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THE INFLUENCE AND EFFECT OF THE RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS ON THE ANTI-HERO IN THE MODERN SOUTHERN NOVEL

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by

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INTRODUCTION

Robert Penn Warren has written, "if there is no past there can be no self."[1] For Southern novelists of the twentieth century, the burden of history has come forward in characters who attempt to reconcile their inner conflicts. Their very purpose in life is to prove the truth of what Louis D. Rubin calls the historical sense:

> the assumption that what human beings have done in time is meaningful and that men are creatures of time and are molded by what has transpired before them, rests absolutely upon the conviction of the importance of what men can achieve; for if human life ultimately means nothing, and if there are no values which transcend the requirements of the moment, then the past is indeed a bucket of ashes, and only what is, and not how it came to be or what it may someday turn out to be, is of any interest.[2]

The search for an understanding of his past is the Southerner's search for himself. Until the Civil War, while the North pursued industry, the South remained steadfast in its codes of honor, politics, economics, and religion. Although it never created a Church, the South possessed its own unique brand of piety, defined by Richard Weaver as "an attitude of reverence or acceptance toward some overruling

order or some deeply founded institution which the mere individual is not to tamper with,"[3] toward the Tradition that the ante-bellum society had set up and followed for so many years.

A chasm developed with the South's defeat in 1865. Its traditional way of life was virtually destroyed, and the one element that could have perhaps restored it or, according to Allen Tate, even prevented defeat in the first place--a Church[4]--did not exist. With Reconstruction came the pains of rebuilding, but more often than not the real agony lay in tearing down what little of the old lifestyle the War had left standing. Congressional Reconstruction lasted only until 1877, but in life and literature the reconstruction continues as Southern writers strive through the great themes of life--love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice, as Faulkner listed them--to reconcile the conflicting forces that originated with the War.

These conflicts can be profitably examined through a study of the literary religious consciousness. Despite their differences in plot, time, setting, and theme, the six novels with which I have chosen to work share a pattern of dual influence in which one character is caught between the forces of two other characters or, in one case, ideas; and herein lies the distinction between the terms <u>hero</u> and <u>anti-hero.</u> A hero, as I would define it here, is one who, by virtue of his unshakable allegiance to some tradition or idea or god, is capable of action; he derives the very pur-

pose of his being from that in which he believes. An anti-hero is a character who views the heroes to either side of him, but who, knowing both their virtues and their faults, cannot commit himself to what either of them stands for; and he is thus unable to act in any significant manner.

The first five novels that I intend to discuss place their anti-heroes between a father or guardian and another character who vies for that position. The heroes retain a belief in something, but they never realize the nature of their beliefs. The anti-hero, on the other hand, realizes the beliefs that provide the others with their capacity for action but cannot himself believe in anything, and he is acutely aware of this dilemma. This awareness is the religious consciousness.

The sixth novel sets the anti-hero between two ideas rather than characters, but his inability to adapt himself to either of them is typical. I include the novel as a test for my basic thesis.

Except for the work mentioned above, I have placed the novels in order of their fictional times to create a sort of imaginary history that will show a distinct growth of the anti-hero as he moves farther away from the Civil War.

In Allen Tate's The Fathers (1860), the narrator, Lacy Buchan, exists between his father, Major Lewis Buchan, and his brother-in-law, George Posey. His task is to resolve the differences between the Southern Tradition in which ritual exists for its own sake and the traditionless

society of the practical business world in which ritual is despised as meaningless. In relating the events fifty years after they have occurred, Lacy demonstrates his continuing inability to resolve his inner conflict.

All the King's Men (Robert Penn Warren) is set in 1937. Jack Burden, the narrator, lives under the dual influence of his father, Judge Monty Irwin, and his employer and friend, Governor Willie Stark--between a respect for and dependence upon the old codes of honor and politics and a total disregard, even contempt for them. Jack, a historian, knows both tradition and political method but cannot give himself over to either one or the other. Interestingly, Jack does not learn that the Judge is his father until well past the halfway point in his narrative. It is his discovery of this fact that, in the end, aids him in recognizing his responsibility to act.

Flannery O'Connor's short novel, The Violent Bear It Away, is set in 1951. Young Francis Marion Tarwater struggles to understand the uncompromising religious convictions of his great-uncle, Old Tarwater (his guardian), and the violent demonism of his uncle, George Rayber. He lives in a state of alternating love and resentment of Christ until he receives a revelation.

Williston Barrett of The Last Gentleman (Walker Percy) is the last son of a distinguished Mississippi family. He attempts to come to terms with his father's suicide at the same time that he tries to figure out his fascination for

his fiancee's brother, Dr. Sutter Vaught. His search for some answers takes him from New York City to New Mexico as well as to other places where, the narrator tells us, he has been before the novel opens. The story takes place during 1964.

The anti-hero of Percy's Love in the Ruins is Dr. Thomas More who lives between the Catholic tradition so adamantly adhered to by his ancestor, Sir Thomas More, and so meaninglessly followed by his father, and the scientific atheism of his friend and colleague, Dr. Max Gottlieb. This novel is set in 1983; and it is interesting to note that the heroes who represent scientific method are as secure in their beliefs as Major Buchan is in his Tradition. Since Tom's father is the victim of the destruction of the Tradition, it is left for Tom to reach back beyond him to Sir Thomas More for the purity of Tradition that Lacy Buchan finds first-hand.

Of the six novels, only William Faulkner's Wild Palms evades the neat triangular hero/anti-hero classification. While Harry Wilbourne is unquestionably an anti-hero as I have defined it, there is no heroic father to conflict with a would-be father; there are only custom and convention set against passion and impulse. There can be no reconciliation for him because there is little for him to choose from. But in the same manner that several of the other anti-heroes achieve a sort of heroism, so, too, does Wilbourne in his quasi-triumph over the people who would have him dead for his

killing of Charlotte Rittenmeyer. Wild Palms is set in 1937, but I have removed it from the chronological sequence for the reasons explained earlier.

