories can be found throughout *Go Down, Moses*. Just like God spares Noah because he is a righteous man, in "The Fire and the Hearth" Lucas survives the flooded river. As such, Faulkner tries to show us the virtue and strength of the black people that were able to survive despite being held in bondage for more than two centuries.

The mixed blood that runs through Lucas's veins and the pride he takes in his heritage is what makes him the strong and persistent man he has become, which is why he is not willing to

³ Faulkner alludes to the story about the flooding of the earth that supposedly took place in the days of Noah, as found in Chapters 6-9 in the Book of Genesis.

accept being treated as a slave. Unaware of both the implications and the consequences of his actions, Zack does not expect Lucas to react to the new living arrangements and the “borrowing” of his wife. With his own wife dead and a newborn to take care of he needs the service of young Molly, and consequently he simply moves her into his house and puts her to work. Blinded by the racial stereotypes and social segregation of his time, he cannot see his own wrongdoings. He does not expect any reactions from the young woman's black husband as this is the way things have been done in the South for two hundred years. It does not seem to affect him that the young woman's husband is his own foster brother, nor does it even occur to him in the slightest that either Lucas or Molly might mind. It takes almost six months for Lucas to decide that he has had enough and work up the courage to claim his wife back. Zack himself is blissfully unaware of the grief he is causing his foster brother until one day Lucas finally goes to the white man to claim his wife back and in doing so reclaims his manhood:

...almost half a year had passed and one day he went to Zack Edmonds and said “I wants my wife. I needs her at home.” Then—and he hadn't intended to say this ... ”I reckon you thought I wouldn' t take her back, didn't you?”

The white man was sitting down ... He leaned slowly back in the chair, looking at Lukas. “Well, by God,” he said quietly. “So that's what you think. What kind of a man do you think I am? What kind of a man do you call yourself?”

"I'm a nigger," Lucas said, "But I'm a man too. I'm more than just a man. The same thing made my pappy that made your grandmaw. I'm going to take her back."”(46-47).

It is unheard of at the time for a black man to oppose a white man and particularly when the white man is also the plantation owner. As Edmund L. Volpe notes, “In asserting himself against the white man, Lucas is violating the pattern of the society” (Volpe, 236). Lucas, however, refuses to be treated as a lesser man because of the colour of his skin. He asserts his position to Zack and states that although he may be a person of black blood, he is equally much a person of white blood—the very same blood that runs through the veins of his foster brother. We understand that even though Lucas knows that he is considered inferior by his white relative, he still has his pride as a man and will fight for his right to provide for and protect his own family. When Lucas comes to the house to confront the white man, Zack's silent reaction seems to suggest that he really has no idea that his actions have offended anyone. As argued by Lee Jenkins, in taking Molly away Zack was allowing himself the privileges offered to him by the racial conventions, but had in his own mind made a clear distinction between using Molly as a housekeeper and a wet-nurse as opposed to keeping her in concubinage (Jenkins 1990, 221). As such, Zack felt certain that he was not doing anything

immoral or objectionable. According to Jenkins, Edmonds was—as a man of honour—telling the truth when he denies having had sexual relations with the black woman, which is why he asks Lucas what kind of man Lucas takes him to be. However, this is of course a matter Lucas can never know with certainty. Thadious M. Davis argues that Zack claims Molly “in a presumption of power and control exercised out of an unexamined sense of racial superiority, white right and white will” (Davis 2003, 209). And it is not just the deed itself that Lucas finds so offensive. In my view, he is equally provoked by the way in which Zack undermines his stature both as a husband and as a man. As Lucas comes to realize, Zack has not even considered the possibility that the black man would have any objections to losing his wife as he does not believe Lucas—as a “nigger”—to possess the emotional depth or ability to be either hurt or offended.

Traditionally during the times of slavery, as many black women were degraded and sexually abused, the black men were simultaneously stripped of their pride and manhood. They were forced to sit idly by and watch as their black women, be it their mothers, wives or daughters, were abused by the white men; there was nothing they could do about it. At the time of Zack and Lucas’ confrontation slavery has long been abolished, but Lucas is well aware of the risk of opposing his white foster brother in the Jim Crow South. Due to his own male lineage he feels, however, in no way inferior to Zack. As a result, he says things to Zack during the heat of the moment that he had not intended saying. Thus, Lucas concludes that he will either have to take Molly and run away, or kill him. Driven to desperation by the jealousy and the humiliation he has had to suffer, he decides to kill Zack, but not without confronting him first:

"You knowed I wasn't afraid, because you knowed I was a McCaslin too and a man-made one. And you never thought that because I am a McCaslin too, I wouldn't. You never even thought that, because I am a nigger too, I wouldn't dare. No. You thought that because I am a nigger, I wouldn't even mind" (52).

It becomes painfully clear to Lucas that the man he has known most of his life and who has been almost like a brother to him thinks so little of Lucas that he does not even believe him capable of being offended or insulted by his actions. Zack moves Molly into his house not because of Lucas’s powerlessness as a black man to object to a white man’s actions, but because of the belief that a black man is not even human enough to mind. The racial insult combined with his male pride is what makes Lucas react so strongly. Zack’s actions make Lucas painfully aware of his black heritage and the injustice his people have had to suffer, just as Lucas's reaction is making Zack gradually aware of his white Southern heritage. The fight

between Zack and Lucas has also been subjected to a thorough discussion by Eric J. Sundquist, who describes the scene as “Faulkner’s most exacting dramatization of the reciprocal powers and impending violence that miscegenation could produce” (Sundquist 1983, 154). He argues that the contest between the two men has less to do with Zack’s potential abuse of Molly, but that it is a result of the rivalry between the two strains of Carothers’ blood as each of the two men try to bluff the other into violating the honour that “descends” with it (Sundquist 1983, 154). Thus, their fight is not only over the woman, it is a question of pride. Not of black pride or white pride, but the McCaslin pride—the male pride—that is equally strong in both men.

In a way the fight between Lucas and Zack can be interpreted more generically as indicative of the changing relationship between blacks and whites where Lucas is reclaiming his manhood on behalf of not just himself, but on behalf of all black men. While it is never asserted in the story whether or not Zack has been sexually intimate with Molly, we know that this is something Lucas—for good historical and cultural reasons—worries about. We know at the same time that Lucas as a black man opposing a white man in a white society is in no position to make demands. Once more we are reminded of how powerless the black man feels when he is up against the white power structure. When Molly returns back home to Lucas and he finds her asleep on the bed, the hopelessness of the situation is made evident as Lucas exclaims to himself: “‘How to God’ he said, ‘can a black man ask a white man to please not lay down with his black wife? And even if he could ask it, how to God can the white man promise he wont?’” (58). Philip M. Weinstein argues that the deepest crisis Lucas undergoes during the course of *Go Down, Moses*, revolves around his status as Molly’s husband. According to Weinstein it is painfully clear that if Lucas were Molly’s husband the same way a white man is husband of a white woman, he would never have to wonder these questions to himself (Weinstein 1996, 95). However, due to his black heritage Lucas is constantly forced to reaffirm his manhood as the white society insists on devaluing his position as a husband and a man. Kiyoyuki Ono also comments on this scene and notes the contrast between Lucas’s behaviour—and his words, after having risked a lynching to assert his equality. As Ono argues, “In the apparent discrepancy between his courageous demand of his human rights and equality and his resignation, he [Lucas] holds himself all the bitter, conflicting, desperate and ineffable feelings of his rage and heritage” (Ono, 217). It has been two decades since the manumission but the abuse of black women has been common practise in the South for so long and the relationship between the races is still so uneven and unjust that it is problematic

for a black man to refuse the white plantation owner's access to his wife. Arthur F. Kinney argues that the confrontation between the two men serves to illustrate the real issue at the heart of "The Fire and the Hearth" which is the question of whether there is any hope to bridge the differences between the races. Or as Kinney puts it: "how to God can a white man hope to understand a black man, and if he can, how can a black man know it? (Kinney).

Faulkner addresses the problem of black pride and manhood by showing how powerless the black man is in his meeting with the white society. The impotence and humiliation Lucas feels before he confronts Zack is also reflected in the way he is treated by the white power structure. Faulkner illustrates this wonderfully through Lucas's meeting with the court and the bank, as well as through his encounter with the law. When Lucas wants to report his soon to be son-in-law for setting up his still on the farm, it is not enough for him as a black man to report it to the sheriff:

The report would have to come from Edmonds, the white man, because to the sheriff Lucas was just another nigger and both the sheriff and Lucas knew it, although only one of them knew that to Lucas the sheriff was a redneck without any reason for pride in his forbears nor hope for it in his descendants (43).

Whenever Lucas needs the help of public officials of any kind, he is reminded of his own powerlessness as he cannot get anything done without the help of a white man. He is dependent on the help of the sheriff, yet at the same time he knows that the sheriff is only interested in helping the people who shares his skin colour. However, even though Lucas is perfectly aware that the sheriff sees him as "just another nigger," he has enough pride and belief in his own self not to feel inferior to the white man. It becomes evident that Lucas takes so much pride in his direct lineage to old Carothers that he believes himself to be a bigger and better man than the sheriff. As Thadious M. Davis points out, "In whatever arrangement he makes, and in whichever linguistic pattern he chooses, he [Lucas] reveals his concern for what he himself deserves due to his position as the oldest living McCaslin descendant on the plantation" (Davis, 140). Davis argues that Lucas's unruly behaviour is a result of his belief that his position will protect him, despite his race and thus he negotiates power in the manner he associates with his ancestors (Davis 1990, 140-142). Even though the white society refuses to acknowledge him as an equal because of his black blood, Lucas will not let anyone bully him into thinking he is a lesser man. His male heritage tells him otherwise.

It is important to point out that there are two major hierarchical structures at play in the story that interferes with how the characters relate to each other, namely those of gender

and race. The old South is built upon a system of patriarchy, so that in terms of heritage the male lineage takes predominance over the female but they both, however, have to yield when it comes to the question of race. With the exception of Isaac McCaslin who does not want any part of his inheritance, Lucas thinks of himself as the oldest living male McCaslin. Thus, Lucas feels deep down that the plantation should rightfully be his. However, in the Jim Crow South he is deprived of the same patrimonial rights that are offered to his white relatives. Of course this complicates the relationship between the black and white descendants even further and adds to the weight that they all have to carry due to generations of miscegenation and disruptive family relations. They are in truth one big but disharmonious family living off the same land. Old McCaslin's bastard children are never, however, acknowledged because of their skin colour.

This problem is one of the core issues that Faulkner deals with in *Go Down, Moses*. He criticizes the white men's sexual abuse of the black women in the South, and the denial of the black race that followed as they refused to accept the children resulting from the abuse. As Faulkner shows us, Carothers McCaslin is well aware that he has fathered the children, as was everyone else living on the plantation, but as the owner of the plantation and the owner of the slaves he had the power to do what he liked with his own property. The only hint of Carothers admitting his fatherhood is found in his will in the form of a \$1000 legacy that he left to the son of an unmarried slave girl. Lee Jenkins refers to the misdeeds of old Carothers and the tragic consequences that his actions lead to: "the producing of the cursed and feared mixed-blood individual who must be rejected, the brutalizing of natural feelings, and as a result, the corrupting of the possibilities of normal human relations, with kinsman rejected by kinsman (Jenkins 1981, 222). Rather than acknowledging his half black-children, it is much easier for Carothers to ease his mind by paying his way out of the situation. Or as Isaac McCaslin thinks to himself upon discovering the shameful truth in the old family ledgers: "*So I reckon that was cheaper than saying My son to a nigger*" (259).

Not only did the miscegenation and confusing family structures in the wake of slavery complicate and make the relationship between blacks and whites even more difficult, but it also laid grounds for a collective identity crisis for everyone involved. With an increasing use of black mummies in the white households, the dividing lines between the races resulting from the racial segregation at the time become more and more unclear. This is seen at the home place of the plantation which for Zack's son Roth proves to be a devastating environment in which to grow up.

Carothers “Roth” Edmonds (1898)

At the outset of “The Fire and the Hearth” we find ourselves in the 1940’s with young Roth as the head of the family plantation. Roth is the son of Zachary “Zack” Edmonds and the great-great grandson of old Carothers, three generations removed. Roth is the last white descendant of the family and inherited the plantation when his father Zack died. Just like his father before him Roth is raised by a black Mammy, Lucas's wife Molly, along with their own black son Henry. The two boys are born about the same time and they grow up together almost like brothers. By having his black and white protagonists born at the same time, Faulkner underlines the theme of continuity and shows us how the problems between the races stretch out over time. Thus not only the genes, but also the conflict is passed on from generation to generation. Faulkner uses the characters as complements and foils in order to look at differences both between the races and between the different generations of descendants. Lucas and Zack are born the same year and raised as brothers, and then two decades later their own sons are born within the same year and they are in their turn raised like brothers as well. In this manner we get to see how the same problems are inherited and passed on once again.

Faulkner thoroughly examines the problems the white descendants are faced with by having large sections of the novella focalized through the mind of Roth Edmonds. By letting us in on Roth’s innermost personal thoughts and feelings, Faulkner provides the reader with the opportunity to explore the mind of the contemporary Southern white man in general and to provide insights into white people’s problems in the aftermaths of slavery, and the reasons for their grief and frustration. The third chapter of the story is perhaps the most important section of the novella in terms of understanding the character of Roth. In addition to focalizing perceptions through him, Faulkner also makes use of several flashbacks that allows the reader to learn about things that happened to Roth when he was still a child. This technique gives us a better understanding of Roth and how past events have affected his personality as an adult.

When we first meet Roth he is in his early forties and serves as the head of the McCaslin plantation. As an adult he has turned into a bitter and cynical man and lives a fairly lonely and isolated life at the plantation. As a result of the difficult family relations and the issue of heritage, Roth’s daily life is coloured by the ongoing conflict between him and Lucas. This is how Roth thinks of the years that have gone by since he took over the plantation after his father:

...when he looked back over those twenty years, they seemed to him one long and

unbroken course of outrageous trouble and conflict, not with the land or weather (or even lately, with the federal government) but with the old negro who in his case did not even bother to remember not to call him mister, who called him Mr Edmonds and Mister Carothers or Carothers or Roth or son or spoke to him in a group of younger negroes, lumping them all together, as "you boys" (112-113).

One of the major issues that Roth struggles with in his life is that he does not get the respect he feels he deserves from his black relative. The main reason being, of course, that he derives from the female branch of the McCaslin family tree. Consequently, Lucas treats him accordingly. As Elisabeth Muhlenfeld explains, "to be descended "by the distaff" is to be forever suspect, somehow tainted: glorified by the blood of old Carothers McCaslin, yet shamed that the descent is through the female line" (Muhlenfeld, 199). As the head of the plantation Roth expects Lucas to treat him with the same respect as was shown to his father. However, due to his inferior female lineage combined with the age difference between the two men, they do not compete on even terms. Seeing as Roth is the same age as Lucas's own son Henry and because he has known Roth since the day he was born, Lucas looks at Roth in the way any older man would look at a younger relative. He does not pay him any respect as head of the plantation because he more than anything sees him simply as Zack's kid and, in terms of lineage, of an even lesser rank than his father was. Proud of his McCaslin heritage that in his own eyes far exceeds Roth's lineage, Lucas is therefore not affected by either Roth's position or the colour of his skin, something which is evident in the way that the two men relate to one another. Not only does Lucas not address Roth with the proper title of "Mister," which Roth considers insulting in itself, but furthermore he also addresses him as "boy," which is an even stronger sign of Lucas's pride and his recalcitrance against his white relative. Historically the title "boy" was a racial insult used by whites to belittle black men by recalling the black people's subservient status during slavery, and their allegedly lesser intellects and maturity. From the white man's side it was deliberately used to demonstrate superiority. Consequently, when Lucas then refers to his white employer and plantation owner as a "boy," he shows his defiance both of Roth himself and the social order that the white society is trying to enforce upon him. It is a clear signal to Roth that even though he is white and Lucas's employer, Roth holds no power over him.

For Roth the lack of respect and recognition from Lucas is at the heart of the problem and the main reason why he feels that as a grown man his life at the plantation has been just one long fight with the black man. The way Lucas relates to Roth is in deep contrast to how he used to relate to Roth's father Zack, and Roth himself is perfectly aware of this. He has

grown up around both men; for years he has been watching the relationship between his father and Lucas and seen how, despite the bitterness between them, they always treated each other with respect or at least as worthy opponents. Roth on his part does not get even that. The sentence: "who in his case did not even bother to remember not to call him mister" (113) underlines both the bitterness Roth feels towards his heritage as well as the indifference of Lucas. Consequently, when Lucas refrains from calling Roth "mister," or even worse sees Roth's status as so clearly inferior that he does not even hesitate to address him as "boy," this becomes a source of deep frustration for Roth. Where Roth through his position as the plantation owner initially expects to be treated as a superior man, he in reality finds himself in a position where he is not even considered the black man's equal but treated as someone of a lesser rank. Working and living under these conditions for so long with his adversary always close by, takes its toll on the white man. His frustration seems to increase with every passing year until his anger seems to be at all times lurking right beneath the surface, ready to burst. Faulkner illustrates how deeply felt Roth's frustration is in a scene where he once again learns of Lucas's unfortunate and disagreeable behaviour, this time from Lucas's own wife. Molly, who was once his Mammy, is now an old woman. Frail of body and with an aging mind, she wants Roth's help to get a divorce from Lucas.

At this point Lucas's hunt for the money has gotten to the stage where he is spending every night going up and down the creek with the divining machine trying to find traces of the treasure. His obsession with the gold is clouding his judgment, and when Molly and Roth for different reasons try to talk him out of it, he becomes even more determined to continue searching. Although Roth himself is not worried (like Molly is about Lucas's salvation), partly because he is confident that there is no money hidden at the plantation and partly because he does not fear the wrath of God like Molly does. Roth is, on the other hand, outraged by the notion that Lucas is still defying his insistent instructions to get rid of the machine. We get a good sense of the complexity of Roth's feelings as the affair with Lucas and Molly brings out different sides of his emotional life all at once. At the beginning of the chapter we get a chance to see the character of old Molly through Roth's eyes as she approaches his house. Even though Roth is thankful of the function she served for him in his childhood, he seems to regard the now old woman with a remarkable sense of detachment. The flaring anger he responds with upon learning about Molly's situation does not correlate with his own initial descriptions of the old woman, which seems to be characterized more by his lack of emotions rather than by warmth and love. Although one assumes that it would be natural for Roth to react with anger to the fact that his old Mammy is being poorly treated, we

learn that the welfare of Molly is not the issue that is bothering Roth the most:

It was not just concern, and, if he had told himself the truth, not concern for her at all. He was raging—an abrupt boiling-over of an accumulation of floutings and outrages covering not only his span but his father’s lifetime too, back into the time of his grandfather McCaslin Edmonds. Lucas was not only the oldest person living on the place, older than even Edmonds’s father would have been, there was that quarter strain not only of white blood and not even Edmonds blood, but of old Carothers McCaslin himself, from whom Lucas was descended not only by a male line but in only two generations, while Edmonds was descended by a female line and five generations back... (101).

He has finally had enough of Lucas’s stubbornness and rebellion. Although the request from Molly is what sets Roth’s anger off, we understand that the difficult relationship between the black and white relatives at the plantation is not something that has begun with Roth and Lucas, but that it has caused problems for all the Edmonds men for decades. At the McCaslin plantation, the white men’s accumulated frustration culminates and comes to the surface through the character of Roth. Annette Bernert also notes the anger that seems to dictate Roth’s behaviour and she argues that even Roth’s name is emblematic, as he is always “wroth” at somebody, who she further observes, is usually Lucas (Bernert, 186). In many ways Lucas becomes symbolic of the troubling and ambiguous race connections and divisions, as Lucas has always been living there since the time of old Carothers, right in the midst of the Edmonds men. Simply by his presence and attitude Lucas is a constant reminder to the white men of their shameful heritage, and a reminder that they are not the rightful heirs to the plantation as they are genetically surpassed by a “nigger.” As Bernard Bell notes, Lucas “undermines rather than reinforce the myth of “white supremacy” (Bell, 231). Consequently, the white men seem to feel their positions threatened by the black blood and their black relatives, while the blacks on their part struggle to assert their equality.

Although the black and white descendants are on different sides of the colorline and consequently differently affected by the racial conflict, what they all have in common is that the question of race define their lives in the South. The Edmonds men that come from the female blood line in this highly patriarchal society, cannot base their rank and social status on their heritage to get an upper hand. Elisabeth Muhlenfeld notes that the men: “—both white and black—in the McCaslin-Beauchamp-Edmonds family view the distaff side as a weakening agent” (Muhlenfeld, 199). As a result, the question of skin colour becomes a much more decisive factor for the Edmonds men. Measured against Lucas, however, Roth Edmonds comes up short both in terms of heritage and race, as Lucas seems to be of a different mettle

than other men. He strikes Roth as almost untouchable. He has survived both Roth's father and grandfather, and even though he is much older than Roth himself he appears to be younger, his face less worn than his own, as if Lucas is not even affected by time the same way other men are:

...and he thought with amazement and something very like horror: He's more like old Carothers than all the rest of us put together, including old Carothers. He is both heir and prototype simultaneously of all the geography and climate and biology which sired old Carothers and all the rest of us and our kin, myriad, countless, faceless even nameless now except himself who fathered himself, intact and complete, contemptuous, as old Carothers must have been, of all blood black white yellow or red, including his own (114).