The six novels conclude with the impression that man cannot live merely in the realm of the Tradition or of Science, but must combine the old with the new to retain his ability and willingness to change as he becomes more aware of the worlds behind and before him. This examination of the Southern religious consciousness is an attempt to demonstrate how, through literature, he may come to save himself.

NOTES

[1] Robert Penn Warren, "Poetry and Selfhood" in Democracy and Poetry (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 56.

[2] Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "Second Thoughts on the Old Grey Mare," Southern Fiction Today, Ed. George Core (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1969), p. 39.

[3] Richard M. Weaver, "Aspects of the Southern Philosophy," Southern Renascence, Ed. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., and Robert D. Jacobs (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1953), p. 20.

[4] Allen Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," I'll Take My Stand (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1930), p. 174.

I

Lacy Buchan's desire to understand his father and George Posey is his desire to determine what went wrong back in 1860. He realizes that he cannot ever recapture emotions and events, for, he notes, "In my feelings about that time there is a new element--my feelings now about that time" (The Fathers, p. 22), but this new element is what makes the novel's action significant.

The Buchan family lives properly and successfully within the old Southern codes of honor, politics, economics, and religion, but their involvement in a formal community ironically allows them an impersonality toward others. "Asking after" a neighbor's family, for instance, implies no true concern on the part of the inquirer but is, rather, a move by a player in an intricate game of honor and dignity. Other moves include the jousting tournament in which all of the young gentlemen participate in hopes of bringing honor to their ladies; the ceremonial funeral of Mrs. Buchan; the formal disowning by Major Buchan, a Unionist, of his secessionist son, Semmes; and the Major's retention of many slaves on a plantation that no longer needs them. The Buchan's life is "final; there could be no other, there never had been any other way of life--which is . . . a way of saying that people living in formal societies . . . can imagine for themselves only a timeless existence: they themselves

never had any origin anywhere and they can have no end, but will go on forever" (p. 183).

The Posey family, on the other hand, lives without this Tradition. George Posey "was a man without people or place; he had strong relationships and he was capable of passionate feeling, but it was all personal" in a time when nothing was personal (p. 179); he remains constantly outside of the Buchan family even though he marries into it. When, upon arriving at Pleasant Hill, George fails to pay his respects to the Buchan ladies; when he drops the wreath of flowers into Susan Buchan's lap instead of crowning her as queen of the tournament; when he informs the Major that he "intends" to marry his daughter; and when he gallops away before Mrs. Buchan's funeral, Major Buchan is utterly perplexed as to how he should handle the other man. When he levels an insult at George which, Lacy observes, "would have blasted off the earth most of the people I knew" (p. 34), George does not even notice. Following Mrs. Buchan's burial, George returns to Pleasant Hill, and indicating the mourners as they march from the cemetary, he tells Lacy, "'They do nothing but die and marry and think about the honor of Virginia.' He rammed his hands into his pockets and shouted: 'I want to be thrown to the hogs. I tell you I want to be thrown to the hogs!'" and looking up at him Lacy sees "what can only be called fear" (p. 107). Later, at a muster parade, Lacy holds George's horse as he listens to the patriotic speeches

and once again remembering his brother-in-law's anguish, explains:

> You will understand, of course, that the honor of Virginia meant something to me; yet for that instant my experience had been like a dream; words that would ordinarily have moved me as it had moved the crowd, to shouts and tears, had been far away, and I knew what it was to be apart from the emotions that all men shared; I suppose I came nearer, there in the street holding his mare, to seeing the world through George Posey's eyes than I had ever come before (pp. 162-63).

A younger version of Major Buchan is his son, Semmes, who is George's closest friend. Their friendship is an exchange, each giving the other what he lacks. George provides Semmes with "mystery and imagination, the heightened vitality possessed by a man who knew no bounds." Besides his sister, Semmes gives George "what the Posey's had lost: an idea, a cause, an action in which his personality could be extinguished," the Civil War (p. 179). But the exchange fails, and Semmes is finally shot by George; in killing the Negro who supposedly abused his fiancée and George's young sister, Jane, Semmes dies a victim of his own honor. George, in killing his friend, acts,not out of compassion for the slave, his half-brother, but out of contempt for Semmes, just as he had left Mrs. Buchan's funeral out of contempt for "the forms of death which were, to [the Buchans], only

the completion of life, and in which there could be nothing personal, but in which what we were deep inside found a sufficient expression" (p. 23). The difference between the formal and formless societies lies, in part, in the heroes' reactions to the things around them. Whereas George's personal involvement gives way to violence, Semmes' detachment permits him "no personal resentment . . . and no anger, only a feeling like anguish" (p. 210) when, for example, his father disowns him.

George is personal in his religious life, too. His Catholicism fascinates Lacy who marvels "in Protestant ignorance [at] the mysterious Church that never changed for peace or war" (p. 196). Throughout The Fathers, the nuns and priests, the convent, and everything associated with them remains as secret as George Posey himself. Lacy never enters the convent, just as neither he nor anyone else ever enters George's mind; Lacy's awe of the Church lies, perhaps, in his respect for a tradition which, unlike his own, can withstand both war and peace.

As Lacy attempts to decipher the meaning of his life, he thinks of his own birth as "a shameful and terrible thing that I could not reconcile with the perfection of my father's character" (p. 43); and his search for the key to his inner conflict leads him to study the nature of good and evil as they exist both in the Tradition and outside of it. In trying to define evil, he works through the senses of sight and hearing. He explains:

> To hear the night, and to crave its coming, one must have deep inside one's secret being a vast metaphor controlling all the rest: a belief in the innate evil of man's nature, and the need to face that evil, of which the symbol is the darkness, of which again the living image is man alone. Now that men cannot be alone, they cannot bear the dark, and they see themselves as innately good but betrayed by circumstances that render them pathetic (p. 219).