This passage illustrates the complexity of the relationships between the McCaslin descendants and how conflicting Roth's feelings towards Lucas are. Even though he is bitter and resentful of Lucas and wants to dismiss him as just another "nigger," he is simultaneously in awe of the old man's strength and resilience. Roth sees Lucas as a prototype because he represents a broad mix of cultural, sociological and historical backgrounds and traditions, both African and American. To Roth there is an aura of something ancient in Lucas's presence and he perceives Lucas to be contemptuous of all blood, and indifferent to skin colours or racial identities. Roth is particularly frustrated that Lucas seems to transcend race. He finds the experience not only aggravating but also deeply humiliating, which makes it exceedingly difficult for Roth to relate to Lucas in any other way than with anger and bewilderment. The contradictions of the situation and the complexity of his emotions turn Roth into a lonely individual whose rage is threatening to tear him asunder. Lucas seems to become the personification of all the issues that Roth struggles with in his adult life and consequently the focal point of all of Roth's vexation and discontent. Edmund L. Volpe identifies Roth's problems to be the result of the conflict between the racial code he has inherited and the actuality of human relations. Roth is torn between seeing the Negro as a "nigger" or as a fellow human being (Volpe, 236, 238). He has accepted the racial code as his heritage, and as Volpe notes, in Roth's case this makes him white first and human being afterward, rather than a human being with white skin. And it turns out Roth is not the only white McCaslin with this problem. As Roth's anger is described as "an accumulation of floutings and outrages covering not only his span but his father's lifetime too, back into the time of his grandfather McCaslin Edmonds" (101), Faulkner illustrates how all the McCaslin men are inflicted with the curse of the South, generation after generation. The misogyny that came in the wake of slavery as a result of the abuse of black slave women disrupted the family structure for both black and

white families alike.

The disruption of the family structure did not, however, create problems only for the grown men in terms of heritage and patrimony; it also had grave consequences for the children. Even though Lucas and Roth consider each other adversaries in adulthood, it has not always been this way. Through flashbacks to Roth's early childhood memories Faulkner illustrates how traumatic life could be for the children growing up at the plantation, a trauma which was complicated by the Southern tradition of keeping black mammies.

Loss of Innocence

When we meet Roth as a child we get to see a very different side of his personality as he is still too young and innocent to differentiate between skin colours or to be concerned with questions of social rank and status. To Roth, Lucas was merely the husband of his Mammy Molly who in his childhood years serves as a mother to him. As Roth's biological mother dies in labour, he is raised and nursed by the black woman along with her own son Henry from the time of infancy. For Roth who has no recollection of his biological mother, the black woman caring for him and her black family becomes the only family he has ever known:

Even before he was out of infancy, the two houses had become interchangeable: himself and his foster-brother sleeping on the same pallet in the white man's house or in the same bed in the negro's and eating of the same food at the same table in either, actually preferring the negro house, the hearth on which even in summer a little fire always burned, centering the life in it, to his own (107).

As a child Roth learns to love Molly like a mother and he fully embraces black culture and family life as his own. He is raised as a member of two separate family groups: On the one hand he has his white family which consists of himself and his father living alone in the plantation home, and on the other hand he has the warm and nurturing Mammy Molly, and the comfort of her family home. Throughout the novel the hearth is a strong symbol of black culture and family life. Being drawn to the hearth, Roth seems to identify himself with black culture. The black home provides Roth with stability and predictability in his life and his black Mammy provides him with the love and intimacy of a mother. The image of Molly that Faulkner creates is that of a warm and loving woman who devotes her life to the well-being of her children and foster children. As Philip M. Weinstein explains, Faulkner in his writing portrays the black mammies as women who are "nearer to the earth itself—more in tune with the demands of the clay they are made of—and therefore not at war with the resources of their

own bodies” (Weinstein 1996, 28). Lee Jenkins, however, is critical of Faulkner’s portrayal of black women, and argues that Faulkner’s general perception of the black women’s function “incorporates the effects of the history of victimization of black women, projecting upon them as natural traits what may more serviceably be thought of as consequences of their degraded exploitation” (Jenkins 1990, 223). Nonetheless, the black Mammy plays an important part in the Southern culture of Faulkner’s fiction, as perfectly illustrates by the characters of the white McCaslin men.

However, as Roth grows older and becomes more self-aware, he realizes that he is different from his Mammy and his black relatives, and his feelings toward them gradually change. At first Roth comes to term with the fact that the black family is not his biological family:

One day he knew, without wondering or remembering when or how he had learned that either, that the black woman was not his mother, and did not regret it, he knew that his own mother was dead and did not grieve. There was still the black woman, constant steadfast, and the black man of whom he saw as much and even more than of his own father (107).

Even though Roth is still just a child there are definite signs that Roth is beginning to feel that he is not only separate from his foster family, but also better than them. Faulkner describes Roth’s realization, that Molly is not his real mom, as something he does not regret. It would be natural to think that the discovery would cause a stronger reaction from Roth but as he is gradually becoming racially aware it does not seem to bother him deeply. Even though he is far too young to grasp the social conventions and racial segregation of his time he is already showing signs of the detached person we know the adult Roth to become. The fully fleshed realization of what it really means to be racially different from his black relatives happens when the boy turns seven years old. Faulkner describes the moment he is struck with the curse of the South; the heritage of slavery:

Then one day the old curse of his fathers, the old haughty ancestral pride based not on any value but on an accident of geography, stemmed not from courage and honour but from wrong and shame, descended to him. He did not recognise it then (107).

As he grows older and understands more of the world around him, Roth becomes aware of his own whiteness and discovers that the world plays by different rules and offers different experiences and choices depending on the colour of one’s skin. Thrown by his newfound knowledge and full of conflicting emotions Roth feels the need to break away from his black family. With a child’s sudden determination and naivety he decides one night that it is no longer appropriate for a white boy and a black boy to share a bed. This moment when he

wants to establish superiority over his foster brother becomes a crucial turning point in his life. He is still just seven years old and does not understand the complexity of the situation or the severity of the racial conflict. He does not realize that once he has made the distinction between himself and his foster brother and made it clear also to the latter, he has introduced a different set of rules to their relationship from which there is no point of return. As argued by Edmund L. Volpe, what Roth does is in effect to re-enact old Carothers' initial rejection of the black man as an equal human being. According to Volpe, Roth's behaviour towards Henry is a symbol of the continued separation of the races, as each new white generation repeats the old pattern of their predecessors (Volpe, 232). The tragedy of the situation is, however, that Roth's behaviour is incomprehensible even to the young boy himself. As Kiyoyuki Ono notes, when Roth rejects his black relative he soon afterwards agonizes for his deed and as Ono points out: "How can he grasp what drives him to do such an incongruous deed, incongruous at least to himself?" (Ono, 217). This is why the grief Roth feels becomes so overwhelming. When Henry understands that he is not welcome to share Roth's bed he goes to sleep at the pallet on the floor, and this is the last night they ever sleep in the same room together. They have been born at the same time and raised like brothers, shared a bed and eaten every meal together since infancy, but the minute Roth opens up their relationship to the question of race he oversteps a boundary between himself and his black relative which their relationship can never recover from. Even though Roth at this point is not aware of the consequences of his actions and is not certain why he feels the way he does, he knows the very same night that something is terribly amiss and he has an intense emotional reaction to what has just happened:

But the boy didn't sleep, long after Henry's quiet and untroubled breathing had begun, lying in a rigid fury of the grief he could not explain, the shame he would not admit ... (109).

There is a striking contrast between the black boy Henry that is sleeping peacefully and untroubled at the pallet on the floor and the young boy Roth on the bed so overwhelmed by the force of his own emotions. At this point he is confused and divided, filled with feelings towards his black relatives that are incompatible with what the outside world is telling him is appropriate or socially acceptable in the deeply segregated society of the South. Roth is filled with grief because he is faced with an enormous loss of love in his life and at the same time he is ashamed because society tells him he is not supposed to have these kinds of feelings towards any person of colour. When he finally understands what is really at stake and he is ready to admit to himself that he does indeed love Molly, his black Mammy, it is too late to

do anything about it. It is heartbreaking to witness the scene where the young boy makes a bewildered attempt of regaining what he has lost, to get his life back the way it was before he entered his white heritage. He pulls himself together and approaches Molly to let her know that he wants to have supper with them, which is the child's way of asking his foster family to take him back into their lives again. When Molly does not object to his request he thinks that everything will be back to normal. However, a little later when he is called in to eat comes the most defining moment in his life, where his whole world collapses:

The table was set in the kitchen where it always was and Molly stood at the stove drawing the biscuits out as she always stood, but Lucas was not there and there was just one chair, one plate, his glass of milk beside it, the platter with untouched chicken, and even as he sprang back, gasping, for an instant blind as the room rushed and swam, Henry was turning toward the door to go out of it (110).

Roth has entered the kitchen in the black household thinking that everybody will sit down together like they used to and eat their supper as a family, but discovers that his assertion of white superiority has come at a cost. He had wanted to assert his whiteness to Henry and now his black relatives are treating him accordingly. When Roth sees the supper table set just for him, he understands that their relationship will never be the same again, and he is horrified and panic-stricken. The intense physical and emotional reaction that Roth experiences in this scene reveals how deeply traumatizing he finds it. He has disowned his black family and their black culture, and in doing so he has also severed himself from his identity as a small child and from the only family he ever had.

Philip M. Weinstein notes that because Faulkner's white women are proven defective it becomes the black women's responsibility to take care of the white children. According to Weinstein, the black women are "drafted to bring up the white children abandoned by their own (sometimes living, often dead, always ineffectual) mothers" and thus, Weinstein argues, "the black mothers become mammies" (Weinstein 1996, 28). As Roth's biological family is broken and dysfunctional, when he rejects his black family, he is now in effect an orphan. Once Roth has established his newfound racial superiority over Henry and his black relatives, he can never undo it. These instances of realization of racial difference—that Roth experiences at the age of seven and Zack upon the death of his wife—are the very moments where the white descendants oversteps the boundaries that changes the black and white relationships from being something resembling next of kin, to being that of the oppressor and the oppressed.

The problem for both Zack and Roth is that they do not really realize themselves that their choice of action involves, as it were, a fall from innocence, not until it is too late. They are only acting the way the world around them expects them to. Even as an adult Roth struggles with his ambivalent relationship to his black relatives and he continues to devalue them with his prejudice. Yet in the moments when he reflects back on his early childhood memories and his black mother, he does so with love and devotion. When Edmonds is in his forties and Molly is no longer part of his life, his reflections on the past reveals that he considers Molly the mother he never had:

The only mother he, Edmonds, ever knew, who had raised him, fed him from her own breast as she as actually doing her own child, who had surrounded him always with care for his physical body and for his spirit too, teaching him his manners, behaviours, - to be gentle with his inferiors, honorable with his equals, generous to the weak and considerate of the aged, courteous, truthful and brave to all, - who has given him, the motherless, without stint of expectation of reward that constant and abiding devotion and love which existed nowhere else in the world for him (113-114).

The warm and loving way by which he describes his Mammy when he looks back on his childhood years forms a sharp contrast to the ambivalent manner in which he relates to her now that he is an adult and Molly is a frail old woman:

And regularly once a month he would get down and tie the mare to the fence and enter the house with a tin of tobacco and a small sack of the soft cheap candy which she loved, and visit her for a half hour. He called it a libation to his luck, as the centaurion spilled first a little of the wine he drank, though actually it was to his ancestors and to the conscience which he would have probably affirmed he did not possess, in the form, the person, of the negro woman who had been the only mother he ever knew... (96-97).

These contrasting views of Molly is a testament to how conflicting Roth's emotions are when it comes to his black relatives, and how torn he is between the different sides of his own fragmented identity. He explains his visits to Molly's house as being his way of paying tribute to his ancestors, calling it a "libation to his luck." However, the word "libation" refers to "a ceremonial pouring of wine in honor of some deity." According to Roth's own explanation, he gives Molly tobacco and candy to honour his ancestors, yet he still comes round to her house every month to bring her gifts. The phrase "though actually it was to his ancestors and to the conscience which he would have probably affirmed he did not possess" is equally ambiguous, as he admits to paying tribute to his conscience, which he will never admit to having—in the form of the only mother he ever knew. In other words Molly is the

embodiment of his conscience, which is why he brings her gifts every month. Yet, he does not want to admit to the fact that he still has feelings for her. Arthur F. Kinney argues, however, that the efforts Roth makes towards upholding his relationship with Molly—his monthly visit bringing the old woman gifts—is only a tentative gesture. The attitude he displays against Lucas and against Molly herself reveals, at least, that his head is not where his heart is (Kinney).

Judith L. Sensibar has explored the effects on Roth of what she refers to as “Racialized maternal loss,” by which she means a maternal loss being complicated by a racist component. Sensibar argues that it is not just the issue of Molly’s skin colour that makes Roth deny his black Mammy, but also her sex. Sensibar notes: “To identify with the black *and* feminine is so shameful and so taboo that the feeling part of the self has to be killed” (Sensibar, 59). Because Roth is living in a society that favours white over black and male over female, his denial of Molly is therefore an expression of Roth’s need to assure his identity as a white male. Sensibar further explains how the maternal loss is felt always as a loss, because one is never allowed to mourn for it (Sensibar, 59). Consequently, as Roth is never allowed to express his feelings as a child, the grief is suppressed and turned inward and he becomes emotionally disconnected and unstable.

Roth is born at the turn of the twentieth century in the South, and is not old enough to have witnessed first-hand the extensive cruelties and injustices that black people suffered. He is instead exposed to and affected by the racist attitudes in his present surroundings. As a grown man he seems to worry more about the injustices he feels are being committed against himself and shows little compassion for the situation of his black relatives. The scene where Roth comes in to find the supper table in the black household set for him to eat all by himself is in many ways a premonition of what his future will be like. The rejection that he suffers when he tries to re-attach himself to his black Mammy and her family along with the conflicting inclinations of his cultural identity turn the adult Roth into a loveless man.

The Relationship between the Abuser and the Abused: Mutual Dehumanization

The relationship between Roth and his black family illustrates the devastating effects that slavery had on not just the abused party, but also the abuser. There are some common psychological traits and patterns that people in abusive relationships develop after having been oppressed over a given period of time. For instance, it is a common trait of people who are oppressed and abused that they suffer from anger and anxiety, as they are unable to

control their own situation. The abused are faced with a difficult dilemma: if they submit to oppression it may lead to feelings of guilt and self hatred, but on the other hand, if they resist, they are faced with the threat of what will happen to them if they disobey their oppressors. Ironically enough, however, the people responsible for the oppression—the abusers, experience a similar psychological process. Although the problem of the abuser is experienced from a place of advantage, the symptoms they suffer from are remarkably similar. The abusers become dependant on their victims as they measure their own self-worth as it relates to their feeling of superiority. The dependency on the victims then leads to anger and anxiety, because it makes them feel vulnerable. Simultaneously, most abusers realize that their behaviour is wrong and immoral and, like it does for the abused party, it may lead to feelings of guilt and self-hatred in the abuser as well

http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/maintaining_oppression/?nid=2378).

If we look at the characters of Lukas and Roth, for instance, their behavioural responses seem to be in accordance with many of these traits. When Zack moves Molly into the white household, Lucas spends six months in submissiveness while growing increasingly more frustrated and angry from having to accept the situation, until he suddenly bursts into a sense of outrage so intense that he is prepared to kill to end his humiliation. In addition, when it comes to Lucas's relationship with Roth, he sees himself as superior to the white man and uses every possible occasion to mark his defiance and disobedience. Similarly, when we look at the incident that takes place between Roth and Henry when Roth is seven years old, the mixed emotions and confusion Roth experiences after having established his superiority, perfectly illustrates the consequences of being an oppressor. Thus, feelings of rage, anxiety and frustration affect both sides of the oppressor/oppressed relationship.

The racial segregation in the South made the white children feel torn between the social conventions of their time and the close and intimate relationships they had to the black relatives and family members. There is a conflict between Roth's own experiences and feelings and what the world outside is telling him is the appropriate thing to think and feel: On the one hand he has his own positive and loving experience with his Mammy which tells him that the outside world must be wrong in its assumptions about race. On the other hand he is later told by society that she is not worthy of such feelings. It is as if the white society deprives him of his childhood and takes away the very foundation of his being. Ironically enough, the long-term effects of the loss Roth experiences as a child resemble the long term effects that black people suffered in the segregationist Jim Crow South. The split he feels and

his internal psychological conflict between the different sides of his personality may be argued to be an inverse reflection—although from the position of privilege—of the problem of identity black people struggled with trying to find a balance between their African and American parts of their identity, which in turn leads us to a discussion of the character of Lucas in “The Fire and the Hearth.”

Identity and the Double Consciousness

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868-1963) predicted in 1900 that “the problem of the Twentieth-Century is the problem of the colour-line” (Gates, 8). In his study of African American culture entitled *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), he coined two metaphors for the black condition that would become dominant in the racial debate for the remainder of the twentieth century: the metaphors of the “double consciousness” and “the veil.” Although Du Bois grew up outside the South and the Jim Crow laws did not take effect during his years at college in Tennessee during the late 1880’s, as an African American he strongly felt the racial conflict. According to Du Bois, it was during these years he discovered the true character of the South. As he describes the situation in one of his later books, *The Autobiography*:

Murder, killing, and maiming Negroes, raping Negro women – in the 80’s and in the southern South, this was not even news; it got no publicity, it caused no arrest; and punishment for transgression was so unusual that the fact was telegraphed north (Gates/Oliver, 16).

The impact of Du Bois’ experiences in the South can be traced throughout *The Souls of Black Folk* and it clearly shaped his urge to be involved in the politics of race and racism at the turn of the century (Gates, 16). In *Souls*, he wants to explore the consequences for black people to live in a society that devalues both their culture and themselves as individuals, and he coins the term “double consciousness” to explain the internal conflict that black people had to struggle with in order to balance the two different sides of their identity, being both African and American at the same time:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,— an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (Du Bois, 11).

It was not just the hostile environment that made it difficult for blacks in the US, it was also their lack of roots and knowledge of their own black history.

After the Emancipation the black people had to try to re-define themselves away from slavery and re-construct their lives as best as they possibly could, but the damage they had suffered as a people made it a nearly impossible task. The African culture was based on an oral tradition, which meant that knowledge of African history and traditions was passed on from generation to generation through singing and storytelling. As a result of slavery and the dispersal of African people to all over America, knowledge of the old African culture was permanently lost. When the black family structure collapsed, the tradition of storytelling was destroyed with it and African Americans were deprived of their historical and cultural roots. Perhaps even more importantly, they lost the connection to their spiritual origins. As Du Bois describes it in *The Souls*, the consequence was a collective identity crisis among black people in the US. It became almost impossible for black people to restore their lives and re-build their identities in a society that devalued them and their culture. With a limited knowledge of their history and background, all black people had to identify with in the US after the emancipation was the legacy of slavery and the shame they were left with after all they had been subjected to as a race. Ex-slaves and the descendants of slaves born in the post- Civil War era may have felt themselves to be just as much American as they were African, but white society did not view the matter the same way.

According to Du Bois, the double consciousness is an awareness of one's self as well as an internalization of how other people perceive that self. This constant state of double awareness made it difficult for black people to build a strong identity. There was also the added danger for the victims of racial prejudice that they might end up changing their personalities according to the stereotypes. As Du Bois argues, when a person is faced with massive prejudice from their surroundings and is living in a hostile atmosphere, it will eventually lead to his or her own ideals being lowered (Du Bois, 15).

Double Consciousness in Faulkner: The Case of Lucas

As Du Bois notes, “The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, — this longing to attain self conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a truer and better self“ (Du Bois, 11). This general characterization of the black condition proves a very apt description of the issues that also Faulkner’s character Lucas struggles with in his life. “The Fire and the Hearth” in part explores the black man’s identity crisis through the figure of Lucas. Although Faulkner narrates most of his story from a white point of view and consequently describes his black characters as they are perceived by their white relatives, the character of Lucas is the exception.

Lucas is obsessed with his McCaslin blood and the heritage that should under ideal circumstances rightfully have been his but which is denied to him because of his black blood. By chance one day, he finds a buried gold coin in the ground and convinces himself that there is plenty more money hidden on the property. Lucas is at this point a man well into his sixties who has lived all his life feeling as if he was robbed and tricked out of the riches and property that were lawfully his. So, when he sees an opportunity to gain the wealth and position he has never been able to achieve at the plantation, he is intent on finding the buried treasure that will give him the status and prosperity that he feels should have been coming to him all his life. The fact that he is willing to risk his marriage and his health to go hunting for a treasure that he is not even sure exists, testifies to the despair and frustration that he feels due to his subordinate status at the plantation.

For Lucas, finding the treasure is not really a question of money as he has enough money in the bank to last him the rest of his lifetime; instead it is a question of what the gold represents to him. As his pride and manhood are far more important to him than the question of his race, getting hold of the treasure becomes a matter of affirming his position as a self-owning man. Arthur F. Kinney notes that Lucas’s hunt has both a narrative and thematic function. Lucas’s search for gold serves as a present-day frame for the fight that took place between Zack and Lucas, when the latter went to the main house to kill the white man. Thus, Faulkner makes a point of structuring the chapter in this manner because he seeks to demonstrate the consequences of a racial history. Although the story of Lucas’s hunt for gold and his conflict with Roth may seem like a comical story at first glance, it is at the same time loaded with the racial tensions in the history of the family. Kinney draws a parallel between Lucas’s hunt for

gold and the fighting scene between him and Zack, because what is at stake in both cases is Lucas's self-esteem (Kinney). As Lucas is constantly struggling to balance his mixed-blood heritage, it becomes increasingly important for his sense of self-worth to be able to re-define himself away from the question of race and build his identity independently. When he suddenly sees a possibility of finding a buried treasure on the plantation, he convinces himself that this is exactly what he needs. The gold in itself becomes a symbol of everything that is denied to him because of the colour of his skin and he sees this as his chance to get the position and respect that he deserves. The pursuit of the gold is in truth Lucas's pursuit of independence and of his identity as a man, regardless of his skin colour. The fact that Lucas does not seem to fit in on either side of the colour line and that the world around him does not allow him to be both black and white gives Lucas a very ambivalent relationship to his mixed blood.