Although a great deal of this novel's significant action takes place at night, I will mention only two incidents and discuss a third, for they are the only incidents in which George, unconsciously trying to define his own evil, appears at night.

The first occurs when he directs Lacy, Semmes, and the slave, who supposedly attacked Jane Posey, to the ledge overlooking the river where Semmes kills the Negro and George kills Semmes. The second occurs when he and Lacy ride to Bull Run to join the Confederate troops. The third and most important event takes place at dusk. George has killed his enemy, John Langton, at Manassas and has been sent, along with Lacy, away from the lines; they ride to Pleasant Hill only to discover the people gone and the house burned to the ground. In probing the Buchans' neighbor, Jim Higgins, to tell them what happened, George remains steady in the face of the unritualistic disaster. He looks at the Major's grave, at the charred house; but when Higgins presents the rope

with which Major Buchan, in a final act of honor, hanged himself, George looks away, unable to tolerate the sight of the instrument of the honor he so despises. After he mounts his mare and waits for Lacy, the boy notices that George speaks with his head cocked "as if he were trying to hear something far away" (p. 306). His attempt to hear the approaching night (evil), however, is futile; instead, he "peered through the falling dusk at the tangled garden, at the dim chimney, at the black place where the cedars began" (p. 306). He sees what he has always seen: the practical, concrete things that form his world; and so he canters back to Georgetown to resume his life, to act as he has always acted. For Lacy, however, there is no clear choice. The Tradition, at least for the Buchan family, has been destroyed, and he cannot follow George. He turns again to Manassas to "go back and finish it. I'll have to finish it because [George] could not. It won't make any difference if I am killed. If I am killed it will be because I love him more than I love any man" (p. 306). The tense change from past to present indicates that, fifty years later, Lacy Buchan still has not "finished it."

II

All the King's Men presents a conflict similar to that of The Fathers. Like George Posey, Governor Willie Stark is committed to practical business and politics and shows little respect for the old codes or for what they represent. Judge Irwin, on the other hand, is, like Major Buchan, a man possessed with honor and dignity; and Jack Burden, a former student of history, knows both but, until the end, understands the significance of neither. From the beginning he claims that he is "a brass-bound Idealist" whereby "it does not matter what you do or what goes on around you because it isn't real anyway" (p. 30); thus "you cannot lose what you have never had . . . you are never guilty of a crime which you did not commit" (p. 311). Jack's real investigation, therefore, is not of Cass Mastern or of Judge Irwin but, through them, of himself.

Again, we can work through the natures of good and evil to examine the dual influence of the heroes on the anti-hero. Willie believes in the innate evil of man: "'Man is conceived in sin and born in corruption and he passeth from the stink of the didie to the stench of the shroud,'" he tells Jack and adds, when the latter doubts that he will be unable to discover any corruption in the Judge's character, "'There is always something'" (p. 49). To Judge Irwin himself, Willie remarks:

> "Dirt's a funny thing. Come to think of it, there ain't a thing but dirt on this green God's globe except what's under the water, and that's dirt too. It's dirt makes the grass grow. A diamond ain't a thing in the world but a piece of dirt that got awful hot. And God-A-Mighty picked up a handful of dirt and blew on in and made you and me and George Washington and mankind blessed in faculty and apprehension. It all depends on what you do with the dirt" (p. 45).

Willie intends to create goodness out of the power that he has himself gained from the corruption instigated by one political faction when they set him up as a gubernatorial candidate merely to split the vote of another faction. To create that goodness, however, he employs evil of his own devising: sending Jack out to gather information on the Judge and giving the corrupt Gummy Larson the contract to the Willie Stark Hospital, among other things. For Willie believes that ends are more important than means; he believes in what Jack calls "the theory of the moral mutability of history," that "process as process is neither morally good nor morally bad. We may judge results but not process. The morally bad agent may perform the deed which is good. The morally good agent may perform the deed which is bad. Maybe a man has to sell his soul to get the power to do good" (pp. 393-94). But in acquiring the power to do good, whether he sells his soul or not--and I believe that he does--Willie

gains the ability to discern good from evil and the power to destroy the evil should he so choose. He does not. It is ironic indeed that the schoolhouse which initially gave Willie his reputation as an honest politician collapsed from its faulty physical construction and that the Willie Stark Hospital collapses from its idealistically faulty construction.

Dr. Adam Stanton, Jack's boyhood friend and a younger version of Judge Irwin, provides another contrast to Willie. A Southern gentleman in the traditional sense, he impersonally dedicates his life to destroying pain and suffering, the natural evils. Unlike his father, a former governor, he avoids politics and the corruption therein, and so he at first turns down the position as director of the hospital that Willie offers him. But Jack, thorough investigator that he is, presents Adam with evidence that Governor Stanton once covered up a bribe for his friend, Judge Irwin, and in so doing inadvertantly caused a man's suicide; Adam, repulsed and shocked by the evil hidden in his own honorable family, finally accepts the position; and when he and Willie meet to discuss the details, they also theorize on the nature of good and evil. Willie says:

> "You can't inherit goodness from anybody. You got to make it, Doc. If you want it. And you got to make it out of badness. Badness. And you know why, Doc? . . . Because there isn't anything else to make it out of. . . . "

> Adam wet his lips and said, "There is one question I should like to ask you. It is this. If, as you say, there is only the bad to start with, and the good must be made from the bad, then how do you know what the good is? How do you even recognize the good? Assuming you have made it from the bad. Answer me that."
>
> "Easy, Doc, easy," the Boss said.
>
> "Well, answer it."
>
> "You just make it up as you go along" (p. 257).

Willie emphasizes the fact that as society changes, so does its interpretations of the law and of good and evil. Superficially, perhaps, he is correct in assuming that social values change with the times; he never realizes, however, that there are certain unchanging human values--as demonstrated by the Cass Mastern narrative, Jack's detached biography about a young man who learned about life before and during the Civil War as taken from his journal and his letters to his brother. Cass's is the story of a man "'born . . . into circumstances of poverty'" (p. 161) but rescued and educated by the older brother, Gilbert. While at college, Cass "'learned what was to be learned from the gaming table, the bottle, and the racecourse and from the illicit sweetness of the flesh'" (p. 164) and learned also of the incomprehensible interrelationship of seemingly unrelated events. During his affair with his best friend, Duncan Trice's wife, Annabelle, Cass feels neither shame nor guilt, but after

Trice's suicide and burial, Cass meets Annabelle in the summerhouse and realizes that their physical and emotional "coldness" toward each other "'was the final horror of the act which we performed, as though two dolls should parody the shame and filth of man to make it doubly shameful'" (p. 174). When the incident develops further to include Annabelle's slave, Phebe, who discovers Trice's wedding ring on her mistress' pillow where he had placed for his wife's eyes--and knowledge--alone, and is sold down the river because Annabelle cannot stand to live with the girl's reproachful gaze, Cass begins to understand the far-reaching effects of his sin: "'it was as though the vibration set up in the whole fabric of the world by my act had spread infinitely and with ever increasing power and no man could know the end'" (p. 178). When Annabelle rejects him, Cass is left with nothing except the knowledge of his own guilt; he then sets his slaves free, leases his plantation, and goes death-seeking into the Civil War, not dying until the siege at Atlanta.

Throughout his journal, Cass attempts to understand the nature of the evil he caused. Although he places some blame on circumstance, he, unlike Willie, realizes that he is himself responsible for this evil. He questions why "'the world is full of good men . . . and yet the world drives hard into the darkness and blindness of blood . . . and I am moved to ask the meaning of our virtue'" (p. 186). The more he probes the nature of good and evil, the stronger his belief in God grows, for he does not "'question the

Justice of God, that others have suffered for my sin, for it may be that only by the suffering of the innocent does God affirm that men are brothers'" (p. 187). Although at this point in the novel Jack does not realize the significance of the Mastern narrative, he ironically summarizes:

> Cass Mastern lived for a few years and in that time he learned that the world is all of one piece. He learned that the world is like an enormous spider web and if you touch it, however lightly, at any point, the vibration ripples to the remotest perimeter and the drowsy spider feels the tingle and is drowsy no more but springs out to fling the gossamer coils about you who have touched the web and then inject the black, numbing poison under your hide. It does not matter whether or not you meant to brush the web of things. Your happy foot or your gay wing may have brushed it ever so lightly, but what happens always happens and there is the spider, bearded black and with the great faceted eyes glittering like mirrors in the sun, or like God's eye, and the fangs dripping (pp. 188-89).

The human values which Cass violates are violated also by Willie Stark some sixty years later, but Jack is too concerned with his theories and Idealism and facts at first to connect the endless flow of human responsibility from one age to another. The supposed irrelevance of the Mastern story to the Stark-Burden one is heightened by the change

in narrator from first person to third, at which time Jack separates himself from other men as well as from himself. He denies any responsibility he may have for the Mastern biography by laying aside the project, "not because he could not understand, but because he was afraid to understand for what might be understood there was a reproach to him" (p. 189). Like Cass, Jack must learn for himself the violent results of evading responsibility.

The process of learning and the deadliness of knowledge both intrigue and repel Jack. When, for example, he visits Judge Irwin to inform him that he has discovered the bribe, the one flaw on the Judge's otherwise impeccable record, he thinks how easy it would be to pretend his call is social and leave without telling this man, his lifelong friend, of what he has found. But:

> Even as the thought of going away without knowing came through my head, I knew that I had to know the truth. For the truth is a terrible thing. You dabble your foot in it and it is nothing. But you walk a little farther and you feel it pull at you like an undertow or a whirlpool. First there is the slow pull so steady and gradual you scarcely notice it, then the acceleration, then the dizzy whirl and plunge to blackness. For there is a blackness of truth, too. They say it is a terrible thing to fall into the Grace of God. I am prepared to believe that (p. 343).

Judge Irwin's calm acceptance of the findings and his refusal to tell Jack the one thing he knows would prevent Jack from reporting those findings to Willie--that he, the Judge, is Jack's father--is in keeping with his honorable character. When he kills himself, therefore, it is done with a bullet through the heart as an act of honor to save both himself and his son.

When Jack's single act of investigating Judge Irwin leads directly to the Judge's death and indirectly to Adam Stanton's and Willie's, he comes to accept the common bond between men. He thinks of Willie, corrupt though he is, as "a great man," for in doing so he can "think better of all other people and of myself. At the same time that I could more surely condemn myself" (p. 427). He realizes not that "the Truth shall make you free" (p. 260) but that it most assuredly shackles him to others. His non-committal attitude toward life changes: he marries Anne Stanton and sets out once again to finish the biography of Cass.

Most importantly he learns to accept the huge responsibility to Truth. After he has "dug up the truth" on Irwin, he finds that "the truth always kills the father, the good and weak one or the bad and strong one, and you are left alone with yourself and the truth" (p. 354); and it is not easy to live with this truth. There are two final tests of Jack's character growth that demonstrate his rise from the position of anti-hero to that of hero. The first occurs when Jack faces Sugar-Boy, Willie's chauffeur and body-

guard, after Willie has been killed by Adam and Adam by Sugar-Boy. Jack, having discovered that the lieutenant governor, Tiny Duffy, told Adam of Anne Stanton's affair with Willie knowing that Adam would attempt to defend his sister's virtue, stands before Sugar-Boy undecided as to whether he should tell him, knowing that Sugar-Boy will find Duffy and kill him:

> He would do it, I knew he would do it. And it was such a joke on Duffy I almost laughed out loud. And as the name of Duffy flashed across my mind I saw Duffy's face, large and lunar and sebaceous, nodding at me as at the covert and brotherly appreciation of a joke, and even as I opened my lips to speak the syllables of his name, he winked. He winked right at me like a brother (p. 420).