What is particularly interesting about Lucas, is that his own ambiguous feelings about his dual heritage and his racial identity makes him equally equivocal to the reader. Although there is no doubt that Lucas takes pride in being "the oldest living McCaslin descendant on the plantation," the reasons for his pride, however, are unclear. Is he proud because his mixed-blood at the family home offers him white privileges? Or is he proud because the bloodline could potentially make him overseer of the plantation, the head of family? Walter Taylor is one critic who finds that Faulkner's portrayal of the black and mixed-blood characters in *Go Down, Moses* lacks credibility, claiming that the virtues they possess are either stereotypical or seemingly distributed according to the characters' white blood. In the case of Lucas, Taylor claims that he builds his pride and integrity primarily on the knowledge of his white blood:

Lucas Beauchamp, the mulatto grandson of Carothers McCaslin, lives in imperial isolation from other Negroes, lording it over them because of his McCaslin blood; he is, according to the white kinsman who knows him best, "more like old Carothers than all the rest of us put together" (Taylor, 433).

Taylor notes that Lucas does not only find an inner strength in his dual heritage from Carothers, but that Lucas is also using his white strain of blood as a means to place himself above the other Negroes at the plantation. I find, however, this statement problematic for several reasons. On the one hand, there is no doubt that Lucas holds a privileged position at the plantation due to his white heritage. He has been allotted a piece of land to use as he likes, and he has a considerable amount of money to his name compared to the other blacks, which

separates him from the other workers. However, there is nothing in his behaviour towards the other blacks that implies that he sees himself as *racially* superior. When Taylor claims that Lucas is “lording” his blood over the other *Negroes*, he seems to imply that Lucas due to his portion of white blood sees himself as a better man than the other “pure-blooded” blacks. Thus, Taylor suggests that Lucas is himself guilty of racism towards the darker-skinned blacks on the plantation. Although Lucas is clearly taking advantage of his privileged position, I would to the contrary argue that he is, to put it in Taylor’s terms, “lording” his mixed-blood heritage over the *white* men at the plantation, as opposed to the other blacks. While Lucas does seem to manipulate his surroundings, both black and white, it seems to me that it is first and foremost the Edmonds men that have to adjust to Lucas’s heritage. The position he holds over George, for instance, does not pertain to Lucas’s white strain of blood, but rather that he demands George’s respect for being his elder, and because he is the father of Nat, whom George intends to marry. In my view, Lucas’s racial heritage does not seem to be a decisive factor one way or the other when it comes to Lucas’s relationship to the other blacks. When it comes to the Edmonds men, however, Lucas is very insistent on assuring his position as a McCaslin descendant. Lucas makes an effort of showing his white relatives that he is not playing the part of the “submissive negro.” Lucas’s statement to Zack, “‘I’m a nigger’ ... ‘But I’m a man too,’” illustrates Lucas’s need to prove that being one does not exclude the other. He is both black and a man.

Thus, I would like to argue that the traits of his character that seemingly pertain to his white heritage, is not an expression of what Lucas identifies himself with but rather evidence of his insight into the white society that he lives in. Lucas knows that if he is going to beat the white men, he has to beat them at their own games. Born and raised at the plantation, in a patriarchal society, he has adopted the white man’s view and knowledge of the plantation economy and of male superiority. Consequently, as Lucas mixed blood places him outside the categories of both white and black, he is determined to earn his status by assuring his position amongst the white men, in the category of *male*. Although the white society disowns him because he is black, they cannot disown that he is male, and a direct descendant of the male-line descending from old Carothers. Lucas takes pride in his kinship with old Carothers not because Carothers was *white*, but because of the qualities Lucas believed his predecessor possessed in terms of his manhood, as an *alpha-male*.

As mentioned previously, an additional illustration of Lucas’s need to assert his manhood in the story is his constant and deliberate refusal to address his white relative as “Mister.” We

understand that this arrangement has in time turned into a silent agreement between Zack and Lucas, but Lucas's silent revolt against Zack does not go unnoticed by his son Roth:

He listened as Lucas referred to his father as Mr Edmonds, never as Mister Zack; he watched him avoid having to address the white man directly by any name at all with a calculation so coldly and constantly alert, a finesse so deliberate and unflagging, that for a time he could not tell if even his father knew that the negro was refusing to call him mister (110).

Mister is a derivation of Master, and historically the term Mister indicates a social status that only applies to gentlemen or persons above one's own station as a mark of respect. While the term was commonly used for white men and even young white boys, it was a sign of respect that was never given to any black man until long into the twentieth century, regardless of achievements and social status. Being a black descendant of McCaslin, Lucas is despite his heritage throughout his life denied the same respect that is automatically given all white men and so consequently he refuses to treat Zack as a person of higher social status. As Philip M. Weinstein points out, the social significance of the term "Mister," was made perfectly clear in a twentieth-century white dilemma over how to address Booker T. Washington. Weinstein quotes Eugene Genovese who notes:

Years after the [Civil] war white southerners sighed with relief when Booker T. Washington received a doctorate. They had too much respect for him to call him "Booker" and could not call any black man "Mr."; but "Dr. Washington" presented no problem (Weinstein 1996, 88).

As Weinstein argues, to be addressed as Mr. is to be addressed properly. Thus, the refusal of Southern white culture at the turn of the century to address Booker T. Washington with the title of "Mr." was a refusal to grant him manhood (Weinstein 1996, p. 89). For the black men who during slavery had to give up their male pride, having to continue to address the white men with the title of Mister served as yet another blow to their already damaged pride. Although it on the surface may seem as a polite way of addressing someone, the title had an enormous social significance in the US, something that is explored by other authors as well. For instance in Tony Morrison's novel *Beloved* the rooster on the plantation is named "Mister," and one of the main characters in his despair reflects on how even the barnyard animals are treated with more respect than any of the black slaves will ever be. When Lucas in the story refuses to address Zack with the socially correct title, it is a signal to the world around him that he will not be subdued. Zack on his part allows for Lucas to treat him differently because he is perfectly aware that Lucas through male descent is morally and

legally more entitled to the heritage than he is himself. They both know the truth, which is why the relationship between the two men is so complicated. His double consciousness and his constant state of acute self-awareness are something that Lucas has to deal with all his life. In the confrontation that occurs between Zack and Lucas after their conflict over Molly, Faulkner once again illustrates the problem of Lucas's duality, and the pain and bitterness that it has caused Lucas in a passage in which Zack and Lucas fight over the gun and Lucas makes mockery of his foster brother and discredits his own white heritage:

All I got to give up is McCaslin blood that rightfully aint even mine or at least aint worth much since old Carothers never seemed to miss much what he give to Tomey that night that made my father. And if this is what that McCaslin blood has brought me, I don't want it neither. And if the running of it into my black blood never hurt him any more than the running of it out is going to hurt me, it wont even be old Carothers that had the most pleasure (55-56).

This passage goes straight to the heart of the problem as it addresses both the white man's rejection of his black children as well as the fatal psychological consequences for the children growing up with a mixed-blood heritage in a white society. Lucas always has to look at himself through the eyes of others, and his disparaging remarks about his own mixed blood are a testimony to his despair. Upon exploring the sociological aspects of being African American in the American society, Du Bois described the experience for black people as one in which society sees you as a social problem. This seems to be the case for Lucas as well since his white relatives—and particularly Roth—thinks his existence is just a tiresome side-effect of slavery. Lucas himself refers to old Carothers' sexual abuse of his grandmother and likens it to being nothing but the unwanted consequences of the white man's discharge. Lucas even goes as far as to say that it will give him more pleasure to take his own life and end the torment, than the sexual act did old Carothers. This is an extreme and anguished reaction to the conflict with Zack. The statement concerning his heritage and old Carothers is in steep contrast to the way in which Lucas normally prides himself on being a close and direct descendant of the family patriarch. It reflects a dividedness so radical that Lucas declares himself ready to die to get away from his heritage, to kill both Zack and himself, if the only thing he is offered in his life is prejudice and humiliation. Had it not been for the fact that the gun misfires, he would have ended up a killer. As Bernard W. Bell notes, Zack's actions are so offensive to Lucas's sense of pride and shame that he will rather kill Zack and accept death by lynching rather than accept dishonour (Bell, 229). As such, the scene between the two men speaks of the despair inherent in the relations between the Southern blacks and whites

growing up side by side.

Interestingly enough the metaphor of the double consciousness is in many ways equally relevant to describe the condition of several of Faulkner's white characters in the novella. Faulkner is naturally occupied with the institution of the family in his writing as the family unit is traditionally important in the patriarchal social structure of the South. The social practice of keeping black nurses and mammies that developed during slavery and in the years following Emancipation led to the deterioration of the family institution for both blacks and whites. Faulkner wants to show the reader what happens when the children grow up without the social and cultural stability that the family unit ideally would provide them with. The social, cultural and physical environments in which the characters grow up shape the way in which they develop their personal identities. As a consequence of growing up with a black foster family in a society that rejects blacks, Roth is also a divided person. On the one hand he has been raised in a black culture and grows to love this way of life and adjust himself to black traditions, but on the other hand he is after a while taught that he is not supposed to socialise with blacks nor identify with someone who is considered racially inferior. Consequently, when the white children grow up and learn the social codes of their society, they are forced to devalue and deny the perhaps most important relationship in their lives. The problem is that they at the same time destroy the basis and foundation that is supposed to help them form lasting bonds to other people as they grow up. When they experience as children that they can not even trust the person closest to them with their love, then how are they supposed to grow up able to trust anyone else with their feelings?

It seems fairly symptomatic that practically none of Faulkner's white characters (for instance Ike or Zack or Roth) are able to form successful relationships in their lives. It seems they are all of them doomed to live their lives detached and disconnected as if they are unable or unwilling to involve themselves emotionally with anyone around them. Lee Jenkins notes that there is seemingly a pattern of rejection in the white men's behaviour: "the rejection of those who have been loved or with whom one has existed in a relationship of love, is a recurring theme in the novel." As Jenkins argues, this is perhaps best illustrated through the character of Roth who rejects his black Mammy, his black foster brother, and finally rejects his lover and their mixed-blood child, all out of respect for his racial code (Jenkins 1981, 222). In addition, the white men's strong belief in male superiority seems to cause a division among the lines of gender that leads to a greater distance between the sexes. This is illustrated by the fact that white women are noticeably absent in *Go Down, Moses*. For instance, we barely hear mention of Cass' or Zack's wives, the latter only known through her

death. As Elisabeth Muhlenfeld notes: “the men in *Go Down, Moses* share not only a belief in the primacy of the male, but also a fear that the female shames or diminishes them. Because of this fear, they ignore the women in their lives, use them, reject them, escape them” (Muhlenfeld, 200).

On the whole it seems as if the identity crisis that Faulkner’s characters —both black and white—suffer from growing up in the South has its basis in the cultural and sociological differences between the races. The dynamics of the conflict seems much the same on either side of the colour line. Both the black and white McCaslin descendants have ties to both cultures. Roth is unquestionably white and privileged, born to a white mother and father, but the people that have the greatest impact on him in the first seven years of his life are all black. Lucas on his side, as a disadvantaged black man born right after the Emancipation, has a limited knowledge of the black people’s historical and cultural background; like his white nephew he grows up with both an American and African cultural identity and identifies himself a varying degree with both and neither. However, regardless of the men’s own feelings toward the issue, the rest of society determines for them which side of the dividing line each of them belongs to.

Black Family Life

Although Faulkner illustrates the negative effects that the Southern tradition of keeping mummies had on both the black and white family life, he also writes very warmly of the black woman and her function as a stable and steady presence in the lives of the children. Particularly through the character of Edmonds, Faulkner describes the black as a loving devoted mother who is always present in her children’s lives and who cares for their needs, physically, emotionally, morally and spiritually. The picture of a strong, loving and selfless woman forms a sharp contrast to the racial stereotypes that were prevalent at the time when Faulkner wrote the novella. Traditionally the black women were thought to be unfit mothers, emotionally deficient and thus unable to love and care for their children. Through the character of Molly, Faulkner is able to challenge these vicious stereotypes, and he writes what is seemingly a glowing tribute to the black woman and her generous nurturing nature. As Weinstein points out, it is difficult not to notice the similarity between the way Faulkner describes the character of the loving Molly, and the dedication to his own black that opens the novel of *Go Down, Moses* (Weinstein 1996, 12). Thus, it is natural to assume that

Faulkner bases the character of Molly on his own experiences of growing up with a black . It is interesting to note, however, that even though Molly is one of the major characters in the novella, we learn very little about her thoughts and feelings and what goes on inside of her as she becomes the centre of conflict between Lucas and Zack. Being a black woman in a patriarchal society, the idea of ownership does not apply to Molly as it does to Lucas in terms of owning land or property as there are no family resources for her to inherit, nor does she have the same level of self-ownership as her male counterparts. She is considered inferior both in terms of race and gender, and as such she is faced with different types of challenges in her relationship with the white descendants of the McCaslin family. Even long after the manumission she is still treated like a possession, and the conflict about her role in the novella is not about whether or not she should be considered property, it is more a questions of whose property she is and which man she belongs to. As argued by Thadious M. Davis, Molly is doubly treated as property. She is the property of the white McCaslins through her functions as wet-nurse and an “implicit gratifier” of “other sexual needs (Davis 2003, 143). Secondly, she is according to Davis simultaneously treated as the property of her black husband Lucas, as illustrated through his confrontation with Zack. Thus, Molly is first and foremost a mother/mammy and a wife. When Zack’s wife dies, it is Molly who fills her shoes, quite literally, and by using multiple focalization Faulkner allows for us to see the character of Molly and the effects of this arrangement from different perspectives. Interestingly, though, we get to see her as the black wife, and as the white , yet we learn very few details of black family life and her role as mother to her own black son. This is not accidental. Faulkner shows how white families are affected by their interaction with blacks, but he offers no perspectives on the effects of this interaction on black family life or on the women of the two households.

It is clear, however, that Faulkner portrays the black family as more compassionate and loving than the white family. Throughout *Go Down, Moses*, and as the title of the novella indicates, the fire burning on the hearth is used as a strong recurring symbol of black love and family life. Faulkner describes black family life and in particular the black mother with a deep warmth and admiration. Elisabeth Muhlenfeld argues that the hearth in the black household is symbolic of Molly’s strength: “That strength is represented by the fire in Molly and Lucas’s hearth, lighted on their wedding day, to burn until neither of them remains alive to tend it” (Muhlenfeld, 206). Similarly, Dorothy L. Denniston points out that Lucas barely stops short of extinguishing the fire on the hearth the day he decides to reclaim his wife. According to Denniston, the fact that he does not put out the fire is a “clear indication that he does not intend passively to accept the destruction of his marriage” (Denniston, 35).

Thus, the fire on the hearth in Lucas and Molly's house is burning from the day they marry, and it keeps burning day and night all the year around from that day forward. Regardless of the turmoil and hardships the black family has to suffer through, there always seems to be a sense of predictability and stability governing the household. The fire is as enduring and strong as their love for each other. Even when Molly lives in the white man's house for six months, the fire in the hearth burns on, giving their relationship an aura of invincibility. The white households, on the other hand, are characterized by an absent mother-figure and a father who is disengaged from family life. The marriages between the white couples are described as loveless and cold and in *Go Down, Moses*, white women are both negligent and negligible. When Zack's wife dies he just replaces her with Molly, and Lucas's observation when he gets home to find Molly back home again is particularly scathing: "His wife had removed only her shoes (he recognised them too. They belonged to the white woman who had not died, who had not even existed)" (51).

Faulkner succeeds in turning the tables around and shows us that slavery and the post-Civil War South have created a culture that perverts everything from inside the family structure. In "The Fire and the Hearth" Faulkner wants to challenge and disprove the stereotypes concerning black people and tries to offer a different view of black love and family life. It is, however, important to point out that his portrayal of the black family bliss differs quite drastically from the way in which his contemporary black writers describe the same structure. There could be several explanations for this. As a white middle class Southern man Faulkner writes from his own point of view and tries to show how slavery and abuse destroyed the lives of the white abusers as well as the black slaves. He does not have the same insight into black culture and family life as a black person would. Thus, being well aware of his limitations Faulkner describes his black characters and their lives as they are experienced through the eyes of their white counterparts.

Faulkner does, however, succeed in showing us how blacks and whites alike are all forced into social roles that they are not comfortable with. In order to survive they have to try to co-exist as best as they know how within the boundaries of what is socially acceptable. The result is a nation of people, blacks and whites; whose personalities are split and whose attempts to build a solid identity prove almost impossible.

It is, however, not just the issue of identity that is complicating the lives of the McCaslin descendants at the plantation, it is also a question of overcoming the moral decline that the structure of the Southern plantation system inevitably engenders. In the novella

entitled “The Bear,” Faulkner addresses a different side of slavery by exploring not only the human suffering this kind of socio-economic system engendered, but also the ethical questions raised by the behaviour of the Southern white man, who not only advocated such a system, but was even willing to go to war in order to preserve its existence. When old Carothers’ grandson and closest heir, Isaac “Ike” McCaslin discovers the truth about his grandfather’s atrocious behaviour against his slaves, he understands that his family is accountable for exploiting both the plantation workers and the land the family plantation is located on. Thus, on his twenty-first birthday he repudiates his patrimony. In an attempt to break the cycle of the white men’s shameful heritage, he refuses to accept the social role that is cut out for him. However, Ike’s repudiation comes at a cost. It has unwanted consequences both for himself and for his relatives that he did not anticipate. As illustrated by the complex relationship between Lucas and the Edmonds men in “The Fire and The Hearth,” the fact that the property falls into the hands of the female branch of the family, instead of the male branch that Ike represents, is one of the factors that contributes to the increasing tension between the black and white descendants at the plantation. While the main story of “The Fire and The Hearth” is set in the 1940’s, in “The Bear” Faulkner takes us back to the life at the family plantation at the end of the nineteenth century and the events leading up to the conflicts portrayed in “The Fire and The Hearth.” The story revolves around Ike, and we get to follow his development from early childhood to his initiation into adulthood. It is through lessons learned at the hunting grounds, at the skilful hands of Sam Fathers, that Ike adopts a different set of moral values that prepare him for adulthood and the choice he makes when he comes of age, to revoke his inheritance. The story of “The Bear” is set in the post-bellum South, and Faulkner combines the events of the story with real-life historical events. This gives us a better understanding of the challenges the characters of the book are up against as it allows us to see the racial conflict in a larger context.

CHAPTER 2: THE STORY OF THE GREAT HUNT IN “THE BEAR”

“The Bear” is one of Faulkner’s best known novellas and is considered to be the main story of *Go Down, Moses*. The story is often referred to as Faulkner’s eulogy to the vanishing wilderness, as the vast woods of his childhood’s Mississippi had to yield for the industrial revolution. A version of “The Bear” was first published in 1935 in Harper’s Magazine under the title “Lion”, but the revised and finished story first appeared in 1942 when it was published as the fifth story of *Go Down, Moses*. It was not until the novella was published as part of *Go Down, Moses* that Faulkner included an additional chapter to the story. The added fourth section deals specifically with family life at the plantation home, and through the entries of the ledgers of the plantation we learn the details of how the black slaves were abused by the family patriarch before the manumission. The ledgers do not only contain the detailed records of events that took place at the McCaslin plantation, they also reveal the true nature of the Southern way of life. As Thadious M. Davis points out, “As an index, the ledgers contain the regulations, the rules, the contracts, and the customs of the plantation owners in regard to their property” (Davis 1990, 147). The inclusion of the fourth section dramatically alters the tone of the novella and changes it from what was otherwise a hunting story questioning the morality of man’s use and abuse of the land into a much darker, scorching tale of the Southern white man’s use and abuse of people. “The Bear” is set in the last decades of the nineteenth century and is written in the form of a narrative about McCaslin’s grandson Ike. The story unfolds as we move through time recounting Ike’s adventures and experiences from the first annual hunting trips he went on as a child, until he becomes a man.

Narrative Technique

The novella is divided into five sections. The first three sections of the narrative is primarily a hunting story that recalls the pursuit and downfall of the legendary bear “Old Ben,” and likewise the final section of the story recalls Ike’s return to the hunting grounds a few years later. The fourth section, however, stands out from the rest of the narrative. It is not concerned with Ike’s hunting experiences, but rather with the life at the McCaslin plantation. This section of “The Bear” is particularly interesting for its exploration of ethical perspectives of the racial conflict of the South, and its portrayal of the mind of Isaac McCaslin as he discovers the truth about his heritage. The story of the hunting expedition is a third-person

narration by an anonymous narrator, in which most of the story is focalized through Ike. The fourth section, however, represents a break from the rest of the story, both thematically and in terms of its narrative technique. Whereas the storyline of "The Fire and the Hearth" focuses primarily on how the racial conflict is played out within the boundaries of the family institution, in "The Bear" Faulkner takes a step back and widens the perspective to include the historical development of the South as well. The fourth section is written largely as a dialogue between the twenty-one year old Ike and his cousin and surrogate father Carothers "Cass" McCaslin. During their conversation Faulkner intermittently makes use of the stream-of-consciousness technique to portray Ike's thoughts and feelings, a modernist trait Faulkner makes use of in many of his novels. By applying this technique he offers the reader an in-depth look into the character of Ike as his thoughts flow freely following the mind's arbitrary logic. The result is long, complex passages with thoughts and even dialogue that contains no periods or capitalizations, nor anything to mark the beginning or end of sentences. In his introduction to "The Bear," Frances Lee Utley refers to Malcolm Cowley, who has pointed out that the fourth section "runs to sixteen hundred words, each placed rhythmically yet precisely between one capital letter and one period," (Utley, 4) and is a such one of the longest sentences in all literature. The continuous flow of words lends a sort of urgency to the scene, and as the narrative keeps shifting between the descriptions of contemporary historical events and the commissary scene, it is as if the narrative itself underlines the cultural importance of Ike's decision. Thus, Faulkner illustrates the severity of the issue and the urgent need for the Southern white man to find a moral ground by which the history of Southern racism could be examined and judged.

Ike's Mentors: Old Ben and Sam Fathers, Spirits of the Wilderness

In order to understand what makes the young Ike repudiate his heritage we must look to his childhood and the events that shape him into the socially responsible adult that he becomes. Isaac is the grandson of Old Carothers and the son of Theophilus "Uncle Buck" McCaslin and Sophonsiba Beauchamp. As his parents die while Ike is just a small boy, he is raised by his seventeen year older cousin: Carothers "Cass" Edmonds who, as mentioned, serves as a father figure to the boy. As an annual member of Major de Spain's hunting expedition, Cass leaves every year to go hunting in the woods in pursuit of Old Ben, and when Ike reaches the age of ten he is finally allowed to come along. This is where he gets his training, under the supervision of Sam Fathers.

In the beginning of the second chapter Ike reveals his own thoughts on his education in the woods:

If Sam Fathers had been his mentor and the backyard rabbits and squirrels his kindergarten, then the wilderness the old bear ran was his college and the old male bear itself, so long unwifed and childless as to have become its own ungendered progenitor, was his alma mater (202).

Although he has a good father figure in his cousin Cass, Ike feels that it is the skills and knowledge he acquires from years of training in the woods with Sam Fathers and the pursuit of Old Ben, that represent his most valuable lesson. He sees the bear as his personal alma mater,⁴ which testifies to the respect and love he has for the wilderness and Old Ben. The bear has lived there alone and for so long, that he has become self-progenitive. Ike grows up to become a respected huntsman but he also graduates from the wilderness with far greater lessons from his mentors than just the skills to be a hunter. It is the grandness symbolized by the figure of the bear and Sam Father's view on life that become the decisive factors in Ike's moral development. It is consequently important to examine the two major "characters" that even Ike himself claims to be the greatest influences on his life.

In the opening passage of "The Bear" we are introduced to the participants of the story that, in addition to the McCaslin men, are the most prominent members of the hunting party:

There was a man and a dog too this time. Two beasts, counting Old Ben, the bear and two men, counting Boon Hogganbeck in whom some of the same blood ran which ran in Sam Fathers, even though Boon's was a plebeian strain of it and only Sam and Old Ben and the mongrel Lion were taintless and incorruptible (183).

We immediately learn that the bear is to be considered much more than just a beast. He is the main reason that the group of hunters return to the hunting ground every year, with the hope that maybe this will be the year that they capture "Old Ben." The bear is not only given a man's name, he is throughout the story given other characteristics that make us see him more as a man than as an animal. By his brain and brawn he has been able to survive countless attacks from hunters over the years, and he is described in almost God-like terms:

not even a mortal beast but an anachronism indomitable and invincible out of an old dead time, a phantom, epitome and apotheosis of the old wild life which the little puny humans swarmed and hacked at in fury of abhorrence and fear like pygmies about the ankles of a drowsing elephant;—the old bear, solitary, indomitable, and alone;

⁴ Alma Mater means "nurturing mother" in Latin and is often used about schools and universities.

widowed childless and absolved of morality—old Priam reft of his old wife and outlived all his sons (185-186).

To like the bear represents a bond to the old times when the wilderness was still untouched by human activity. He sees the bear as the very embodiment of the wilderness which he believes is so grand, and so vast, that the human race's disruption of it is of little or no importance.

R.W.B. Lewis argues that the character of the bear is a symbol of honour and immortality, as Lewis notes: "And like Old Ben, the bear, patriarch of the wilderness, embodying the virtues in some undefined and magical way, the honourable exists as an ethical reality before the story opens, "before the boy was born": as a glimpse of immortality" (Lewis, 190). Similarly, Faulkner underlines the idea that Old Ben's spirit stretches back into ancient times, by drawing a line to Greek mythology. Old Ben is in his solitude compared to Priam, an important figure from Greek mythology. Priam was the last king of Troy during the Trojan War, who tragically lost his first wife and several of his children. The name "Priam" also translates into meaning "exceptionally courageous." In the wilderness, the bear is the king. As such, the bear is established at the beginning of the novella as a force of nature in and by himself, unconquerable and incomparable to all except Sam, whose ancestry dates as far back as the bear's, and his mongrel dog Lion.

Sam Fathers is the son of a Chickasaw Chief and a black slave woman. His father Ikkemotubbe was a hard and ruthless Indian leader who gave himself the name of Doom, a name that originated from his French companion referring to him as "D'homme"—meaning "the man." Just as old Carothers is the head of his family, so is Doom the head, or "the man," of the Indian tribe. Similar to what took place at the McCaslin plantation, at the Indian camp Ikkemotubbe brings home a quadroon slave woman from one of his trips. As a result of his sexual abuse, the slave woman becomes pregnant and gives birth to Sam. Ikkemotubbe then marries her off to another black slave, giving the boy the Indian name of "Had two Fathers." By what I see as a parallel between the Indian chief and the McCaslin patriarch, Faulkner illustrates how slavery and miscegenation were not just a problem pertaining to the blacks and whites. Thadious M. Davis has also pointed out the similarities between the situation in Doom's tribal community, and what takes place at the McCaslin plantation. Davis argues that Doom selling his son into slavery is part of his consolidation of power, and that "Sam Fathers... repeats the discourse of race, concubinage, enslavement, white fathers, and black property central to *Go Down, Moses* (Davis 2003, 114). Whereas Faulkner in "The Fire and

the Hearth” explored what it meant to the McCaslin descendants that some of the family members had a mixed-blood heritage consisting of both black and white blood, Faulkner now shows us the added complications engendered by the fact that some of the slaves had parts of Indian blood as well. Thus, there were at this point not two but three different races fighting for survival and trying to co-exist in the old South.

Doom, however, sells the land to old Carothers and along with it the quadroon woman and his own son, the two year old Sam. This is how Sam Fathers begins his life, as a slave at the McCaslin plantation. Just like the other characters of mixed-blood heritage, the multiple strains that run through his veins are a source of inner conflict for Sam. It also makes his surroundings treat him differently. At the family plantation Sam lives among and dresses like the other blacks. We understand that like any other person with black blood, however little, Sam is considered a black man. But there is also where the similarities between Sam and the other blacks at the plantation end. As his father was Native American and his mother was just a quarter black, Sam’s physical appearance is that of an Indian. As Albert J. Devlin argues, although Sam lives with the other blacks, he is not a member of their community. According to Devlin, due to Sam’s mixed blood and because he was born into slavery, the only place Sam feels a sense of belonging is in the wilderness (Devlin, 195). However, Sam’s multiple heritage is not only a source of deep internal conflict, it seems evident in the way that the different characters relate to him that it is equally difficult for his surroundings to define his ethnicity. Consequently, his surroundings do not quite know how to relate to him.

As both Carothers and the other workers know, Sam does not derive from just any Indian; he is the closest male descendant of the Chickasaw Chief. In the patriarchal South this makes him the son of a King. Thus, Sam Fathers finds himself in the peculiar position of being treated both as a Native American King and a “Negro” slave, depending on the premises. Back at the plantation he is “the Negro,” but as soon as they leave for the wilderness, the white men treat him with respect as he is their superior in terms of hunting skills. Thus, in the woods he gets to play the part of the “Indian King.” It seems rather confusing that the white men are so inconsistent in the way they relate to Sam. However, the reason for the change in their behaviour is that they follow a different racial code when they are in the wilderness. As Thadious M. Davis argues, the men establish a different hierarchy than the one that normally exists when they are hunting. In the woods, Sam is regarded as a surviving Chickasaw, and as a trained woodsman he is placed at the top of the social order. As illustrated by the black cook Ash continuous subservient role, however, it is not that the hunters are race blind or levels race, but that they invert their hierarchy on the basis of

huntmanship (Davis 2003, 114). It is therefore not a question of the white men accepting Sam's blackness, but rather that they for the moment seem to be ignoring it. When in the wilderness, the group of men plays by the rules of hunting:

It was of the men, not white nor black nor red but men, hunters, with the will and hardihood to endure and the humility and skill to survive, and the dogs and the bear and deer juxtaposed and relieved against it, ordered and compelled by and within the wilderness in the ancient and unremitting contest according to the ancient and immitigable rules which voided all regrets and brooked no quarter;—the best game of all... (184).

The act of going hunting for game, as the Major's hunting party does, applies directly to the primal instincts of the men, testing their ability to re-connect with nature. As Edmund L. Volpe notes, when the men are away from the artificialities of social life, they cannot ignore the rules imposed by nature (Volpe, 244). Thus, when they are out hunting deer or bear, the men's ability to hunt decides their rank on the hierarchical order— as opposed to the colour of their skin. As such, the wilderness becomes the only place in which Sam Fathers has the advantage. On the other hand, this also means that when he is around the white men he is continuously forced to adapt to his surroundings and he becomes torn between the different sides of his heritage.

We get a good look at the complexity of Sam Fathers' character through the way he relates to the other members of the hunting party. As we're told in the opening passage of the novella, Sam Fathers is a righteous, pure and moral man. One of the ways in which Faulkner illustrates this is by showing us that Sam has the ability to shoot and kill but more importantly also the ability to know when not to. There is a clear contrast between Sam's attitudes to nature and the attitudes displayed by the white members of the hunting party. Edmund L. Volpe argues that the members of de Spain's hunting party are hunters because they respond to a primitive desire to confront the natural man within. Volpe notes that when they are in the wilderness, "they cut themselves off from the civilized world, its attachments, routines, obligations and codes" and in doing so, Volpe argues, the men accept "the brutal pattern of nature and adopting codes and conducts in accordance with that pattern" (Volpe, 244). There is, however, reason to question the morals of the white hunters when they enter the wilderness. When Major de Spain's hunting expedition makes camp, they bring along modern day equipment, carrying guns, watches and compasses to help them in the hunt. Thus, while the hunters have adapted to modern times, the animals still have to fight for their survival on the old terms, giving the human beings a clear advantage. As such, it is the hunter's ethical and moral values that determine how they chose to handle the advantage. The Major and

Walter Ewell, who are old war veterans, have a greater understanding of the rules of the game and honour the principle of protecting the helpless and the innocent. Consequently, they will refrain from killing does and fawns or yearlings that they know will not stand a chance against their weapons.

However, even these hunters do not understand the underlying and larger issue at hand, which is the question of anthropocentrism. Faulkner illustrates the striking irony of the situation in a scene where the hunters find a dead colt which has been grotesquely torn to pieces by a much larger animal. The Major concludes that it is the doings of Old Ben: ““He has broken the rules ... now he has come into my house and destroyed my property, out of season too. He broke the rules ... ““ (205). It seems highly ironic that the Major expects the bear to respect the rules and not trespass on “his” territory, yet he believes that it is perfectly legitimate for him and the men to come barging into the wilderness with weapons, horses, dogs and equipment to go hunting. The fact that he claims ownership to the wilderness makes it obvious that the Major’s rules are based on wrongful premises to begin with. He also reveals his lack of morals when he jumps to conclusions and places the blame on “Old Ben” without spending any time trying to investigate the matter further. As such, he does not only take advantage of his superiority, he is also ignorant enough to cry fault when the advantage is taken from him. The anthropocentrism of the Major comes to a peak towards the end of the story when he ends up selling the land to a lumber company, which confirms that he has no ethical restrictions on his own behavior as long as he is profiteering from it. As such, the character of the Major is a prime example of the kind of mentality that would also enable the Southern white man to hold the black man in bondage for over two hundred years.

Finding Back to Nature

Ike, on the other hand, develops a close relationship to Sam over the years and grows to adopt his attitude towards nature from early on in his life. The moment of transition occurs when Ike at the age of eleven realizes that the wilderness is Old Ben’s territory, and that he himself is a mere guest. Ike’s outlook is clearly contrasted with the attitude displayed by the Major. Through watching Sam he has understood that he will never be a good hunter unless he takes the time to get to know the animals and the woods that are his hunting ground. However, all of Ike’s attempts to pursue the bear are in vain until one day he strips himself of all his equipment and surrenders himself to the wilderness. That is when the old King shows himself. It is a grand scene depicting the joining of the hunter and the hunted. The scene in

many ways marks Ike's graduation from his "college of the wilderness" where he develops the awakening social conscience he displays later in life. Albert J. Devlin notes that the scene is important because it marks the moment Sam teaches Ike to master his fears. It is Sam who tells Ike that he has to leave his weapon and equipment behind to come face to face with his own fear, and meet the bear on equal terms (Devlin, 194). Thus, Ike's meeting with Old Ben is not only a lesson in respecting the wilderness, but also a lesson of courage, which helps prepare Ike for the choices he has to make when he comes of age. Similarly, Lee Jenkins draws a parallel between Ike's repudiation of his heritage and his getting rid of the equipment that gives him an advantage over the bear. Jenkins argues that the choice Ike makes when he confronts Old Ben on an equal footing is "analogous to the choice he makes in his willingness to confront and recognize the evil deeds of his heritage and the injustice it perpetuates" (Jenkins 1981, 223). As such, we understand that Sam's lessons in the wilderness are vital to Ike's moral development.

A sure sign that Ike has adopted the value system from his two mentors is when he himself at one point has the opportunity to shoot at Old Ben. Instead he throws his weapon away to save a scared little fyce that in its panic runs right at the bear instead of away from it. His laying down his arms and his potential "sacrifice" to save the dog serves as a foreshadowing of what is to come. As Annette Bernert notes, neither Ike nor Sam shoots old Ben when presented with the opportunity. According to Bernert, Ike's insistence to Sam that when the bear is going to die "it must be one of us ... when even he dont want it to last longer" (204) and likewise, the foreshadowing words "he should have hated and feared Lion," (202, 204, 216) indicate that the bear hunt exists for the hunt itself, not to kill the bear (Bernert, 184). After years of training and hunting with Sam Fathers, Ike has gained an understanding of life and of nature that none of his forbears had.

It is nonetheless symptomatic of all the white characters of the novella that, however well-meaning they may be, they are unable to fully understand "the other"—people of another race. Ike feels closely connected to Sam and genuinely cares for his well-being, yet he does not seem to understand until it is too late that he is also guilty of exploiting him. The psychological effect it has on Sam when he is forced to work as a servant on the McCaslin plantation seems to elude Ike. Sam's physical features are predominantly Indian and so visibly different from the other blacks at the plantation, that the other blacks do not see him as one of their own. Nonetheless, because Sam is one-eighth Negro, the drop of Negro blood forces him to live in the former slave quarters at the plantation. Edmund L. Volpe argues that

“Fathers, like most people living in the South, is supersensitive on the subject of his blood heritage” (Volpe, 240). According to Volpe, this is why Sam keeps apart from both blacks and whites, with the exception of Ike and Jobaker. Thus, Sam feels like an Indian and looks like an Indian but the white society insists that he shall be a black. Too red to be treated as a “Negro,” too black to be treated as an Indian, and too much of everything to be treated as a white, Sam ends up being treated as a “privileged negro.” When he is with the group of hunters the men heavily rely on his expertise and ask for his advice, yet he is still forced to play the subservient role of “negro” when he is around them. It seems as if there is no place in society for Sam to be himself, which is why when Ike is nine years old he decides to leave the plantation and move out to the camp to live there on a permanent basis. As John R. Cooley notes, when Sam leaves the plantation and society behind he “imagines that he has set himself free from the warfare within him and from the conflict between civilization and wilderness that has always surrounded him” (Cooley, 133). However, as it turns out, the wilderness becomes for Sam at once his freedom and his prison. It is the only place Sam is able to feel at ease and where he does not have to pretend to be someone he is not, yet the freedom it offers is a constant reminder of his displacement from the rest of humanity. In the wilderness he is allowed to be the King, but a king without a people. People-less and alone he instead identifies with Old Ben, who to Sam represents a bond to his ancestry and the old times, as the bear has walked the land since before the Indians left. To Sam the bear becomes the one being in his solitary existence that he can connect with and rely on, the one unchangeable and steadfast element that keeps him rooted in the woods.

Trinity

The problems Sam experiences are in many ways similar to the problems of Lucas in “The Fire and the Hearth.” Both men are perfectly aware that if it was not for the discrimination caused by their part-black identities they would normally be deserving of a much higher social status, higher even than the people responsible for their oppression. Sam would have had the status of an Indian Chief and Lucas could potentially have been the owner of the McCaslin plantation. In addition they also have to deal with the fact that they have been rejected not just by the white society, but also by their closest of relatives, a betrayal that is much harder to accept. As a consequence, it becomes difficult for the men to know what to identify themselves with. Thus, the struggle of identity remains a source of deep inner conflict for them both. In Sam’s case, it seems highly contradictory that he takes so much pride in his

kinship with his father Doom, the man that raped and abused his mother and who was ruthless enough to sell them both into slavery. It says a lot about the inferior status of the blacks in society, when Sam identifies himself with a ruthless rapist and murderer, rather than identifying himself with his partially black blood. As Lee Jenkins notes, “The possession of black blood carries with it a cursed and defiling stigma. Divested of dignity itself, it imposes no obligations upon others to treat it as such” (Jenkins 1990, 229). Thus according to Jenkins, when Sam’s father rejects his son, it can be seen as a honourable and necessary act done in order to maintain the dignity of the Chickasaw bloodline. As such, we understand why Sam feels betrayed by the black blood he has inherited from his mother as opposed to feeling betrayed by his father. Ironically enough, from this perspective Doom’s denial of his son gives the latter one more reason to take pride in the Indian heritage that is denied to him. Consequently, as opposed to Lucas, it is not Sam’s multicultural heritage that is the cause of his inner conflict; it is the actual black blood itself.

There is a major difference between the ways the two men handle their conflicting heritages. Lucas is described in the following manner: “Instead of being at once the battleground and victim of the two strains, he was a vessel, durable, ancestryless, nonconductive” (101). When faced with his mixed blood he chooses to disregard both of his heritages and instead build his sense of self-worth on his manhood, his male identity. As such, he is in many ways able to raise himself above the issue of skin colour. There is a contrast between Lucas’s durability and the way Sam’s internal struggle is described: “himself his own battleground, the scene of his own vanquishment and the mausoleum of his defeat” (163). Faulkner illustrates the complexity of Sam’s mixed-blood identity when he states that Sam is all at once the scene of the fight between the races, simultaneously being both the winner and the loser. The composite of all the three races, he in part represents the different sides of the conflict all at once. While it proves challenging enough for Lucas to balance his double heritage, Sam has not only a double, but a triple heritage he has to adapt to. For more than seventy years he has been carrying this burden, and it has worn him down. Thus, the day they finally catch the bear has dramatic consequences for the old man:

He lay there—the copper-brown, almost hairless body, the old man’s body, the old man, the wild man not even one generation from the woods, childless, kinless, peopleless—motionless ... only the boy knew that Sam too was going to die (236).

As the Indians left the land when Sam was only two, we are once again reminded of how utterly lonely his life has always been.

Mick Gidley argues that the knowledge of his father's rejection is one of the primary reasons Sam is so disengaged from the rest of society. According to Gidley, Sam has in a way had to suffer from fatherly rejection, not once but three times during his childhood years. His biological father rejected him first and married his pregnant mother to a black slave man who is Sam's second father, and then when the Indians leave, he is yet again sold off to Carothers who is equally capable of rejecting his offspring as Doom was. Due to his lack of responsible father figures in his life Sam—like Ike—grows up to father no children of his own (Gidley, 122). Deprived of a family life as a child, Sam is unable to fulfil the role of a father himself. Consequently, when he takes on the role of Ike's spiritual father and mentor he proves in many ways incapable. Which is why, when Ike is done with his backyard training and Jobaker dies, Sam abandons Ike to go live at the campsite. Sam's troubled heritage and fatherless childhood is therefore passed on to Ike, who also grows up an orphan. Although Ike has a responsible, nurturing father figure in his cousin Cass, it is his relationship with Sam that has the greatest significance for his upbringing. In accordance with Gidley's observation, Laura P. Claridge also notes the lack of stable father figures in "The Bear." Claridge points out that although the lack of mother figures in the story has been thoroughly noted by critics, the paternal side of Ike's family has not been adequately explored. Claridge argues that Ike too, despite his many surrogate fathers, is failed by all of them as neither of the men takes full responsibility for the boy or has the proper "parental" authority (Claridge, 242). Thus, when Sam leaves Ike behind to go live in the wilderness, he fails to maintain the father-role that could have provided both the Indian and the boy with a steadfast and lasting father-son relationship that could have given them both a sense of belonging. Instead they both live their lives without any strong attachments to other people, leaving them dysfunctional and solitary individuals. As a result of his failure to connect to the human race, Sam instead connects himself to the bear.

There is a striking resemblance between the way Sam is described in this passage, and the way that Ike describes the bear in the beginning of the novella with the phrase: "the old bear, solitary, indomitable, and alone; widowed childless and absolved of morality—old Priam reft of his old wife and outlived all his sons" (186). As they are described in almost identical terms, Faulkner underlines how similar life has been for the two of them. This is why, when the bear is captured and killed, Sam lays down to die with him:

"He's all right," the doctor said. "He didn't even catch cold. He just quit."

"Quit?" McCaslin said.

"Yes. Old people do that sometimes. Then they get a good night's sleep or maybe it's

just a drink of whisky, and they change their minds” (237).

It is almost as if Sam has lived the last years of his life purely out of solidarity with Old Ben, who like himself, is doomed—and the wilderness with them. There is nothing physically wrong with Sam beforehand, but the minute Boon gives Old Ben the fatal wound with his knife, Sam shuts down. His life has become so caught up and intertwined with the bear's, it is as if he by sheer willpower decides that he will join the bear, in death as in life. As Lee Jenkins notes, Sam's death coincides with the death of Old Ben, both of whom represents the spirit and majesty of the wilderness. As such, their deaths mark the end of the dying wilderness in “The Bear.” It is a paradox, however, that it is the one man with the greatest respect and love for the bear who is also the one responsible for his demise. On the other hand, it seems that his love for the bear is also Sam's motivation for doing it.