Jack does not tell Sugar-Boy. The final test of Jack's maturity occurs when his mother asks him if the Judge, the only man she ever loved, killed himself to "'get out of a jam'" (p. 431); and Jack tells her only that the Judge was concerned over his failing health.

With Jack's realization that all men share a common bond through their humanity comes the realization, too, that all of time is connected. At first he believes, along with his Idealism, that "the dead in the past never lived before our definition gave them life" (p.228). When he first begins work on the Mastern papers, he treats Cass and Annabelle and Trice almost as if they were fictitious even though he

sees every day the picture of Cass, the journal, and Trice's gold wedding ring. When he begins to consider the fact of their reality, he abandons the project; just as Annabelle and Cass could not bear to live with their slaves' accusing eyes, Jack cannot "bear to live with the cold-eyed reproach of the facts" (p. 157). But because he is a historian subconsciously haunted by the past, Jack learns to gaze back into the face of the facts--though not until he has caused the deaths of Judge Irwin, Adam Stanton, and Willie Stark.

As Jack begins his detached narrative of Cass, he explains almost apologetically why he feels compelled to include that story in the one he has set out to tell of Willie: "Not that the first excursion has anything directly to do with the story of Willie Stark, but it has a great deal to do with the story of Jack Burden, and the story of Willie Stark and the story of Jack Burden are, in one sense, one story" (p. 157). He comes to understand that "no story is ever over, for the story which we think is over is only a chapter in a story which will not be over" (p. 355), the story of man. The Mastern narrative did not end when Cass died, for Jack writes the next section, nor did the story of Irwin's bribe end with Governor Stanton's concealment of it, for Jack writes the next chapter to that one, too. Willie's story continues as Tiny Duffy inherits his office and continues its corruption. Jack realizes his responsibility to all of these stories, and he accepts the past not so much for

what it was as for what it may turn out to be. He learns, when he has killed Judge Irwin as surely as Cass killed Duncan Trice, that what he does not know about the past, in this case that the Judge was his father, is perhaps even more important than what he does know; that the Judge's honor is as much a part of him (Jack) as Willie's practical use of evil is; and how "if you could not accept the past and its burden there was no future, for without one there cannot be the other, and how if you could accept the past you might hope for the future, for only out of the past can you make the future" (p. 435). He accepts, in the end, "the awful responsibility of Time" (p. 438) both in its terrible and its unrevealed connotations.

III

Francis Marion Tarwater of The Violent Bear It Away attempts to resolve the inner conflict that is caused by his great-uncle, Old Tarwater, and his uncle, George Rayber. When the novel begins, we are informed that the old man has just died and that Tarwater, who is supposed to be digging his grave, is drunk and under the influence of a "stranger," an inner voice planted by the devil. The stranger urges the boy to defy his great-uncle's request for a proper burial by burning the body (and the house in which it sits) and dares him not to see the practicality of the suggestion. Tarwater, made vulnerable by the absence of the old man's saintly influence, sets fire to the house, without knowing that a Negro neighbor, Buford, has already buried the remains, a fact which becomes important later. At the stranger's bidding, the boy sets out for the city in which Rayber lives, and since Rayber is the stranger personified, the voice inside Tarwater disappears when he confronts his uncle, only to return again when Tarwater goes back to Powderhead.

The influences of Old Tarwater and Rayber on Tarwater are, until the end, fairly equal. The old man has taught him both the history of the human race from the time of Adam and the personal history of George Rayber, and has instructed him in the teachings of the prophets and of Christ. Tarwater's own past is a thing of pride for him; the fact that

he was born at the scene of the automobile accident which killed his mother and led to his father's suicide convinces him of the inevitability of his becoming a prophet; similarly, he knows that "escaping school was the surest sign of his election" (p. 313). At the same time, he resents the influence of Old Tarwater and the Lord over him; he feels, "with a certain, undeniable knowledge [,] that he [is] not hungry for the bread of life" (p. 315), and he is horrified to learn that when he dies, he, like his great-uncle, "will hasten to the banks of the Lake of Galilee to eat the loaves and fishes that the Lord had multiplied" (p. 315) forever.

Rayber's evil influence is almost as strong as Old Tarwater's good one. His one loyalty is to psychology, and when Tarwater appears at his door the night following his great-uncle's death, Rayber determines to cure him of the other's influence. But the boy, forewarned by Old Tarwater who was himself the victim of Rayber's studies, refuses to take part in any psychological games: "'I'm outside your head,'" he tells Rayber. "'I ain't in it. I ain't in it and I ain't about to be'" (p. 371). Rayber, however, continues to observe his nephew as he takes him to museums, parks, restaurants, and all manner of places to which Tarwater has never been taken before and has no desire to be taken now.

Part of Rayber's determination to rid Tarwater of the old man's influence derives from his belief that he has himself shaken off the other's influence. Kidnapped by Old Tarwater at the age of seven, Rayber learned for the first

time that "his true father was the Lord . . . and that he would have to lead a secret life in Jesus until the day came when he would be able to bring the rest of his family around to repentance. [Old Tarwater] had made him understand that on the last day it would be his destiny to rise in glory in the Lord Jesus" (p. 341). Unlike Tarwater, Rayber rejects the goodness with which the old man enlightens him and commits what one character in Love in the Ruins will call "'the sin for which there is no forgiveness'": "'The sin against grace. If God gives you the grace to believe in him and love him and you refuse, the sin will not be forgiven you'" (Love in the Ruins, p. 373). He confines himself within the limited realm of scientific method and chooses not to believe in God, although he does think that God exists [he believes that Bishop, his idiot child, "was formed in the image and likeness of God" (p. 392)]. Thus, he also will not believe in religious ritual, especially that of baptism. He demonstrates the meaninglessness of the rite when, after Old Tarwater has properly baptized the baby Tarwater, Rayber blasphemously repeats the baptismal words as he pours water over the infant's bottom, and comments, "'Now Jesus has a claim on both ends'" (p. 347). He refuses to allow Bishop's baptism "'as a gesture of human dignity'" (p. 323) because he does not believe that the child can be reborn.