A possible explanation for the seemingly contradictory relationship between Sam and Old Ben can be found by looking to the Native American tradition. According to Native American beliefs every individual is thought to be connected with different animals that serve as guides and guardians in both the physical and spiritual world. In “The Bear” Old Ben may be seen as Sam's totem animal, accentuating the old man's connection to the wilderness and nature. Eric J. Sundquist has explored the relationship between the hunter and the beast in Faulkner and argues that the totem animal must be killed in order for its sacred status to be manifest. If the violent death that the hunt of Old Ben culminates in is to have a sacrificial significance, his death must be preceded by love and intimacy (Sundquist 1983, 145). According to Sundquist, the strategy of the hunt is to establish the hunter and the beast as equals that oppose each other in a ritual dance, before the differences between them are re-established and it all ends in the hunter killing his prey (Sundquist 1983, 145).

Sam has been dancing with the old bear for years, but as he is reaching the end of his life he sees that the wilderness around him is being ruined by the white men. Sam realizes that it will all come to an end soon with or without his interference and he knows that even Old Ben is getting older and will at some point be unable to escape the hunters when they come for him. Thus, when Lion turns up, Sam has found a worthy opponent to the old Bear. He decides to give the bear one last fight worthy of his name and reputation. This way Sam is able to control the circumstances of Ben's death and can allow for the bear to die respectfully and with dignity. Sam knows that he, Old Ben, and the wilderness are doomed; he decides that it is time to quit. Never allowed to be in control of his life, he makes sure to take control of his own death, and the demise of his totem animal.

Despite having developed a tight bond to Sam and gotten to know his way of thinking, Ike is not able to understand Sam's struggle. It is not until Sam is about to die and afterwards, in retrospect, that Ike realizes the hopelessness of Sam's condition and his sense of relief when he had discovered Lion:

There was something in Sam's face now. It was neither exultation nor joy nor hope. Later, a man, the boy realized what it had been and that Sam had known all the time what had made the tracks and what had torn the throat out of the doe in the spring and killed the fawn. It had been foreknowledge in Sam's face that morning "*And he was glad,*" he told himself (206).

When Ike looks back on the morning of Ben's death, he remembers that there had been something different about Sam that day, and understands that the old man had been looking forward to his own death. Ike realizes that Sam did not only know what was going to happen, but that he had in fact facilitated and planned for it himself. Thus, it took the old man's death to make Ike understand just how devastating it was for Sam to have to live his life as a "negro." This relationship between two people—even when it is one between a mentor and a pupil, or a father substitute and child—proves how difficult it is for the different races to relate to each other.

The Veil

As referred to previously in the discussion about Lucas' and Roth's identity problems, Du Bois coined two metaphors to explain the black condition: the metaphor of the "double consciousness" and "the veil." While the term "double consciousness" refers to the internal struggle that black people suffers from when trying to balance the different parts of their cultural identities, the metaphor of "the veil" explains the problems that the races have of properly understanding each other's way of life. Because of differences in culture and belief systems it is as if there is a veil between the races keeping them from seeing each other clearly (Du Bois, 10). The veil work both ways so that it obstructs the whites from seeing the blacks and vice versa. However, due to the black people's double identity they traditionally have a better understanding of the white people because they have been forced to adapt to the white culture as well as their own. Consequently, it is rather symptomatic of the problems between the races that the whites often misinterpret the blacks, however well-meaning they may be. The white characters in *Go Down, Moses* are no exception. In "The Old People," which serves as a prelude to "The Bear," Cass McCaslin coins a metaphor of his own to

describe his version of Sam Father's condition and what he believes to be the source of Sam's internal struggle. The metaphor is particularly interesting because it serves as a perfect example of how the cultural and racial differences between the men are preventing Cass from seeing Sam clearly. Cass and Ike are discussing their Indian servant noticing how it is almost impossible to tell, based on Sam's physical appearance, that he is part black. There is, however, occasionally something in the expression of his eyes that reveals his ancestry:

... not the mark of servitude but of bondage; the knowledge that for a while that part of his blood had been the blood of slaves. "Like an old lion or bear in a cage," McCaslin said. "He was born in the cage and has been in it all his life; he knows nothing else. Then he smells something ... It was the cage he smelled. He hadn't smelled the cage until that minute. Then the hot sand or the brake blew into his nostrils and blew away, and all he could smell was the cage. "That's what makes his eyes look like that."

"Then let him go!" the boy cried. "Let him go!"

"His cage aint us," McCaslin said. "Did you ever know anybody yet, even your father and Uncle Buddy, that ever told him to do or not do anything that he ever paid any attention to?"

That was true (161-162).

By comparing Sam to "an old lion or bear in a cage," we are at once reminded of Lion and Old Ben, and the similarities between the free spirit of the two animals and the spirit of Sam. The animals are powerful, strong creatures, and they in many ways embody the wilderness they live in. Thus, Faulkner underlines the severity it has for Sam, when he is deprived of his freedom. Edmund L. Volpe marks the moment Sam leaves the plantation as the moment "he breaks out of the cage in which he was born and goes to live in the woods" (Volpe, 240). According to Cass, however, Sam's "cage" is not due to his "servitude" of the McCaslin men, but instead the internal struggle that Sam has to go through as a result of his triple heritage — or more precisely, of being both black and Indian. Cass thus believes that Sam's own body and mind is his cage. Consequently, Cass's metaphor of the cage is an appropriate description of Sam's internal struggle, yet only a partial insight into his problem. The problem with Cass's metaphor is that it solely places the blame on Sam's mixed blood heritage, without reflecting over the fact as to why being born with mixed blood is such an affliction to begin with. Like the time when the Major immediately and wrongfully assumes that Old Ben is behind the killing of the young colt, Cass is too quick to place the blame of Sam's struggle on his ancestry, simultaneously acquitting himself and the McCaslin family. Although Sam's multiple heritage is a major issue for Sam, his problem is not a result of the blood itself but of

the white men's discrimination of it. It is the Southern white man who has decided that Sam, due to his drop of black blood, shall be "deemed a black," and hence inferior. Thus, Sam's cage is not his own body, but the South itself. When Cass says that "His cage aint us," he implies that none of the McCaslin men have treated him badly and that he has always been in charge of his own work and schedule. Thus according to Cass's reasoning, the McCaslin men are not responsible of exploitation.

The attitude that Cass reveals in this scene accords with a very common misconception found among white slave owners before the Emancipation. A very typical stereotype was the belief that if the slave master was kind to his slaves, he would never have problems with runaways. The slave masters who did not physically abuse their slaves would then be sincerely surprised if any of their slaves then did attempt to run away. The slaves were then regarded as ungrateful, as they were supposed to be thankful for having food and clothes and easy work (Middleton, 18). Because Sam according to Cass's standard is being treated so well, Cass fails to understand and recognize Sam's condition. Both Cass and Ike have known Sam since childhood and have over the years developed close relationships with him. There is no doubt that they truly care about the old man and his well being. The problem is nonetheless that cultural and racial differences make them unable to understand the premises of the cage. They fail to see that by keeping the Indian working as a servant in their household, and subjecting him to continuous discrimination, they are in fact contributing to the cage. The attitude Cass displays is based on a common misconception in the South, as the white men did not realize the destructive effect the working conditions and racial segregation had on the black workers even after the Civil War. Even though the violence had subsided, the plantation system continued to rob the workers of their pride. As the white men never experienced the effects of racism and prejudice themselves, they were unable to see the world through the eyes of the blacks. Thus the veil failed to be lifted.

Cass's metaphor of the cage also raises another interesting issue pertaining to the relationship between the races. We know that Cass in his childhood, and now Ike in his, grew up to be hunters under the careful and skilful training and supervision of Sam. It is however problematic that it is due solely to his *Indian* looks and heritage that the McCaslin men (Buck and Buddy, Cass, Ike and probably in some ways old Carothers himself) accept that Sam is unwilling to take orders from them on how to do his work. This raises an interesting question about the white men's attitude towards Sam, versus their attitudes towards the other black workers at the plantation. They recognize that it is a problem for Sam that he has to live his

life as a “negro.” Ike even refers to it as one of the reasons Sam decides to quit his life: “For 70 years now he had had to be a negro. It was almost over now and he was glad” (206). Thus, the white men are able to see that it is unbearable for Sam to live like a “negro,” yet they simultaneously fail to see the irrationality in the supposition that it is all right for the black men to be treated as “negroes.” Unable to see the black man as an equal, it is as if they are forming their relationships to Sam not regardless of his heritage, but rather despite of it. The white men’s changing and conflicting views of their black relatives is part of the reason why the black and white descendants have such extreme difficulties relating to each other.

This is the reason for the conflicts in the white men as well. On the one hand, the white descendants all seem to want to make amends for what old Carothers did, and mark their distance to the way he ran the plantation. As Annette Bernert notes, “Even as Ike inherited from his grandfather a legacy of guilt and shame, he derived from his father and uncle ““a little at least of its amelioration and restitution”” (Bernert, 182). We know, for instance, that as soon as old Carothers is in the ground, Buck and Buddy move out of the plantation house and with their own hands, not the help of the blacks, they build themselves a cabin to live in. Cass on his part takes care of Lucas and provides him with land and financial security to ensure that he is not in need. Similarly, Zack provides for Molly in his will. On the other hand, however, Cass continues to run the plantation with the blacks as workers, upholding the bond of economical dependency, and Zack on his part treats Molly as property and disrespect her marriage and her husband. As such, the white men all seem to want to compensate for old Carothers’ horrible actions, yet seem unwilling or incapable of changing the mentality that is at the heart of Southern life; instead they themselves seem to keep these prejudices alive. Ike is still just a child at this point in the story, but even he shows signs of the same prejudicial mentality.

The Invisible Wall

What is particularly striking about the hunting narrative in “The Bear,” in contradistinction to “The Fire and the Hearth,” is not the issue of the complicated relationships between blacks and whites, but rather the total lack of any relationships between them whatsoever. As such, the racial conflict in this part of the story is marked only by its absence. As the hunting narrative is focalized primarily through Ike, Faulkner allows us to get a good look into the thoughts and feelings of the young boy. What is so remarkable about reading the narrative is that the black men that surround Ike, at the plantation and on their

annual hunting expeditions, are scarcely mentioned at all. When they do get mentioned it is only by way of neutral and unconcerned descriptions that are only connected with their duties as servants. Often they appear in a phrase or a subordinate sentence that merely notes that they are present at the scene. This is remarkable in the sense that Ike spends most of his time training with Sam whom again spends most of his time with the other black servants. Consequently, Ike seems to be around the black workers just as much as he is the white men but he does, however, not seem to form friendships or any type of connection to any of the blacks during the time they spend together. The lack of relationship is particularly noticeable when it comes to Tennie's Jim —James. We are for instance told of how one time Ike and James help Sam after one of the dogs has been hurt during a hunt: "he and Tennie's Jim held the passive and still trembling bitch while Sam daubed her tattered ear and raked shoulder with turpentine and axlegrease" (190). James is in reality Ike's half cousin. He is only a few years older than Ike and they both spend their childhood years at the camp hunting for squirrels and rabbits with Sam. Tennie who is James's mother was also Ike's nurse, and so they have practically grown up together at the plantation. It is noteworthy then, when after so many years of shared experiences: hunting with Sam and having the same Mammy, that there is practically no mention of James when Ike the focalizer recalls his adventures. There is a distance between the two young boys due to their racial differences that may be contrasted to the relationships we know that the next generations of descendants have to one another: Lucas and Zack, and Henry and Roth, who in their childhood years are as close as foster brothers.

A probable explanation of the noticeable difference in the way that the black and white descendants relate to one another from one generation to the next may be found in the changes in political climate and social conditions. When Ike and Tennie's Jim grow up it has only been a few years since the Emancipation and it is therefore a much greater distance between the races. They have yet to figure out how to relate to one another when out of bondage; as a friendship between the two boys would be unacceptable. It is therefore highly ironic that when James abruptly leaves the plantation a few years later, he becomes of such importance to Ike that the latter finds it necessary to leave the plantation and travel great distances in order to go look for him.

The Runaways and The Savior

As a result of the time he has spent training and hunting with Sam since early childhood, Ike grows up believing in a different value system and with a view of nature different from that of his foster-father Cass and the other McCaslin men. Already at the age of ten, Ike has adopted Sam's belief that the land is to be used and held in common for everybody's benefit. We understand, however, that although he has adopted Sam's beliefs on an intellectual level, particularly as they pertain to nature, Ike is not able to recognize in his social surroundings that the McCaslin way of life differs drastically from this ideal. Edmund L. Volpe explains that anyone who is born and brought up within society is necessarily divided: "Deep within him is the natural man; superimposed is the social man. Between society and the woods, between social man and the buried natural man, there is an unbridgeable gap" (Volpe, 244). As Volpe argues, the problem with Ike is that he is never able to fuse the different aspects of his personality into one harmonious being (Volpe, 244). This is why he is never fully able to apply the lessons Sam has taught him in the wilderness to his social life. At the age of nine he still has a very naive perception of what life is like at the plantation:

...he intended to examine them [the ledgers] someday because he realised that they probably contained a chronological and much more comprehensive though doubtless tedious record than he would ever get from any other source, not alone of his own flesh and blood but of all his people, not only the whites but the black one too, who were as much a part of his ancestry as his white progenitors, and of the land which they had all held and used in common and fed from and on and would continue to use in common without regard to color or titular ownership... (256).

Ike's innocent view of the situation illustrates how difficult and complicated the race relations between the descendants are. The white men's prejudice is so incorporated into the daily life and routine at the plantation, that the children grow up unable to perceive that there even is a problem. Although he lives in the midst of a system that degrades the blacks and is beneficial only to his white relatives, Ike seems already at nine desensitized to the inequity between the races and the injustice that still takes place against the blacks. He seems to believe everything is as it should be, too young to fully understand what the ideal of a communally shared land would entail. It appears as if he has unconsciously accepted the premise that the blacks are inferior, and consequently that the blacks are getting what they are entitled to. However, Ike is still just a child at this point. As he grows older, the respect he holds for the land and the wilderness develops into a social conscience, and he starts realizing that life at the plantation

is not quite how it ought to be. Consequently, he begins questioning the way the McCaslin men are treating not just the wilderness, but also his black relatives.

When Ike then at age sixteen finally decides to read the family ledgers, it marks a turning point in his life. He learns the truth about his grandfather's incest and sexual abuse of the black women, and the \$1000 legacy for his mixed-blood son. He learns how his father and his Uncle Buddy played poker— wagering with slaves, and how the black workers were recorded in the ledgers in terms of their monetary value, balancing their work against the food they ate. Ike is shocked by what he finds, and decides that he will not take part in the abuse that his white relatives have been guilty of since the days of old Carothers. As Thadious M. Davis notes, the ledgers provide Ike with the truth of his grandfather's incestuous relationship with his daughter, which is a transgression of the natural law Ike embraces. According to Davis, everything Ike needs to understand his heritage is written in the family ledgers (Davis 1990, 146). Consequently, once he has read the ledgers Ike develops a strong need to mark his distance to the McCaslin men and his shameful heritage. Thus, when his black cousin Tennie's Jim disappears at the night of his twenty-first birthday without receiving his legacy, Ike sees this as a chance to make up for the deeds of his ancestors as well as showing his compassion for the black man.

Cousin James

Everything that concerns the black workers of the farm and the plantation economy is recorded in the family ledgers. Jim's disappearance is thus recorded in the books:

Vanished sometime on night of his twenty-first birthday Dec 29 1885. Traced by Isaac McCaslin to Jackson Tenn. And there lost. His third of legacy \$1000.00 returned to McCaslin Edmonds Trustee this day Jan 12 1886 (261).

Even though this takes place two decades after the Emancipation, the blacks' position at the plantation is still so inferior that the blacks do not leave openly. Jim sneaks off in the middle of the night. It seems as if he does not want to risk staying until the morning of his birthday, in fear that someone might attempt to stop him from going. Consequently, James leaves without collecting his \$1000 legacy. The description of James resembles that of a runaway slave. Thus it is highly ironic that the well-being of James is suddenly so important to Ike that he makes such an enormous effort to retrace his moves, in order to grant him his heritage. He and his black cousin have grown up side by side at the plantation and they have lived their whole lives without having anything to do with each other, not even on their hunting trips, yet

now Ike is obsessed with finding the man. However, it is soon apparent that Ike's motivation for tracking down James is far from selfless. We understand that Ike regrets that Tennie's Jim escapes before the \$1000 dollar legacy can be passed on to him. Panthea Reid Broughton argues that Ike's regrets seems more selfish than not: "as if he wanted to make a payment, discharge a duty, and thereby be freed of an obligation" (Broughton, 177). And not only is Ike's motivation for tracking down James questionable. His course of action can also be seen as an infringement on James freedom and a dismissal of his decision, independently made, to leave the plantation without the money from old Carothers. It seems as if Ike does not even consider the possibility that the black descendants do not want the money. Thadious M. Davis and Annette Bernert both note how Ike fails to understand his black relatives. Davis points to Ike's misinterpretation of Tomey's Turl's relationship to the legacy while he was still enslaved. Ike himself describes the situation as "the thousand dollars which could have had no more reality to him ... than it would to the negro, the slave who would not even see it until he came of age, twenty-one years too late to begin to learn what money was (258). Davis points to the possibility that Tomey's Turl might have refused to accept the legacy because he did not want to give McCaslin the satisfaction of "absolution through alms-giving" (Davis 2003, 164). This may be true of James' siblings as well. As Annette Bernert notes: "Isaac could not understand why all three of old Carothers Negro grandchildren refused their legacy (there is no evidence that Lucas ever used much of his) with more finality than he himself did ..." (Bernert, 186). As it turns out, all James really cares about is getting away. We learn of his motivation for leaving in a passage from the previous story, "The Fire and the Hearth":

It was as though he had not only (as his sister was later to do) put running water between himself and the land of his grandmother's betrayal and his father's nameless birth, but he had interposed latitude and geography too, shaking from his feet forever the very dust of the land where his ancestor could acknowledge or repudiate him from one day to another, according to his whim, but where he dared not even repudiate the white ancestor save when it met the white man's humour of the moment (102).

As soon as he is "legally" able to, James needs to free himself from the McCaslin heritage. However it is not enough for him to mark his distance on a psychological level—like for instance his brother Lucas does—James has to physically distance himself from the very place his people have been enslaved. But it is not just the land; he feels he has been betrayed by both his white and black predecessors. He seems to blame his grandmother Tomasine as much as he does his white grandfather. Despite knowing that she was probably abused by the white man, he seems equally bitter towards her. We understand that even though slavery ended

when James was a one-year old boy, he has felt like a slave all his life. The sentence “the land where his ancestor could acknowledge or repudiate him from one day to another, according to his whim,” is a reference to old Carothers refusal to take responsibility for the “nameless birth” of his son, James’s father. The hypocrisy of the situation is evident to James: Carothers is able to deny his black children, yet as a black descendant James is supposed to not only accept the rejection, but simultaneously accept his kinship in the form of a \$1000 legacy.

The paradox of James situation is furthermore underlined in the next sentence: “but where he dared not even repudiate the white ancestors save when it met the white man’s humour of the moment.” Historically, this was the reality of the situation for all blacks in the racist, post-war South. Opposition to white men was considered an insult, subservience was demanded and instituted. Thus, white men could “acknowledge” and “repudiate” the blacks at any time but black men did not dare to do the same towards whites. Not in the 1880’s, or even in the 1940’s, as the racial inequality in the Jim Crow South continued far into the twentieth century.

Ike’s insistence on tracking down James therefore becomes a question of Ike’s personal need to repent the actions of his predecessors. He has been raised in the wilderness by Sam Fathers and at the plantation with Cass. As a result, Ike has developed a strong sense of ethics based on Sam’s Native-American beliefs, as well as a Christian system of values inherited from Cass. Consequently, Ike seems to measure both himself and others based on their morality. Deeply shamed by his grandfather’s un-Christian and unethical behaviour, Ike becomes obsessed with finding James. To Ike, the search for his cousin represents a way of easing his sense of complicity and to cleanse himself of the moral decay he recognizes in his white relatives. The \$1000 legacy is therefore both literally and symbolically a way for Ike to pay off his black relative. As pointed out by Thadious M. Davis, Ike does not understand that he cannot protect blacks with money or idealism alone. Neither does he seem to recognize that his action replicates his grandfather’s act of leaving a thousand dollars to Tomey’s Turl, an act that Ike himself condemned (Davis 2003, 184). Davis also notes the contradiction in Ike’s behaviour when he relinquishes his claim to his patrimony, and yet simultaneously accepts the authority of Carothers’ will and its assertion of right over his black descendants (Davis 2003, 165). Consequently, a probably explanation for Ike’s contradictory behaviour is that Ike seems to choose the easiest way out by trying to buy himself absolution. “Isaac looks upon freedom as a state of being,” Panthea Reid Broughton observes, “accomplished by proclamation or thousand-dollar payment or by relinquishment” (Broughton, 178). Thus, it

seems that the act of providing his black relatives with Carothers' legacy accomplishes two things for Ike: it allows Ike to ease his guilty conscience, and it serves as a gesture to mark his distance to the other white men. As such, it is questionable whether Ike himself believes he is helping the blacks or whether he is helping himself — to feel better. When the hunt for James proves fruitless, Ike is forced to return to the plantation with his needs unfulfilled.

However, as James' sister Fonsiba disappears in a similar fashion the following year, Ike is provided with another opportunity to do a "good deed." There is a noticeable similarity between the description of Ike's hunt for his black relatives, and Lucas's hunt for gold in "The Fire and the Hearth": "... Lucas, who still held the divining machine before him as if it were some object symbolic and sanctified for a ceremony, a ritual" (85). Just as Lucas' obsession with the buried gold is an expression of his need to define himself away from the question of race and heritage, Ike's hunt for Carothers' descendants is an expression of his need to define himself away from the question of his shameful inheritance. Where Lucas's metal detector is described as being almost sacred to Lucas because it represents to him the life he has always felt that he deserved, Ike's search becomes symbolic and an almost sacred act as well:

...an experienced traveler by now and an experienced bloodhound too and a successful one this time because he would have to be; as the slow interminable empty muddy December miles crawled and crawled and night followed night in hotels, in roadside taverns of rough logs and containing little else but a bar, and in the cabins of strangers and the hay of lonely barns, in none of which he dared undress because of his secret golden girdle like that of a disguised one of the Magi travelling incognito and not even hope to draw him but only determination and desperation, he would tell himself: *I will have to find her. I will have to. We have already lost one of them. I will have to find her this time* (264).

By comparing Ike to an experienced bloodhound, the narrator recalls Ike's experiences as a hunter—drawing a parallel between his hunting expeditions as a child and the tracking of his relatives. The comparison also recalls scenes from the opening chapter of the book "Was," where Ike's father and his Uncle Buddy act out the charade of a hunt for his cousins' father, Terrel. Eric J. Sundquist explains how the metaphors of game, ritual and pursuit that are found throughout *Go Down, Moses* in almost every instance simultaneously relates to the struggles between hunter and beast or white and black (Sundquist 1983, 134). Sundquist points out how the black characters are repeatedly described as beasts, and he refers to Tomey's Turl "who is bayed, flushed, baited, treed and run to den every time he escapes to court Tennie Beauchamp ... and the "doe hunting" of Turl's unnamed descendant in 'Delta Autumn'" (Sundquist 1983, 134). Thus, Faulkner once more reminds us of the resemblance

between Ike's hunt for his relatives, and that of a plantation owner hunting down his runaway slaves or a hunter tracking down an animal.

Ike, on the other hand, seems to be glorifying the experience. When Ike says to himself: "We have already lost one of them," it brings to mind the parable of "The Lost Son." The story of "The Lost Son" is one of Jesus' most known parables. In the story, the son asks his father for his inheritance before leaving for a distant country where he spends all his money and is forced to work as a servant, herding pigs. The son then returns home and asks his father if he can come back and work as one of his servants, upon which his father welcomes him back with open arms, proclaiming that it is as if he has been given back his son from the dead. When comparing the story of "The Lost Son" to the reality of James' situation, it gives the impression that Ike is still looking at his surroundings through the eyes of a child, recalling the naïve thoughts of the nine year old who still believed that his black and white relatives shared the land in common, as equals. It seems as if Ike is unable to comprehend why anyone would want to run away from the plantation. It is as if Ike believes that James, like the lost son, will come back again as soon as he comes to his senses.

Ike does not only aggrandize the actual hunt for his black cousins, he also seems to magnify the importance of the part he plays in their lives. The money belt he carries around his waist is referred to as "his secret golden girdle," which is a reference to the Bible and the image of Jesus Christ.⁵ The reference to the "golden girdle" implies that Ike does not only see himself as a savior, he does in fact secretly identify himself with Christ the Savior. It is as if Ike feels that he is committing an act of great nobility and compassion when he sets out to find Fonsiba. However, as Thadious M. Davis and Olga W. Vickery both argue, it may seem like an act of nobility, but only on the surface. Vickery explains that although Ike can refuse to condone and contribute to the shameful history of his people, his actions seem to stem more from a desire to find personal salvation. Consequently, his gesture of relinquishment and withdrawal is only superficially an atonement for the sin of his forefathers (Vickery, 211). Davis too notes that Ike's efforts are "to assuage his own shame at his ancestor's behavior" (Davis 2003, 166). Ike himself, however, seems to think that he is rescuing his black relatives, as if he knows better than James and Fonsiba what is in their best interest.

In addition, Faulkner's use of symbolism in this passage is highly ambiguous. While

4. The image of Jesus Christ as envisioned in King James' Bible, Revelation 1:13: "And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle" (<http://bible.cc/revelation/1-13.htm>).

the thoughts of Ike reveal one side of the story, the voice of the narrator reveals quite the opposite view. The description of the slow and rough journey and the simile that compares Ike to the Magi can be read as an allusion to T. S. Eliot's poem "Journey of the Magi," which lends a very different perspective to the journey of Ike. Eliot's poem was written in 1927, and it describes the travel of the Magi on their way to bring gifts and honor to the baby Jesus. However, the narrator of Eliot's poem recounts the travel as a painful and tedious journey, and although they are on their way to see the baby Jesus, the Magus can not seem to recognize the meaning or importance of the event. He knows that he is witnessing a birth that it is supposed to be a matter of great importance but fails to grasp it. He therefore seeks to elevate the experience itself instead. Like Eliot's Magi, Ike seems to both glorify his journey and exaggerate his own importance.

Ike's young age combined with his idealistic vision of what the world is supposed to be like, is what makes him so naive and gives him such unrealistic expectations. Simultaneously, he is also beginning to realize the true nature of the South and how devastating the Southern way of life has been to the blacks. Thus, he is desperate to find anything that can provide some purpose or meaning to the horrible things that have happened. His search for a greater meaning is also illustrated by his initial thoughts when he understands why Eunice killed herself. Instead of accepting things at face value, Ike is so shocked by what he reads in the ledgers that he finds it very difficult to believe that the progenitor of his own family could have been so emotionally and morally corrupt. Therefore he seems desperate to find alternate explanations for what has happened: "*But there must have been love* he thought. *Some sort of love. Even what he would have called love: not just an afternoon's or a night's spittoon*" (258). That love is, however, As Eric J. Sundquist argues: "doubtful at best, a mockery at worst ... [it] defines both the limits and the ramifying contours of Ike's repudiation" (Sundquist 1983, 136). Thus, his repudiation only serves to prolong the cycle of grief, loneliness and loveless relations within the family tradition. For Ike however, at the time when he reads the ledgers as a sixteen-year old boy, it is an expression of his hope. It is not as if Ike seeks to justify his grandfather, but rather that he, for his own peace of mind, needs to believe that there must be a better explanation that will make the awful truth easier to accept. Thus, it seems to be a character trait of the young Ike that he needs to bring some conciliatory meaning into situations where there is none. The conflict between Ike's own unrealistic expectations and the actual truth of the matter is, however, made painfully clear to Ike when he finds Fonsiba, his missing black relative.

The Fugitive: Fonsiba

We understand that Ike sees himself as doing a good deed, but there is a radical contrast between the heroic figure he believes himself to be, and the way he is perceived by the people he is so desperate to help. The complicated race relations between the blacks and whites and the veil that is clouding their vision are perfectly illustrated in the way both Ike and Fonsiba are unable to understand the actions and intension of the other. When Ike finally tracks down Fonsiba and her husband, he finds them in a deserted farm building that resembles nothing more than a shed. The reaction he gets from the black woman when he finds her is, however, not the one he had anticipated:

Crouched into the wall's angle behind a crude table, the coffee-colored face which he had known all his life but knew no more, the body which had been born within a hundred yards of the room he was born in and in which some of his own blood ran but which was now completely inheritor of generation after generation to whom an unannounced white man on a horse was a white man's hired Patroller... (265).

Ike arrives at the farm-building with the \$1000 legacy for Fonsiba, but when he enters the building, she responds to him with fear. It is when he sees her reaction that Ike realizes that he does not know the woman at all. He believes to have known her all his life, because they both have grown up at the family home, but in this passage Faulkner underlines the unbridgeable gap between them and the difficulties they have relating to one other. He describes Fonsiba's reaction to Ike's arrival as an instinctual reaction, as if it is part of her black heritage to fear the white man. This, combined with the comparison of Ike to "a white man's hired Patroller" is of course Faulkner's way of referring to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. From a historical perspective, the Fugitive Slave Act was one of the most controversial laws that were passed by the Congress at the time. Within a brief period of time it greatly worsened the conditions of all blacks, both slaves and free men. The law was a part of the compromise between the pro-slavery movement of the South and the abolitionist movement of the North, and it sought to force the authorities in the Free states to return the fugitive slaves to their masters. The law made every police officer, marshal or watcher responsible of arresting everyone suspected of being runaways, and it was enough for anyone to suggest that someone were fugitives in order for the blacks in question to be arrested. The suspected slaves were not given the opportunity to defend themselves against the accusations, and as a result many free blacks were being captured as slaves (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fugitive_Slave_Act).

The description of Fonsiba curled up into a corner, terrified of the white man, brings to

mind the terror it must have been for any fugitive slave to know that they were found and would be taken back to the plantations, not to mention the fear of punishment at the hands of the master for having run away in the first place. Thus, the portrayal of Fonsiba recalls the numerous men and women who stood no chance of escaping, even in their escape. When the black woman responds to Ike with fear, we understand how deep her need for freedom is and how the slaves' way of reacting is part of her heritage. Even though she was born after the manumission and the Civil War, Fonsiba is still scared that the white man is going to attempt to make her go back to the plantation. Kiyoyuki Ono points out the "extraordinary" in Fonsiba's reaction "because the act of hiding behind the table is exactly what her ancestors must have done and now she is doing the same unawares" (Ono, 216). Ono further argues that both Fonsiba and Ike are in the ironic situation of being unable to attain freedom because having lived in the South has made an indelible impact on their unconscious. Thus, according to Ono, man cannot be free from the "chained legacy of time" (Ono, 216).

Her insistent need to break away, however, is further underlined when Ike asks the black woman: "Fonsiba, are you all right?" to which her only response is: "I am free" (268). We know of course—and so does Ike—from the circumstances under which she lives, that she is in fact not "all right." She and her husband barely have a roof over their heads and they have very little food. Despite living under such poor conditions, her answer therefore tells us that it is more important for her to be free. Panthea Reid Broughton notes that Fonsiba seems to grant an almost magical status to the concept of freedom (Broughton, 178). She keeps repeating that she is free, but her freedom does not make any difference in terms of her living situation. As Broughton argues, Fonsiba's "freedom" is of little help when the farm she and her husband live on has no stock, no crops and her husband does not work (Broughton, 178). Elisabeth Muhlenfeld seems to support Broughton's ideas of Fonsiba's "hopeless" freedom, and in addition she draws a comparison between Fonsiba and Eunice: "Fonsiba is 'free' by virtue of allowing herself to be buried alive (an ironic and self-defeating repetition of Eunice's suicide)" (Muhlenfeld, 206).

Ike's reunion with Fonsiba perfectly illustrates the distance between the blacks and whites in the decades after the Emancipation, and the cultural and racial difference that made it difficult for both parties to understand and relate to one another. Even Ike and Fonsiba who have grown up side by side, are completely misreading each other's signals and misinterpreting each other. This is why Ike feels as if the woman he finds a few months after she left the plantation is not the woman he had known all his life. As it turns out, he never knew her.

Once again, we are reminded of the lack of relationship between Ike and his black relatives.

Fonsiba's choice to starve in freedom rather than live back at the plantation is a good example of the fate that many black workers and ex-slaves suffered from in the wake of slavery. The fates of the three siblings, James, Fonsiba and Lucas, offer good insight into what life was like for blacks at the time. After the manumission, the black people were faced with immense problems. Once freed, they were released into society unprepared for the responsibilities that came with their freedom, and into a society that was still holding on to its racism and prejudice. Thus, the life out of bonds was for many blacks still extremely difficult. Many of the freedmen had in actuality very few choices. Consequently, many chose to stay at the plantation and keep working under slave-like condition because the alternative was worse. This is also illustrated by the family ledgers back at the McCaslin plantation:

*Roskus. raised by Grandfather in Callina Don't know how old. Freed 27 June 1837
Dont want to leave. Dide and Burid 12 Jan 1841
Fibby Roskus Wife. bought by granfather in Callina says Fifty Freed 27 June 1837
Don't want to leave. Dide and burd 1 Aug 1849 (254).*

Even though Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy attempt to free these black slaves upon the death of their father in 1837, the slaves do not want to leave the plantation. Ike's father and uncle seem to want to mend the situation, but do not in reality improve much on the living conditions for their black relatives. David H. Stewart argues that beside the twin's decision to increase the thousand dollars by Carothers to "expiate the old sin," to three thousand dollars, one for each of the children, their solution to try to abolish slavery is according to Stewart almost pathetic (Stewart, 219). It seems the twin's actions, however well-meaning, does not achieve much in terms of providing Ike with a solution to the racial problem either. Thadious M. Davis, on the other hand places the blame of Buck and Buddy's failure on the social conventions that governed Southern life at the time. According to Davis the twins try to handle the situation to the best of their abilities, but that they cannot show Ike how to change the plantation system because they do not know how (Davis 1990, 147). Similarly to Davis, Eric J. Sundquist notes how Faulkner himself commented on the twins actions that: "Buck and Buddy knew by instinct that slavery was wrong but did not know quite what to do about it" (Sundquist 1990, 163). Thus, at the McCaslin plantation, the slaves continue to live their lives like they did before they were freed, because they have lived so long under their white suppressors that they do not have the knowledge or the resources to be able to make it on their own. As such, the ledgers confirm that many of the McCaslin workers stayed at the plantation

for the remainder of their lives. In terms of material goods and education, most black slaves were not prepared for their freedom and the South was not ready to accept black people into the white society. As Davis points out, by 1860, some of the laws controlling slaves in Mississippi included: “prohibitions against marriages, contact with free blacks, defence or testimony against whites, learning to read or write, and leaving a plantation without a pass” (Davis 1990, 142). Thus, for many blacks it became a question of choosing between the lesser of two evils, like the case of Fonsiba and her husband illustrates. Driven by their wish for freedom and a need to break away from their past, they leave the predictability and stability that the plantation offers and head out into the world with no proper means for survival. Fonsiba’s husband is a proud, strong and intellectual man. However, instead of prioritizing finding work to be able to provide for his family, he seems preoccupied with satisfying his craving for knowledge, as book learning had been a white privilege withheld from most blacks. The image of the frightened Fonsiba who sits huddled up into a corner is juxtaposed to the image of her husband that Ike finds in the next room:

sitting in a rocking chair before the hearth, the man himself, reading ... in the same ministerial clothing in which he had entered the commissary five months ago and a pair of gold-framed spectacles which, when he looked up and then rose to his feet, the boy saw did not even contain lenses, reading a book in the midst of that desolation ... and over all, permeant, clinging to the man’s very clothing and exuding from his skin itself, that rank stink of baseless and imbecile delusion, that boundless rapacity and folly, of the carpetbagger followers of victorious armies.

“Don’t you see?” he cried “Don’t you see? This whole land, the whole South, is cursed, and all of us who derive from it, whom it ever suckled, white and black both, lie under the curse?”

And the man answers:

“You’re wrong. The curse you whites brought into this land has been lifted. It has been voided and discharged. We are seeing a new era, an era dedicated, as our founders intended it, to freedom, liberty and equality for all, to which this country will be the new Canaan—“

And Ike’s response is:

“Freedom from what? From work? Canaan?...What corner of Canaan is this?” (266-267).

The description of the proud black man in his best clothes, wearing glasses without lenses, is a perfect illustration of how hopeless the situation was for many blacks when they were trying to re-establish themselves in the white society. Fonsiba’s husband seems himself unable to realize the paradox of being so eager to get some learning that he risks starving to death with

his nose in a book. He seems to have a strong belief that everything will work itself out as long as he and his wife are free; apparently the couple never made any plans as to how they were going to provide for themselves, once they got away. When Ike then finds the man clinging on to his books in the middle of nowhere, and with Fonsiba unprovided for, he is both provoked and frustrated. In his anger, however, it seems as if Ike's own prejudice comes to the surface. He describes the black man in rather derogatory terms: "clinging to the man's very clothing and exuding from his skin itself, that rank stink of baseless and imbecile delusion, that boundless rapacity and folly, of the carpetbagger followers of victorious armies." Ike is accusing him of being both unintelligent and greedy, and so full of self-deception that his very body reeks of his stupidity. It is a rather crude description of a man whose only crime is the desire to start his life anew with his wife, away from the plantation and the white men that has held his people in bondage. David H. Stewart accentuates Ike's intrusion on the black couple's lives as he arranges for Fonsiba's financial security, believing in Stewart words that he is "protecting her from her own silly illusion of freedom and from her ridiculous negro husband" (Stewart, 215). Ike reveals a side of himself that is far from his own vision of himself as the heroic and Christ-like figure that set off from the plantation on a mission to "save" his black relatives. Simultaneously, he betrays his own inability to understand or empathise with the black man's situation. In Ike's view the black man will have no use of book learning if he dies of starvation, but for the black man, however, the situation is not that simple.

In the political discussions that followed the Emancipation during the Reconstruction period and after, the debate focused on securing the black people's civil rights and on the importance of book learning, in order for the blacks to improve upon their condition. It soon became obvious that the difficulties for the blacks in no way ended with the Emancipation. In many ways it contributed to creating an even greater distance between the blacks and whites, because it was impossible for the whites to comprehend why the blacks would be willing to trade off what the whites regarded as relatively good lives at the plantations, to an unknown future on their own. The problem Ike seems to recognize in "The Bear," was that the blacks were still wholly dependant on the white plantation owners. Thus, when Ike confronts Fonsiba's husband with the belief that they are all cursed, the black man illustrates the problem that Ike in his fury seemed to recognize. Although Fonsiba's husband is trying to make the best out of his situation, we understand that he is unprepared for the responsibilities that come with his freedom. However, Ike seems to argue, when he once again mentions the curse, that the land has failed them both. Fonsiba's husband, on the other hand, is still

convinced that the Emancipation itself is the solution that will end the problems of the black people. As Lee Jenkins argues: “His intelligence, along with the effects of discrimination in his society which deny him the opportunity to function at his level since he can no longer fit into any traditionally black subservient position, have made him a tragic figure” (Jenkins 1981, 32-33). As it turned out, Reconstruction only marked the beginning of a new era of abuse. There is a radical contrast between the reality that meets the black man out of bonds, and Fonsiba’s husband’s description of the Canaan that awaits his people. Faulkner underlines this contrast when Ike responds to the black man saying “What corner of Canaan is this?” (267). Canaan is the Hebrew name for “The Promised Land”, and thus Faulkner reinforces his comparison between the struggles of the blacks and the Israelites that were held in bondage by the Egyptians.

It seems necessary, once again, to connect the work of Faulkner to the ideas of W.E.B. Du Bois. Du Bois was heavily engaged in the politics of African Americans and the debate on how to best improve the living conditions of the blacks. Just like Faulkner, Du Bois made frequent use of the comparison between the situation of the black slaves and the Israelites. In “On the Dawn of Freedom,” Du Bois addresses both the issue of book learning and the consequences this ideal had on the black man’s way of thinking on the prospect of Canaan:

It was the ideal of “booklearning”; the curiosity, born of compulsory ignorance, to know and test the power of the cabalistic letters of the white man, the longing to know and to know. Here at last seemed to have been discovered the mountain path to Canaan; longer than the highway of Emancipation and law, steep and rugged, but straight, leading to heights high enough to overlook life (Du Bois, 13).

In his essay, Du Bois describes the experience the blacks went through after the Emancipation. The white society was not ready or prepared to integrate millions of blacks at the stroke of a pen. The blacks freed by law were unable to gain the benefits of their freedom, as the white society was holding on to its prejudices and racist attitudes. Consequently, the blacks were deprived of the equality that the Emancipation had seemed to promise, and they had to find other means to improve upon their social conditions (Du Bois, 15). The argument Faulkner depicts between Fonsiba’s husband and Ike is in many ways a mirror of the two opposing political views on the black condition after the Civil War, as represented by Washington and Du Bois.

Booker T. Washington (1856-1915), Du Bois’ contemporary, was one of the most

influential leaders in the African American community at the end of the nineteenth century. It was his firm belief that the way for blacks to advance in society was through getting a practical and vocational education. He emphasized that education for practical work should come first and then later the issue of civil rights. The right to vote and have political positions would have to come second (Washington, 39). Thus, Washington's educational ideas were not felt to be threatening to the white society. He fronted a policy of compromise as means to bridge the gap between the races, which made his views controversial in many circles. According to Washington vocational education as a means to find work and earn money was the key factor for the black man to be successfully integrated into the white society and thus gain a position of equality. As a result of his politics that seemed to discount the civil rights movement, he earned the opposition of many black intellectuals. W.E.B. Du Bois was one of Washington's most outspoken opponents. Du Bois also strongly believed in the essential importance of education for blacks, but in contrast to Washington, Du Bois' emphasis in education was on ideas, freedom and civil rights.

In *The Souls of Black Folk* Du Bois has dedicated an entire chapter to the politics of Booker T. Washington, in which he debates the damaging effect it had for the black people's struggle for equality to agree to Washington's policies. Du Bois and several of his contemporary black intellectuals believed Washington's line of political compromise contributed to uphold the black man's inferior position. Du Bois argued that Washington represented "in Negro thought the old attitude of adjustment and submission," and that "Mr. Washington's programme practically accepts the alleged inferiority of the Negro races" (Du Bois, 40). On the other hand, Washington strongly believed that the blacks had to bide their time and prepare themselves and the white society for their equality, and that it was important to find a compromise that both races could agree to. This is a view that Faulkner himself sympathized with, as he believed it necessary even in the 1950's for blacks to be flexible and patient. In an essay published in September 1956 entitled: "If I were a Negro," Faulkner praises Booker T. Washington's policies and challenges the blacks to follow Washington's words: "I will let no man, no matter his color, ever make me hate him." And then he gives his own advice to the black man, stating that "If I were a Negro, I would say to my people: 'Let us be always unflinching and inflexibly flexible, But always, decently, quietly, courteously, with dignity and without violence'" (Faulkner in Utley, 274).