But Rayber's innate evil is limited by his "terrifying love" for his son. Bishop, who physically resembles Old

Tarwater, arouses Rayber's fear; his love is "love without reason, love for something futureless, love that appeared to exist only to be itself. . . . It . . . covered everything his reason hated. He always felt with it a rush of longing to have the old man's eyes . . . turned on him once again" (p. 372). When Rayber attempts to drown Bishop, he finds that he cannot, for he "could control his terrifying love as long as it had its focus in Bishop, but if anything happened to the child he would have to face it in itself" (p. 410). As Tarwater drowns him, Rayber hears his screams through his hearing aid: "The machine made the sounds seem to come from inside him as if something in him were tearing itself free. . . . No cry must escape him, the one thing he knew, the one thing he was certain of was that no cry must escape him" (p. 422). And no cry does. With deadly certainty, Rayber turns off the hearing aid, shutting out his love for his son as he shuts out the child's voice. He had always thought that "to feel nothing was peace" (p. 421), but when he realizes that he will indeed feel nothing at Bishop's death, he "collapses," drained of the only good that sustained him.

After Tarwater drowns Bishop, he begins his journey back to Powderhead where the final struggle takes place. Along the way, he wonders, disturbed, why he had spoken the words of baptism over Bishop when he had meant only to kill him. The "stranger" returns to him as he rides with the truck driver; asleep in the cab, "the defeated boy

cried out the words of baptism, shuddered, and opened his eyes. He heard the sibilant oaths of his friend fading away on the darkness" (p. 432). But as he attempts to ask the woman at the store for a grape drink, "to his horror what rushed from his lips . . . was an obscenity he had overheard once at a fair" (p. 437). The voice manifests itself in the form of a stranger in a lavender car who, after a homosexual encounter, takes Tarwater's old hat and new corkscrew/bottle-opener: the symbols of Old Tarwater and Rayber respectively. When the boy awakens, he realizes what has happened, or senses it, and burns the leaves on which he lay. The final denial of evil comes when, with a shock, he sees that his great-uncle has been buried after all, that God has triumphed after all. In a vision he sees Old Tarwater "lowering himself to the ground. When he was down and his bulk had settled, he leaned forward, his face turned toward the basket, impatiently following its progress toward him. The boy too leaned forward, aware at last of the object of his hunger, aware that it was the same as the old man's and that nothing on earth could fill him" (p. 446). He sees the burning bush he has for so long sought and is commanded: "GO WARN THE CHILDREN OF GOD OF THE TERRIBLE SPEED OF MERCY" (p. 447). He heads back toward the city where "the children of God lay sleeping" (p. 447) that he might act as the prophet he has become and embrace the destiny he has struggled so desperately to avert.

IV

Will Barrett, the amiable anti-hero of *The Last Gentleman*, attempts to distinguish between the soured Tradition which killed his father and the lack of tradition which may kill Sutter Vaught. Barrett comes from an "honorable and violent family" which has disintegrated over several generations' time:

> The great-grandfather knew what was what and said so and acted accordingly and did not care what anyone thought. . . . The next generation, the grandfather, seemed to know what was what but he was not really so sure. He was brave but he gave much thought to the business of being brave. . . . The father was a brave man too and he said he didn't care what others thought, but he did care. More than anything else, he wished to act with honor and to be thought well of by other men. So living for him was a strain. He became ironical. For him it was not a small thing to walk down the street on an ordinary September morning. In the end he was killed by his own irony and sadness and by the strain of living out an ordinary day in a perfect dance of honor.
>
> As for the present young man, the last of the line, he did not know what to think. So he became a watcher and a listener and a wanderer (pp. 9-10).

Because of this developing religious consciousness which culminates in Will Barrett, he "had to know everything before he could do anything" (p. 4). On impulse, he buys a nineteen hundred dollar telescope, the lenses of which "did not transmit light merely. They penetrated to the heart of things" (p. 29); he sets it up in Central Park; and through it he first sees Kitty Vaught, falls in love with her on the spot, and through some rather extraordinary circumstances, meets the Vaught family, becoming almost an immediate member of it.

Besides technological gadgets, Barrett reads extensively in psychology, science, the World's Great Religions, and business, and at the beginning of the novel, we observe him ending five years of analysis. But despite his love for science, Will Barrett is markedly haunted by the past. Of the male line, all of whom have distinguished themselves at Princeton, only Will leaves before graduating; for he cannot endure the collective consciousness of the place that has evolved from stories told by his father and grandfather. In New York, he manages to alienate himself in time and place, but as he moves south again to join the Vaughts in Alabama, the memories return. Often he literally discovers himself wandering around Civil War battlefields, lost in déja vu, of what, he is uncertain.

Barrett's obsession with the Civil War is his obsession with the desire to understand the force that caused the decay of the Tradition in which his father lived and died.

But his major concern lies unquestionably with his father. He remembers again and again the night of his father's death: his father's pacing, the despairing words, the unspoken contempt for "the fornicators and the bribers and the takers of bribes" (p. 330), the sad music and poetry. When Barrett returns one evening to his hometown, he stands outside in the same setting in which his father paced and grieved and almost--but not quite--grasps the answer for which he has been searching; touching the old hitching-post, he thinks:

> Wait. While his fingers explored the juncture of iron and bark, his eyes narrowed as if he caught a glimmer of light on the cold iron skull. Wait. I think he was wrong and that he was looking in the wrong place. No, not he but the times. The times were wrong and one looked in the wrong place. It wasn't even his fault because that was the way he was and the way the times were, and there was no other place a man could look. It was the worst of times, a time of fake beauty and fake victory. Wait. He had missed it! It was not in the Brahms that one looked and not in solitariness and not in the old sad poetry but--he wrung out his ear--but here, under your nose, here in the very curiousness and drollness and extraness of the iron and the bark that--he shook his head--that-- (p. 332).