I would consequently argue that Ike's response to Fonsiba and her husband may reflect Faulkner's public idea, but these are in the fictional world of "The Bear" clearly contrasted to Fonsiba's husbands' outlook which suggests that ideas of freedom are more

important than bread on the table. To me then, Ike seems to follow Washington's line of thinking, while Fonsiba's husband seems to follow Du Bois. As the previously described passage where Ike envisions himself as a "Christ-like" figure and the narrator on the contrary compares him to Eliot's Magi, the narrator of the story first and foremost foregrounds the ambiguities and painful contradictions of the history of Southern race relations. Ike would have thought Du Bois' ideas of Canaan to be terrible wrong—and Faulkner may indeed have thought so too (considering his rejection of Martin Luther's immediate demands of freedom and civil rights in the late 1950's). History has taught us, however, that neither Du Bois, Martin Luther King or Fonsiba's husband were "terribly wrong," they were proven right.

Consequently, Ike's reaction to Fonsiba and her husband may in many ways also be an expression of Faulkner's own political views, his preoccupation with the racial conflict and the way it affected the social conditions of both the blacks and the whites. According to Lee Jenkins, Faulkner did in his early work display a distaste for the educated black person and for any attempt by a black to advance his interests through intellectual assertion (Jenkins 1981, 32-33). This is a view that seems to coincide with the view that Ike expresses towards the black man. Simultaneously, by referring to both Booker T. Washington and Du Bois, the passage is at once both a critique of the black people's urgency to make use of their freedom, and simultaneously it provides us with the insight of how book learning became so important to the blacks.

The scene with Fonsiba and her husband may be argued to mark the beginnings of the moral decline of young Ike, and serves as a foreshadowing of what is to come. Although there is some sense to Ike's way of reasoning when he is faced with Fonsiba's husband, in his anger he seems to take the debate too far. He reveals that he has little sympathy with the black man's views. The scene is in many ways strikingly ironic, as the white man is standing there moralizing in his mind about the black man's lack of ethical principles. However, Ike's sudden anger and his demeaning behaviour towards Fonsiba's husband are an expression of the conflicting emotions he is struggling with, in regard to his shameful heritage.

CHAPTER 3: THE HISTORY OF SLAVERY AND THE WHITE EXPLOITATION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS

As mentioned in my general introduction to “The Bear,” the fourth section of the novella is significantly different from the rest of the story both in terms of content and subject matter, and much more complex in its narrative. The importance of the fourth section has been noted by most of Faulkner’s critics, and it is generally regarded as essential to the understanding of *Go Down, Moses* as a whole. Eric J. Sundquist places the fourth section at the heart of the novel, naturally because it contains Ike’s repudiation of his inheritance, but also because it, according to Sundquist, offers a magnificent example of the structural complexities of *Go Down, Moses* (Sundquist 1983, 136). The scene is, as mentioned, a dialogue between Ike and his cousin Cass, written in a stream-of-consciousness style in which the conversation between the two men is interrupted by contemporary historical events significantly important to the understanding of the Southern racial conflict. The fourth section makes for a more difficult reading and is according to Francis Lee Utley: “Faulkner’s comprehensive attempt to express ideas about God, nature, and man coupled with his interpretation of the history of the South,” and as Utley notes, “he has put it into one sentence” (Utley, 3-4).

The Commissary

When Ike at the age of sixteen learns what his family is guilty of, it comes as a shock to him. His discovery changes the way he looks at both himself and his white relatives, and he is all of a sudden forced to re-evaluate his whole existence. There is a conflict between the moral beliefs and value system that Ike has developed in his childhood and those that he finds his family has been practicing at the plantation. As Thadious M. Davis explains, it is impossible for Ike to accept the legacy of his grandfather because he has a very different conception of himself as a human being. Unlike old Carothers, Ike acknowledges that other people have been harmed in order to secure his birthright (Davis 2003, 145). He is neither able nor willing to identify with their behaviour, and as a consequence he ends up feeling alienated from the other McCaslin men.

For Ike it is in many ways as if he is becoming an orphan for the second time in his young life. He has been raised and nurtured by both Cass and Sam, but Sam is gone and now

he finds himself in disagreement with the value-system that Cass—due to his position as head of family—represents. Consequently, Ike has no close relations in his life that he can rely on. When Ike decides to read the ledgers we understand that he suspects that the family is hiding something, that there is something untold at the plantation that is kept in the shadows. Thus, when Ike discovers the truth, he experiences a sense of betrayal and a deep crisis similar to the one Roth goes through when he loses the black family that have provided the stability in his life. Upon reading the ledgers it is not only his shame he discovers, it is also his grief. Sundquist notes that “it is the very nature of Ike’s grief that it has no solution,” and that, although Ike may be able to lessen the shame of his heritage, the grief “like the sin itself and like the deaths of old Ben and Sam Fathers— cannot be undone” (Sundquist 1983, 136). Thus, according to Sundquist there is no way for Ike to escape his heritage. And the grief he discovers proves devastating for the young boy. What Ike finds in the ledgers makes him lose the stable foundation that he has built his life on and as such also the basis for his personal identity. The newfound knowledge does not only change his outlook on the future; it also alters the significance of his childhood memories as he sees the incidents with new eyes:

And he remembered this, he had seen it: an instant, a flash, his mother’s soprano “Even my dress! Even my dress!” loud and outraged in the barren unswept hall; a face young and female and even lighter in color than Tomey’s Terrel’s for an instant in a closing door ...

”She’s my cook! She’s my new cook! I had to have a cook ...”They’re free now! They’re folks too just like we are!” and his mother: “That’s why! That’s why! My mother’s house! Defiled! Defiled! And his uncle: “Damn it, Sibbey, at least give her time to pack her grip”... (289).

In this scene between Hubert and his Sister Fonsiba, Faulkner reminds us that the sexual abuse of the black women continued even long after the Emancipation. Although the young girl is not a slave and Hubert is not in any way forcing her to stay in his house, he is however, clearly taking advantage of the young woman’s age and inferior position, racially and socially, for personal gain. As a white, “wealthy” man much older than the girl, he is displaying a complete lack of morals by offering her Sophonsiba’s clothes and jewellery as gifts in exchange of sexual favours. With the description of the young girl who is “even lighter in color than Tomey’s Terrel,” we are reminded that the sexual abuse of black women is something that has been going on for decades, as the girl is clearly descending from mixed-blood relations. Thus, Hubert is repeating the behaviour of his forefathers, and re-enacting the potential act of miscegenation. More surprising than Hubert’s poor morality, however, is the

explicit racism expressed by Ike's mother in this scene. When she sees the young girl in the house she reacts violently and reveals her racism as she is screaming to Hubert that the house is defiled due to the black girl staying there. Hubert even tries to defend the girl against his sister's outrage by claiming that the black people are free and are folks just like the whites are. However, Sophonsiba replies "That's why," implying that the fact that "they're folks too now" is exactly why Hubert's behaviour is wrong. Any relationship between the races was after the Emancipation considered a bannable offence. The implication here is strong, that if the girl had still been a slave it would have been perfectly legitimate for Hubert to abuse her. Sophonsiba reacts so strongly because now that the black people's status is elevated from that of property to human beings, Hubert is now committing an outrageous transgression. When Sophonsiba exclaims: "Even my dress! Even my dress!" it is almost as if she feels that her dresses have been sullied, just from the black girl wearing them. As the scene between Hubert and Sophonsiba unfolds, we understand that they are both tainted by the Southern way of life and possess rather degrading attitudes towards the blacks. And the young boy Ike proves no exception.

We understand from the way Faulkner describes Ike's thoughts and feelings when he is witnessing the spectacle in his uncle's house, that he is already affected by the views of both his mother and his uncle. Although Ike is just a small boy at the time, he realizes from the girl's and his mother's reaction that there is something illegal and sinful going on between the black woman and his Uncle. However, Ike does not seem to be troubled by what he learns, instead he has his moment of sexual awakening at the sight of the young girl and what she represents to him:

...for an instant in a closing door; a swirl, a glimpse of the silk gown and the flick and glint of an ear ring: an apparition rapid and tawdry and illicit yet somehow even to the child, the infant still almost, breathless and exciting and evocative: as though, like two limpid and pellucid streams meeting, the child which he still was had made serene and absolute and perfect rapport and contact through that glimpsed nameless illicit hybrid female flesh with the boy which had existed at that stage of inviolable and immortal adolescence in his uncle for almost sixty years... (289).

The girl's appearance is described as "rapid and tawdry and illicit." Despite his young age, Ike is fully aware that the black girl's very flesh represents something that is illegal and wrongful, yet she evokes such passion in the boy that he is breathless. He instinctively responds to the sight of the woman's "illicit hybrid female flesh." Albert J. Devlin and Thadious M. Davis both note the tremendous impact the scene between his mother, his uncle and the black woman has on the mind of young Ike. Devlin argues that Ike identifies so

strongly with his uncle and that his perception in this scene is so intense, that he imagines himself as a participator, both as an enchanted admirer of Hubert's mistress and as a receptor of his mother's maternalism (Devlin, 192-193). According to Devlin, Sophonsiba's violent dismissal of Hubert's mistress identifies the mulatto as a "racially proscribed lover," but that it also has a great impact on Ike's experiences later in life, making him sexually inhibited (Devlin, 193). Davis shares the same view and concludes that his mother's insistence on racial purity and "her conception of whiteness as invested with privilege and position" serves to heighten Ike's shame at being attracted to the black "illicit hybrid female flesh," like his uncle and his grandfather before him (Davis 2003, 214).

The reference to the girl's mixed blood accentuates once again a previous illicit sexual encounter between a white man and a black woman. Thus, "The Bear" underlines that the sexual abuse of black women is a tradition amongst the white men that has become deeply embedded in the Southern culture and way of life through two centuries of slavery. The biblical symbolism of the scene is also clear, as we are reminded of the original sin and the corruptness of human nature. The young black woman's body is symbolic of the forbidden fruit, and Ike who is described as "the infant still almost" recalls the idea that man is born sinful. Just like his uncle who was born during the time of slavery has been raised under the belief that the black women are considered objects of the white men's sexual desires, Ike is from childhood aware that the girl's flesh is connected with something sinful. Consequently, we understand that Ike too, is born tainted. Although the child Ike recognizes that there is something "illicit" going on in his uncle's house, he did not understand the wrongfulness of his uncle's actions. However, when he looks back on the incident as an adult he realizes that his grandfather's sexual abuse was not an exceptional incident. He is now able to identify the poor morals that lie at the heart of Southern life, and it comes as a shock to him.

Thus, Ike has to re-evaluate his life and build himself a new foundation to base his beliefs and his identity on. He is born too close to slavery and grew up too distanced from his black relatives to be able to identify with them. At the same time, as he is alienated by the moral degradation he sees in his white relatives, he feels disconnected from them as well and has a strong need to repudiate their value system. As a result, Ike holds on to the values adopted from Sam, but in his search for guidance and the right way to live his life, he also turns to the bible. Because he is desperate to regain some stability in his life and to try to find some meaning in all this social suffering, he feels a strong need to break free from his heritage to start anew. Consequently, when he comes of age and is old enough to receive his patrimony and inherit the plantation, he repudiates it: using the Bible as evidence to explain to Cass why

there is no inheritance for him to repudiate:

I can't repudiate it. It was never mine to repudiate. It was never Father's and Uncle Buddy's to bequeath to me to repudiate because it was never Grandfather's to bequeath them to bequeath me to repudiate because it was never old Ikkemotubbe's to sell to Grandfather for bequeathment and repudiation. Because it was never Ikkemotubbe's father's father's to bequeath Ikkemotubbe to sell to Grandfather or any other man because on the instant when Ikkemotubbe discovered, realized, that he could sell it for money, on that instant it ceased ever to have been his forever, father to father to father, and the man who bought it bought nothing."

"Bought nothing?"

"Bought nothing. Because He told in the Book how he created the earth, made it and looked at it and said it was all right, and the He made man. He made the earth first and peopled it with dumb creatures, and then He created man to be his overseer on the earth and to hold suzerainty over the earth and the animals on it in his name, not to hold for himself and his descendant inviolable title forever, generation after generation, to the oblongs and squares of the earth, but to hold the earth mutual and intact in the communal anonymity of brotherhood, and all the fee He asked was pity and humility and sufferance and endurance and the sweat of his face for bread (245-246).

One of the many things Ike learned from his hunting expeditions with Sam was that he should treat the land and the wilderness with respect and humility. As Olga W. Vickery explains, it is Sam Fathers that has made Ike's repudiation possible by the fact that he provided him with the respect for the wilderness and the code of the hunter as an alternative to the plantation world. Vickery argues that this is what allows Ike to examine the history of his people and thus make the decision to rebel against his heritage (Vickery, 211). Ike finds that Sam's lesson of humility in the wilderness applies to life in society and corresponds to what he has read in the Bible. Ike explains his beliefs to Cass: God created the earth and gave it for all men to share in a communal spirit of brotherhood. All that men had to do in return was to show each other compassion, be enduring and humble, and willing to work for food. As Ike knows that the McCaslin men are guilty of exploiting both the land and the black slaves, he claims they have lost their privileges of the land entirely as they have sinned against God's commandments. As such, Ike concludes that there is no property for him to inherit or even repudiate, because it was never theirs to own to begin with. In his view, the very instant when Ikkemotubbe sold the land to old Carothers, the white men and the Native Americans lost their privileges. When Cass tries to point out to Ike that the human race was guilty of the same sins in the days of Abraham and that Man's fall from grace happened long before Ikkemotubbe sold the land, Ike continues to seek support in the texts of the Bible in whatever way possible. He picks and chooses the parts of the Bible that serve to strengthen his own

arguments and does not consider the ones that weaken them. The problem is, however, that Ike himself is not able to see how he by his own ways of reasoning keeps contradicting both himself and the Bible. When he is unable to back up his claims or counter Cass's arguments, Ike concludes:

“There are some things He said in the Book, and some things reported of Him that He did not say. And I know what you will say now: That if truth is one thing to me and another thing to you, how will we choose which is truth? You don't need to choose. The heart already knows ... Because the men who wrote his Book for Him were writing about truth and there is only one truth and it covers all things that touch the heart.” And McCaslin

“So these men who transcribed his Book for Him were sometimes liars.” and he

“Yes. Because they were human men” (249).

He has been trying to find support for his “truths” in the Bible, using it as a source of authority to legitimize his decision to repudiate his inheritance. However, he robs his own line of arguing of any credibility when he simultaneously states that the Bible cannot be trusted, because it is put into writing by humans that are innately flawed. Thus, if he disagrees with the written word it is according to Ike not a disagreement between him and the words of the Lord, but rather because the men who transcribed the Bible were sometimes in the wrong. According to Ike's way of reasoning, he is therefore able to interpret the Bible as strictly or loosely as he finds it necessary, and thus the Book no longer serve as an Authority on “truth.” Michael Grimwood points to the paradox of Ike's line of reasoning when Ike argues that the Bible transcends its own message. Grimwood notes that although Ike accepts the Bible's authority and quotes it to support his interpretations of history, he refuses to read it literally. Thus, according to Ike's logic the Bible “transcends mere literacy and overcomes all the normal barriers to communication” (Grimwood, 267). David H. Stewart also argues that Ike is seemingly irrational when he presents his highly subjective interpretation of the Bible and justifies his own selectiveness by stating to Cass that his version of “truth” cannot be contradicted or refuted because “the heart already knows,” thus Ike's truth is *the* truth (Stewart, 217).

The relationship between Ike and Cass and the tension that is growing between them in this scene is also symbolic of the growing tensions in the rest of their society. Thus Faulkner illustrates how the racial conflict is tearing people apart both in society at large as well as within the family unit. Through the character of Ike he illustrates the hopeless paradox of a conscientious, basically good descendant of plantation owners, born into a world already tainted. He is forced to carry the guilt and shame resulting from his ancestor's behaviour

knowing that there is nothing he can ever do that will undo the actions of his predecessors. For Ike, repudiating the property becomes a quick solution to this problem. It is a desperate attempt to ease his mind of the guilt that seems to overshadow everything. We understand that Ike himself is struggling to justify his own decision and rationally explain why he gives up the property. It is something he strongly feels in his heart that he has to do. He realizes, however, that doing so also means that he has to give up the close relationship he has with his cousin and foster father, as their views are incompatible: “the two of them juxtaposed and alien now to each other against their ravaged patrimony” (284). Although Cass has served as a father to Ike since he was a small child, and despite the fact that Cass is only sixteen years older, their views of the racial conflict and the issue of man’s right to own property are too different.

Edmund L. Volpe draws a comparison between Sam Fathers, whose different allegiances are revealed in his trinity of bloodlines, and Ike’s that is revealed in a trinity of fathers (Volpe, 241). According to Volpe, Ike’s biological father Buck is responsible for binding him to the past and the heritage of guilt, his cousin Cass is responsible for training him to assume the responsibilities of the plantation and white society, and Sam Fathers has the function of teaching Ike the code of the wilderness (Volpe, 241). Thus, his different allegiances represent a division in Ike, and he is torn between the different views and how to best handle the situation at the plantation. Consequently, although he has several father figures in his life, Ike in many ways lives his life as an orphan. Annette Bernert notes that none of the men in Ike’s life are the proper age for a father. Carothers himself was dead long before Ike was born, Buck and Sam died during his adolescence and they could chronologically be his grandfathers (Bernert, 283). Cass on his part is only sixteen years older than Ike and in many ways his peer. Therefore, Bernert argues, Ike has in a sense been fatherless all his life. As Ike and Cass are having their conversation it becomes apparent to both of them that their relationship will never again be the same, and Ike loses the last of his father figures.

Ike is so obsessed with escaping his heritage, that he is not susceptible to anything Cass has to say, as his mind is already made up. For Cass it becomes almost impossible to understand Ike’s motives. Ike has difficulties with explaining both to himself and to Cass why he chooses his course of action. His attempts to justify his decisions with the Bible therefore result in a rather contradicting line of reasoning, which is something Cass unsuccessfully tries to point out to Ike several times during their talk. Ike argues to Cass that God has turned his back on man because the human race has misused their freedom and abused his creation, but he insists at the same time that the very land is cursed as well. Ike describes the South as

already tainted when God—through Columbus—discovers America:

He saw the land already accursed even as Ikkemotubbe and Ikkemotubbe's father old Issetibbeha and old Issetibbeha's father too held it, already tainted even before any white man owned it by what Grandfather and his kind, his fathers, had brought into the new land ... and no hope for the land anywhere so long as Ikkemotubbe and Ikkemotubbe's descendants held it in unbroken succession ... (248).

According to Ike, the human beings' behaviour on the earth from time immemorial has brought a curse upon the South and it seems as if it is not just the people that are cursed, but the very soil that they live on. Ike believes that as long as people are claiming ownership to the land, it will forever be cursed. Ike is so desperate to be free, that he has managed to convince himself that he will escape the shame as long as he does not own any land or property. However, although Ike seems to point to the cursed land as the reason for his repudiation, both the reader and Cass understands that the question of ownership is not the only reason for his course of action. As Olga W. Vickery notes, "Isaac's withdrawal is in reality an attempt to evade both the guilt of his forefathers and his own responsibilities" (Vickery, 212). Thus, Ike in many ways seems to be more like his old grandfather than he would like to admit, something we learn that he worries about himself:

It was not a pause, barely a falter even, possible appreciable only to himself, as if he couldn't speak even to McCaslin, even to explain his repudiation, that which to him too, even in the act of escaping (and maybe this was the reality and the truth of his need to escape) was heresy: so that even in escaping he was taking with him more of that evil and unregenerate old man who could summon, because she was his property, a human being because she was old enough and female, to his widower's house and get a child on her and then dismiss her because she was of an inferior race, and then bequeath a thousand dollars to the infant because he would be dead then and wouldn't even have to pay it, than even he had feared (281).

Ike has made up his mind to repudiate his heritage, but at the same he has a frightful suspicion in the back of his mind that maybe the repudiation makes him more like his grandfather than if he had accepted the farm. Like Carothers who took no responsibility for his actions save for an empty gesture in his will, Ike in a sense refuses to accept responsibility for his heritage: by repudiating his title to the land he does not have to reflect on the consequences of his actions. He is only focused on his own escape. There seems to be an inconsistency between his overwhelming shame from the way his predecessors have treated the blacks and his reluctance to try to mend the situation. He does not do anything to help improve upon the conditions of his black relatives except by trying to give them Old Carothers' legacy; instead he turns his

back on the entire family and leaves the responsibilities to his cousin instead. Thus he is himself guilty of the same self-centred and egotistic behaviour. This is why David H. Stewart refers to Ike's course of action as a "Cop-Out." According to Stewart: "What he achieves is little more than cheap self- satisfaction, cheap because his urge is to gain peace and escape, which prevents him from finding solutions that really satisfy or that are really meaningful" (Stewart, 210).

It is consequently difficult to say whether Ike's decision to repudiate the farm is the result of good or bad morals. When the conversation between the cousins comes to an end, Cass makes one final attempt of trying to reason with Ike why he should accept his heritage, to which Ike replies "I am free" (285), free of his heritage. It does, however, prove to be not that simple for Ike. Although he has repudiated his title to the plantation and has made a point of not owning any land, Ike is not able to escape the curse after all. As Kiyoyuki Ono notes, Ike's freedom is self-contradictory from the start because the reality of both his past and the present continues to surround him and haunt his consciousness. Thus, like Fonsiba who displayed her inherited fear of the white patroller despite never having been a slave or witnessed slavery, Ike cannot escape the knowledge that has shaped him (Ono, 214). As R.W.B. Lewis describes Ike, as a "Christ-like person with some ineradicable Southern biases" (Lewis, 200). He can choose not to condone of the Southern traditions, but he cannot escape the prejudices and preconceptions of his mind. In the exchange between Cass and Ike, the latter's fate is foreshadowed by the anonymous narrator:

And that was all: 1874 the boy; 1888 the man, repudiated denied and free; 1895 and husband but no father, unwidowed but without a wife, and found long since that no man is ever free and probably could not bear it if he were (269).