But the answer is not forthcoming.

Barrett's preoccupation sets him apart from the people

with whom he associated; and knowing this, he wonders why, for example, he feels elated during hurricanes or at the news of disaster and feels bad in good weather or at parties. He muses, "if there is nothing wrong with me, then there is something wrong with the world. And if there is nothing wrong with the world, then I have wasted my life and that is the worst mistake of all" (pp. 78-9). He attaches himself to Sutter Vaught, who has wasted his life, because, subconsciously, the doctor reminds him of his father in his aimless searching.

Dr. Vaught lives by cultivating sin, although he does retain bits of the cultural heritage which is his; he can both unabashedly seduce any woman to whom he takes a fancy and become thoroughly embarrassed when his ex-wife, Rita, mentions that they are "good in bed." Dr. Vaught writes in his journal that he "cultivate[s] pornography in order to set it at naught" (p. 281), just as Willie Stark employs evil to obtain good. Like Rayber, Dr. Vaught despises ritual, especially that of baptism, as meaningless. For this reason he is set against the suggestion that his young brother be baptized before he dies of the leukemia that is slowly killing him.

As a doctor, Sutter is primarily concerned with the flesh. As a pornographer, he is also primarily concerned with the flesh. Yet he recognizes that a mere preservation of the body will not save the individual. When, for example, his patients are too obsessed with material pleasures and

are desperately sad in their upperclass happiness, Sutter commits them to the terminal ward where they soon become cheerful. But he cannot adapt himself to his cure. After one sexual relationship, he writes in the journal, he became depressed and shot himself: "I saw something clearly while I had no cheek and grinned like a skeleton. But I got well and forgot what it was. I won't miss next time" (p. 373). When he tells Barrett that he expects to die soon after his brother, Barrett feels again that fear he recognizes from the night of his father's death.

Barrett, for whom Dr. Vaught has left the journal, begins to place things together as he drives toward New Mexico to find Sutter and his brother. After having relived his father's suicide (in a series of flashbacks) and having read the notebook, the fact that "he had to know everything before he could do anything" (p. 4) becomes insignificant, for Barrett suddenly discovers that he already knows what he needs to know to understand himself through his father and Sutter Vaught. On the New Mexico desert gazing up at the sky through his telescope, he sees

> the great cold fire of Andromeda, atilt, as big as a Catherine wheel, as slow and silent in its turning, stopped, as tumult seen from far away. He shivered. I'm through with telescopes, he thought, and the vast galaxies. What do I need with Andromeda? What I need is my Bama bride and my cozy camper, a match struck and the butane lit and a

> friendly square of light cast upon the neighbor earth, and a hot cup of Luzianne between us against the desert cold, and a warm bed and there lie dreaming in one another's arms while old Andromeda leans through the night (p. 358).

At the end, as he runs after Sutter Vaught's departing car shouting, "'Wait,'" the same word he used to try to stay his father before his suicide, he comes at last to understand why his father died and why Dr. Vaught might: one, because he believed only in an outdated concept of honor, could act only in honor; the other, because he believes only in science, can act only through method. Barrett, in planning to marry Kitty, in working for Mr. Vaught--in assuming responsibility for his life--proves that he has at last reconciled the dual influence; he becomes a new hero able to function in the world at large.

Love in the Ruins explores the religious consciousness of its anti-hero, Dr. Thomas More, a psychiatrist, who is suspended between the Tradition of the family line stemming from his "illustrious ancestor," Sir Thomas More, and his good friend and colleague, Dr. Max Gottlieb. Tom's forbears were "of that rare breed, Anglo-Saxon Catholics who were Catholic from the beginning and stayed Catholic" (p. 22), but the family has disintegrated over the years to the point where "the effort of keeping the faith took such a toll that we were not fit for much else" (p. 22), as demonstrated by his father who "sat out the long afternoons in his dim little coroner's office, sipping Early Times between autopsies and watching purple martins come skimming up to his cypress-and-brass hotel" (p. 23). But all of the Mores except the present one have remained active in their Church: Knights of Columbus, church benefits, and so on. Max Gottlieb, on the other hand, an "unbeliever, a lapsed Jew, believes in the orderliness of creation, acts on it with energy and clarity" (p. 106). Tom's pastor and friend, Father Smith, tells Max, "'I think it is you doctors who are doing the work of God, even though you do not believe in him. You stand for life'" (p. 186). The fact that Tom is both a scientist and a conservative Catholic sets him apart from his Tradition and his profession. His allegiance to both

is reflected in the fact that he loves "women best, music and science next, whiskey next, God fourth, and my fellow-man hardly at all" (p. 6). Throughout the novel, Tom searches to balance himself in an unbalanced world.

The 1983 world of Love in the Ruins is important to the plot and to the development of the anti-hero. It, too, exists under the influence of two major factions: the Lefts (formerly Democrats), who believe in "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, The Pill, Atheism, Pot, Anti-Pollution, Sex, Abortion Now, Euthanasia" (p. 18) and the conservative Christian Knotheads (formerly Republicans), who, for example, have "enacted a law requiring compulsory prayers in the black public schools and [have] made funds available for birth control in Africa, Asia, and Alabama" (p. 19). Each of these parties despises the other. In the subdivision in which Tom More lives, Paradise Estates, however, both factions exist peacefully side by side. In the outlying swamps, communes of "love couples" attempt to live outside of the political conflicts, while black Bantu guerrillas wait for their opportunity to take over the area of Louisana in which the story takes place. In addition, the religious structure of the country has changed: many people profess atheism; Protestants are rare; and the Roman Catholic Church has divided into three schisms:

(1) the American Catholic Church whose new Rome is Cicero, Illinois:

(2) the Dutch schismatics who believe in relevance

but not God;

(3) the Roman Catholic remnant, a tiny scattered flock with no place to go.