The Curse of Man

One of the things Ike hoped to achieve with his repudiation was to break the cycle of his shameful heritage, and see to it that the curse would end with him. This way he wanted to make sure that he, at least, was not responsible for passing the guilt on to the next male member of the McCaslin branch, if ever he had a son of his own. Ironically enough, it turns out that the decision to repudiate his heritage instead proves to be the reason why he is never given a son. In a scene between Ike and his wife, Faulkner illustrates that the issue of inheritance also found its way into the most intimate spheres of the descendants' lives, into

the bedroom. We understand that although Ike has refused his patrimony before he gets married, his wife has a hope to someday be the wife of a plantation owner. Although she is aware of Ike's decision she approaches him one day, wanting to know when they will move to the plantation. He does not know what to answer her, and before he has a chance of replying, she undresses and asks him to take his clothes off too. We learn that it is the first time that she has allowed him to see her naked, and then she whispers to him:

“Promise:” and he

“Promise?”

“The farm....”

“No, I tell you. I wont. I cant. Never:” and still the hand and he said, for the last time...I cant. Not ever. Remember: and still the steady and invincible hand and he said Yes and he thought, *She is lost. She was born lost. We were all born lost* then he stopped thinking and even saying Yes, it was like nothing he had ever dreamed, let alone heard in mere man talking until after a no-time he returned and lay spent on the insatiate immemorial beach and again with a movement one time older than man she turned and freed herself ... ”And that's all. That's all from me. If this don't get you that son you talk about, it wont be mine:” lying on her side, her back to the empty rented room, laughing and laughing (300-301).

Ike's wife degrades herself as she is trying to trade off her own flesh for material gain, and the comparison to a prostitute seems obvious. She approaches Ike in an attempt to take advantage of him when he is in a vulnerable position without realizing that she is exploiting herself as well. Albert J. Devlin argues that Ike's wife covets the social position and financial security that ownership of the family plantation would bring. When it becomes clear to her that Ike will never claim his patrimony, she renounces the marriage (Devlin, 193). According to Devlin, it is the wife's thwarted social ambitions that lead to the critical scene of the marriage. He points to the tradition in the McCaslin family of conjoining economic and sexual motives, and he implies that the wife is only involved with Ike for material gain (Devlin, 193).

Although the woman undoubtedly seems to be occupied with Ike's heritage and their economy, there may be additional reasons for her seemingly calculating behaviour. Elisabeth Muhlenfeld provides a different perspective to the bedroom scene between Ike and his wife, and points to the social factors that influenced Ike's wife as well as Ike himself. Muhlenfeld argues that it is the wife's rural Southern background that makes her so preoccupied with the plantation. Being brought up in the country herself, she equates the ownership of land with home and security (Muhlenfeld, 202-203). To her, Muhlenfeld argues, Ike's refusal to take up his proper place constitutes the ultimate betrayal, and she is demoralized by the fact that her man chooses his romantic ideals over her very human needs, which is why she acts immorally

(Muhlenfeld, 203).

Ike is, however, acting just as immorally as his wife. We know that he becomes perfectly aware of his wife's false intentions. He has the presence to conclude that what she is doing is wrong, yet he makes no attempt to stop her. As such, the exploitation seems to be mutual in this scene. Despite her sexual advances Ike keeps repeating that he will not take back the farm, yet when he is approaching his sexual peak he gives in and reaches his climax with a "Yes." Thus, Ike is as guilty as his predecessors of letting his lust and appetite overshadow his morals. However, even as he utters the word "Yes," both Ike and his wife know that he really means "No," and his hypocrisy is once again underlined. Thus, knowing that he will never change his mind, Ike's wife laughs hysterically and states that he will never get another chance of making her pregnant. It seems that they will never have sex again, if he is not willing to provide her needs and get her the farm. This is how Ike ends up as "Uncle Ike."—"Uncle to half a county and father to no-one" (3). Ironically, it is Ike's desire to spare his future son of his family's shameful heritage that is ultimately the reason why he never has a son at all. It seems as if Ike is unable to escape the curse no matter which course of action he chooses. Once again Faulkner refers to the original sin when Ike thinks to himself "We were all born lost," and we are reminded of man's innate sinfulness—of which Ike becomes the perfect example.

Despite his insistent struggle to break away from his heritage, Ike does not seem to accomplish much for himself or anyone else. The repudiation of the property has forced him to live off the handouts of his cousin, but even worse, it has cost him his marriage and his unborn children. He has become completely isolated and obsessed with living as justly and righteously as he possibly can. Even more ironic is the fact that his decision to repudiate has accomplished nothing in terms of improving the situation for his black relatives. If anything, it could be argued to contribute to the increasing tensions between the black and white descendants on the McCaslin plantation because the control of the plantation is left to the female line of the family instead of the male line. Thus, for the following generations of Edmonds men, and for Lucas, Ike's repudiation only complicates their relationship. Eric J. Sundquist argues that Ike's repudiation depends on this paradox. His refusal to accept his heritage and control of the land and the freed slaves saves neither of them from the continuing curse. Instead it ensures that the white McCaslin blood will descend only through the distaff Edmonds line or the black Beauchamp line (Sundquist 1983, 135). Ike's refusal is consequently what gives Lucas the slight advantage over the Edmonds men that are nominally

his “masters,” and Sundquist explains: “it is that ascendancy, along with Ike’s tortured repudiation that expresses the South’s and Faulkner’s lingering obsession with the legitimizing power of paternal blood” (Sundquist 1983, 135). Thus, the only thing Ike seemingly achieves, it to mark his distance to old Carothers and prove that he has taken a moral stance that separates him from his ancestor. However, as Faulkner illustrates in the subsequent story of *Go Down, Moses*, when Ike becomes an old man it seems he has not accomplished even that. In “Delta Autumn,” we get a final look into the life of Isaac McCaslin where Faulkner lets us see how Ike’s ethics turned out.

“Delta Autumn” in many ways serves as a sequel to “The Bear.” The story revolves around the hunting trip that Ike himself expects to be his last. Ike is now a man well into his seventies, and the story begins as he sets off for camp with Roth Edmonds—Cass’s son—and a group of friends. The events take place in the year 1940, but it is noticeable that the relationship between the black and white characters is still very much like it was on Ike’s first hunting trip when he was only 10 years old. The black men are still the servants and workers, the ones who set up camp and cook the food, and the white men do still not interact with the black men socially. As the white men are gathered around the fire, Ike and Roth engage in a conversation on human nature. Roth claims that the only reason any man behaves is the threat of otherwise being punished; if there were no men with badges around, then man would have no moral scruples at all. Ike on the other hand suggests otherwise:

There are good men everywhere, at all times. Most men are. Some are just unlucky, because most men are a little better than their circumstances give them a chance to be. And I’ve known some that even the circumstances couldn’t stop (329).

We immediately recognise some of the self-righteousness that Ike displayed in his youth when he was on the hunt for his black cousins, when he says: “And I’ve known some that even circumstances couldn’t stop.” This may suggest that Ike has made peace with his life-choice, and is convinced that his repudiation was a selfless act, a display of good morals. It is now Roth, however, who expresses the view that man is immoral and sinful at heart. This view is of course in many ways verified by the transgressions of the white plantation owners and slave masters against their black slaves before the Emancipation. They were able to get away with sexual abuse, violence and even murder without having to pay the consequences.

Ike, on the other hand, is throughout his conversation with Roth expressing an attitude that contradicts his earlier preoccupation with original sin and predetermination. We are once again reminded of Ike’s inner struggle and the duality of his character. He seems to have

taken on a role of defending the inherent goodness of man, yet it does not lend him credibility. The big turning point of Ike's frame of mind takes place when he in his meeting with Roth's mulatto mistress is no longer able to keep up the façade he has created to convince both himself and his surroundings, that he is innocent and untainted by the racism of his forefathers. Annette Bernert notes that despite the fact that Ike sees his disinheritance as a repudiation of the sins of his forefathers, he does not overcome the attitudes which made those sins possible (Bernert, 185). When the younger men leave the camp one morning to go hunting, Roth approaches Ike with an envelope full of money. He asks Ike to give it to a woman he expects will show up sometime during the day, and to tell her that he said "No." It comes as a shock to Ike when he learns that Roth has fathered a child with a black woman—which Roth now refuses to take responsibility for. However, instead of directing his anger at Roth as we might expect him to do, he turns it on the black woman. What comes to the surface is a racism in Ike that was merely hinted at and only indirectly insinuated in the story of "The Bear":

"That's right. Go back North. Marry: a man in your own race. That's the only salvation for you—for a while yet, maybe a long while yet. We will have to wait. Marry a black man. You are young, handsome, almost white; you could find a black man who would see in you what you saw in him, who would ask nothing of you and expect less and get even less than that, if it's revenge you want. Then you will forget all this, forget it ever happened, that he ever existed—... "

"Old man," she said, "have you lived so long and forgotten so much that you don't remember anything you ever knew or felt or even heard about love?" (346).

Ike delivers a speech to the black woman that undermines everything he has sacrificed and fought to escape from the time he was sixteen. He proves that he possesses the same racist way of thinking and the prejudice that characterized his forefathers. With a mentality similar to that of his grandfather who sold bleaching-products to provide his black workers with the whitest possible in hair and skin, Ike notes that the woman is white and pretty enough to be a good catch for someone with a darker skin than she herself has. Thus, his statement serves to underline his prejudice against blacks and the attitude that the ones with white skin are superior compared to those with a darker skin. At the same time he automatically assumes that the woman seeks out Roth because she is looking for a man with *white* skin, and does not even consider the possibility that she may actually be in love with him. As such, he also undermines the black woman's emotional capability—which is the same line of thought that made his Uncle Buddy write in the family ledgers: "23 Jan 1833 'Who in hell ever heard of a niger drowning him self'" (256), unable to understand that Eunice could have the emotional

depth to drive herself into committing suicide. Ike even goes a bit further when he speaks of her possible vengeance, as if she could use her whiteness, her light-tanned skin, to make a black man feel inferior.

Thus, Ike, nearing his eightieth year, reveals a discriminatory and racist side of himself that belies the noble act of repudiation that shaped his entire life. As Eric J. Sundquist explains, when slavery was abolished new physiological theories were developed to keep the blacks in their social and economical place and defend against the threat of racial mixing (Sundquist 1983, 140). Sundquist argues that the threat of miscegenation came from the freed slaves rather than their masters, in a shocking reversal. Thus, the Negro was more than ever through the power of repression reduced to a “beast,” and the mulatto became the very symbol of the return and revenge of the blacks. Consequently, it made “the Negro” of the Jim Crow South something always to be kept at bay, often to be hunted down and killed, and at times to be made the object of ritual sacrifice (Sundquist 1983, 140).

When the woman asks Ike if he has lived so long that he has forgotten about love, we are reminded how lonely and solitary his life has really been. It is not that he has forgotten about love, but rather that he has never truly loved. As Davis notes, this is the major burden of Ike’s inheritance, his inability to love. The moral and ethical choices Ike has made through his life, has rendered him alone. Losing the people closest to him is the price he had to pay for his repudiation. Then, when the black woman arrives with the white man’s child on her arm, it is as if Ike’s heritage—the curse of his forefathers—finally catches up with him.

Edmund L. Volpe describes Ike’s reaction as almost instinctive, and sees the conflicting emotions in Ike as the confrontation between the natural man that he has nurtured through his relationship with Sam, and the product of his social conditioning; thus it becomes clear that he has not been able to eradicate his prejudice (Volpe, 250). It is as if all the guilt and shame he has spent all his life trying to escape is back to confront him in the shape of the black mother and her baby. We know that the guilt has its origin in Carothers’ sexual abuse of his black slave women, and his refusal to accept responsibility for his mixed-blood children. Now history repeats itself, as it is Roth’s mistress that is standing there with his mixed-blood child, and Ike has been given the task of sending the black woman away. As in the case of the \$1000 legacy that Carothers provided for Terrel, Roth is trying to pay his way out of the situation with an envelope full of money.

During the conversation between Ike and the woman, it turns out that the woman is in fact the granddaughter of Ike’s half-cousin James, the man he lost track of in Tennessee. Dorothy L. Denniston argues that although Isaac may have felt that he had grown to

understand his vision and given his repudiation substance, and tries to uphold this notion, Roth on the other hand makes no pretence about his social conditioning. Although he may have had real feelings for his black mistress, he knows that his social status will not permit him to marry her (Denniston, 41). It does not, on the other hand, prevent him from getting involved with the woman even though he knows that their relationship is futile. Thus, Roth is in many ways not just responsible of repeating Carothers pattern of abuse; he is also responsible of once again bringing the two different branches of the family tree back together again, reuniting the black and white bloodlines in the newborn baby. As such, the “curse” of the McCaslin family is starting all over again. The relationship between the black and white descendants in 1940 is therefore similar to what it was in the days of old Carothers himself, which makes Ike’s attempts of breaking the curse seem all in vain. Therefore, Ike’s life has now come full cycle. He has spent all his life trying to escape, but ironically enough, it seems as if he has been trying in vain to outrun what has been in his heart all along. When his emotions take control of him, he is right back where he did not want to be: the figure of the white, abusive, degrading Southern man that Ike so profoundly despises. Thus, it ends for Ike as it was foreshadowed: “no man is ever free” (269).

Through his portrayal of Ike, Faulkner explores why it becomes so difficult for the races to relate to one another. Because their cultural and social heritages are so different, they are incapable of understanding each others’ way of life. By placing the racial conflict in a historical context, Faulkner seeks to explain how the social conditions in the South could facilitate slavery and enable it to continue for more than two hundred years. He points to the delta economy and the plantation system and explains how it for the Southern white man represented an economic incentive for keeping slavery alive, despite its dehumanizing effect on both blacks and whites. Thus, by placing the conflict in a larger context and exploring the circumstances that created and maintained slavery, and served to extend racism and discrimination into the twentieth century, it seems as if some of Faulkner own thoughts are reflected in Ike when he says: “most men are a little better than their circumstances give them a chance to be” (329). However, it is important to point out that Faulkner by no means seems to justify the racist behaviour of the Southern white man, as may be seen in his critique of even such an idealistic and humane man as Ike. To Faulkner it is more a question of trying to shed light on the situation in order to understand how it could happen. It was not because the people of the South were a particularly immoral and depraved people but, as Faulkner tries to illustrate, they were fallible and corruptible, committing unforgivable acts against other human beings that served to define their interrelations in several succeeding generations.

CONCLUSION

My analysis of *Go Down, Moses* has primarily focused on how the black and white descendants of the McCaslin family have related to each other; how the racial conflict has affected life at the plantation; and how the social economy of the South has disrupted the family structure of both blacks and whites. In my view, "The Fire and The Hearth" constitutes a particularly interesting object of study because it views the tortuous family and race relations from both a black and white perspective. Through the eyes of Lucas the effects of white prejudice are revealed as they are experienced by the black man who due to his black blood has to suffer the violation of his marital rights and his male pride, at the hands of his white relatives.

A central point of my analysis has been to show that also the white men are marked by the conflict between social conventions and their relations with the other race. The conflict between the close and intimate relationships they share with their black relatives growing up, and the racial segregation in their society is what makes the Edmonds men so deeply conflicted and emotionally divided. As the social pattern of the South demands a separation of the races, the white men's love for their black relatives is rejected by society and consequently the white men in turn reject the blacks. Thus, Zack rejects Lucas, and Roth rejects Henry and his black Mammy. As a result, the Edmonds men have to live the rest of their lives paying the consequences as their heritage of shame and grief descends upon them. In degrading their black cousins from "foster brothers" to "niggers," they end up degrading themselves, and they are struck by the "curse of the South." As I have tried to show, however, the white men are not only separated from their black relatives, but they become so emotionally conflicted by the Southern way of life that they become unable to form close relationships to anyone around them. As we have seen with all the white men, they are alienated from their white family members as well, detached from their wives, their children, their mothers and their fathers. Consequently, they end up dysfunctional and isolated individuals. Thus, understanding the historical and social conditions that the characters of "The Fire and the Hearth" are faced with is essential to understanding the changing relationship between the races. The tradition of keeping mammies, the social economy of the plantation system and the strong belief in patriarchy serves to aggravate the already existing racial tension and contributes to an increasingly difficult relationship between the black and white characters in "The Fire and the Hearth."

In my discussion of the hunting narrative of “The Bear” I have explored the development of young Ike and the value of his “education” in the wilderness with Sam Fathers. The time he spends in the wilderness and the views of nature that he adopts from Sam allows Ike to step outside the boundaries of the social order and look at the Southern way of life from the perspective of an “outsider.” Although he sees the injustices that take place at the plantation and becomes more and more estranged from his own social and racial heritage, my analysis has tried to show that the division between the races is so deep that it penetrates even the closest of relationships. Consequently, the racial division makes it impossible for people to understand each other. The relationship between Ike and Sam perfectly illustrates the complexity and severity of the situation, when not even the two men—who relate to each other like father and son—are able to bridge their differences and see beyond the racial barriers. Consequently, Sam withdraws to a solitary, lonely existence in the woods where he does not have to play “the Negro.” It is not until the death of Old Ben, when Sam lies down to die with him, that Ike is able to understand the difficult conditions that his mentor was forced to live under. The fact that Ike is only able, in retrospect, to understand how devastating it was for Sam to live his life like a “Negro”—testifies to the inherent difficulties between the races. It is, however, the realization Ike has upon the death of Sam combined with the social values he has adopted from his training in the wilderness that leads to his repudiation and the events of the fourth section.

In the third and final chapter of my paper, I have explored the events of the fourth section of “The Bear” and the consequences of Ike’s discovery of the shame and grief of the family ledgers, his repudiation of his inheritance and his rejection of his heritage. In the discussions between Ike and Cass, Faulkner traces the complicated race relations through history, portraying past and present events and circumstances that have determined the development and outcome of the racial conflict. In my view, the exchange between Ike and Cass collapses as Ike tries to explain the reasons of his repudiation. His behaviour is both self-righteous and self-contradictory. My analysis of his way of relating to his relatives, James, Fonsiba and Lucas, and perhaps particularly Fonsiba’s husband clearly illustrates that he is unable to free himself from his social conditioning. As Thadious M. Davis also observes: “Ike can only acknowledge by repudiation, he cannot escape” (Davis, 147). Although Ike’s intentions may be good, namely to help his black relatives, easing his own bad conscience is the only thing he achieves: his actions fail to improve on the unjust social conditions of the blacks, and Ike proves himself unable to free himself from racial prejudice.

A main objective of my reading of “The Fire and the Hearth” and “The Bear” has been to trace the relationships between the black and white characters of *Go Down, Moses* through history as the storylines describe events from between the years of the 1830’s and into the 1940’s. Thus, the history of the South and the development in the lives of Faulkner’s characters serve to complement and support each other. As illustrated through the relationships between the black and white descendants at the McCaslin plantation, the race relations in the Jim Crow South grow increasingly worse. Despite the fruitful promise of the Emancipation Proclamation and the Amendments to the Constitution, blacks and whites remained bound together by mutual dependency engendered by the Southern economy and the plantation system. As Faulkner seeks to illustrate, the plantation economy combined with the Southern white man’s refusal to give up his superiority proved devastating for the South and for the relationship between the races.

Through its close reading of Faulkner’s two novellas, my study reveals above all that the racial division also creates a division within the McCaslin descendants, regardless of colour, as they are struggling to find the balance between their racial heritages and their social conditioning. As argued, Lucas is able to overcome his struggle with identity by placing his confidence in his manhood and paternal heritage instead of measuring it by his race. Interestingly enough, although the whites are experiencing the difficulties from a position of advantage, they are nonetheless subjected to the same psychodynamics and suffer similar effects as their black relatives. Due to the tradition of keeping mammies, the white core-family is divided and disrupted and the white children grow up with no clear role models, and absent parents. The men are in many ways also alienated from the women due to their strong belief in the power of paternal blood. Consequently, as illustrated by my reading of the characters of the Edmonds branch, they grow up dysfunctional and isolated individuals that seem incapable of forming lasting relationships to women or experience love. And then there is Ike, whose fate is perhaps the most tragic of all the white men. What separates Ike from the other McCaslin men is that he believes himself to be different, and that he has managed to break away from his shameful heritage. He sacrifices his relationship with Cass, loses his wife and his unborn son and lives off the handouts of his cousin and the Major, all this in order to live his life free of guilt and without sin. However, as he is faced with Roth’s mulatto mistress, it turns out that not even Ike is able to escape his heritage of racism and that his gospel of redressing past sins turns out to be mainly a matter of self-delusion.

The problem Ike and his relatives have with freeing themselves from the past is

symptomatic of the problems that the entire country was faced with after the Emancipation. Eric J. Sundquist notes the importance of the fourth section of “The Bear,” and the complex structure of the narrative in this section. Sundquist draws a parallel between the collapse in the narrative and the collapse in the relationship between the blacks and whites in America (Sundquist 1990, 158). According to Sundquist, while the nation had previously been divided into “half-free, half-slave,” it was in the 1940’s when Faulkner wrote *Go Down, Moses*, divided into black and white. As Sundquist further notes, as the nation was faced with different challenges pertaining to the black people’s struggle for civil rights neither blacks or whites were able to free themselves of the past and the heritage of slavery served to uphold the racial division (Sundquist 1990, 158). The fact that the shameful history of slavery has never been properly acknowledged or “expiated “ in the South, is one of the reasons why the division between the races was allowed to remain a problem in the US. As argued in my previous discussion of the character of Roth, the experience of loss that Roth suffers when he loses his Mammy and his closest friend Henry is, in my view, similar to the social dynamics that takes place in the US after the Civil War. As the “loss of innocence” in America and the devastating history of slavery and the sexual abuse of fellow human beings were never grieved, the blacks and whites were left unable to free themselves from the legacy of the past. Also in this sense slavery became, as Faulkner himself would argue, the curse of the land.

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