The American Catholic Church, which emphasizes property rights and the integrity of neighborhoods, retained the Latin mass and plays The Star-Spangled Banner at the elevation.

The Dutch schismatics in this area comprise several priests and nuns who left Rome to get married. . . . Now several divorced priests and nuns are importuning the Dutch cardinal to allow them to remarry. The Roman Catholics hereabouts are scattered and demoralized. The one priest, an obscure curate, who remained faithful to Rome, could not support himself and had to hire out as a fire-watcher (pp. 5-6).

Important, too, to an understanding of the exact nature of Tom's conflict is an understanding of his awareness of the separation of the soul from the body. He has invented a device which he believes can cure the individual's divisions and thus those of the country. It is called the More Qualitative-Quantitative Ontological Lapsometer and is "the first caliper of the soul and the first hope of bridging the dread chasm that has rent the soul of Western man ever since the famous philosopher Descartes ripped body loose from mind and turned the very soul into a ghost that haunts its own house" (p. 191). The instrument measures various centers of the brain to determine relative levels of "angelism" and

"bestialism," then, with an adjustment of the dial, cures by administering an appropriate dose of Heavy Sodium to the afflicted area(s).

The device is first tested on Tom himself. Gazing at his hand, he notes, for the first time, the beauty of it and muses, "How can a man spend forty-five years as a stranger to himself? No other creature would do such a thing. No animal would for he is pure organism. No angel would for he is pure spirit" (p. 212). When he demonstrates the lapsometer in the Pit, a traditional gathering-place where students and faculty view an annual competitively friendly showdown between two resident scientists. Tom's colleagues and the students consider the device merely a theatrical prop, for only Tom senses the rift between spirit and flesh, and thus only he feels any need for such an instrument; and this leads us back to his religious consciousness.

Tom continually shifts from his dedication to science to his dedication to his heritage. He believes that his main concern is to market the lapsometer and to publish his findings in the scientific journal, Brain. At the same time, he suffers from his inability to accept completely his religious heritage and is possessed with a "terror" which derives from "the piteousness of good gone wrong and not knowing it, from Southern sweetness and cruelty" (p. 153), from the decline of the Tradition to the point where the family is no longer capable of action. Tom's inability to act is evident, for example, when he creeps up, unnoticed,

behind the Bantu sniper who is trying to kill him; he argues with himself as to whether he should shoot the gunman in the back or warn him first or just capture him; then he wonders what his grandfather and Sir Thomas More would have done. Before he can do anything at all, however, he is himself discovered.

Although the lapsometer performs an instant welding together of flesh and spirit, its results appear to wear off with time, while the natural welding process as accomplished during ordeal (conflict and resolution) lasts indefinitely. Tom's mental and physical suffering during the four days in which the greater part of the novel's action takes place still affects him five years later, while the lapsometer does not. When we see him at this time, he has given up his several love affairs to marry the woman he loves; he has stopped drinking; and he enjoys his small medical practice. Because of the Bantu takeover, he has "fallen" from Paradise Estates and lives in a modest but comfortable house in what used to be the Negro section of town.

But it is not until the very end that Tom More obtains, through a reconciliation of his science and his heritage, the ability to act. Much earlier, he expressed his concern over his inability to feel guilty for his sins to his friend, Max Gottlieb: "'If I felt guilty, I could get rid of it. . . . The problem is that if there is no guilt, contrition, and a purpose of ammendment, the sin cannot be forgiven. It means that you don't have life in you" (p. 117). Now, at the end of

so much ordeal and after so many years, Tom returns to confession and admits to "'drunkenness, lusts, envies, fornication, delight in the misfortunes of others, and loving myself better than God and other men'" (p. 397); but still he is not sorry for them. Father Smith advises him to

> "continue to pray for knowledge of your sins. God is good. He will give you what you ask. Ask for sorrow. Pray for me."
>
> "All right."
>
> "Meanwhile, forgive me but there are other things we must think about: like doing our jobs, you being a better doctor, I being a better priest, showing a bit of ordinary kindness to people, particularly our own families--unkindness to those close to us is such a pitiful thing--doing what we can for our poor unhappy country--things which, please forgive me, sometimes seem more important than dwelling on a few middle-aged daydreams."
>
> "You're right. I'm sorry," I say instantly, scalded.
>
> "You're sorry for your sins?"
>
> "Yes. Ashamed rather" (p. 399).

By his contrition, Tom reconciles his "ordinary self, the restless aching everyday self" with "the secret self one happens on in dreams, in poetry, during ordeals, on happy trips" (p. 370). As he returns home, drunk for the first time in six months, he recognizes--and accepts completely--both the traditional lore and the scientific ability to act.

VI

Of the six novels with which this paper concerns itself, only Wild Palms evades the rather strict hero/anti-hero triangulation that I have set up; but for this reason it serves as a test for my thesis. While Harry Wilbourne is unquestionably an anti-hero as I have defined it, there are no obvious heroes; there are only respectability and convention set against passion and impulse. Francis "Rat" Rittenmeyer acts in society as the respectable businessman he is, but I in no way view him as a hero; nor do I see his wife, Charlotte, with whom Wilbourne has his affair, as a heroine, for she acts only out of passion. In Wild Palms, both convention and passion are their own means as well as ends. Like Science and the Old Southern Tradition, they exist solely for the sake of existing; but Wilbourne, unlike the other anti-heroes, is little more than an instrument of these forces.

The necessity of maintaining an appearance of respectability has, until the story begins, determined Wilbourne's life. He has spent his "twenty-six years, the two thousand dollars [he] stretched over four of them by not smoking, by keeping [his] virginity until it damn near spoiled on [him], the dollar and two dollars a week or a month [his] sister could not afford to send" (p. 208) expecting to graduate from medical school and earn his living respectably as a

physician at the price of enjoying none of the pleasures of youth. However, when he attends the Rittenmeyers' party, his first, he is so taken with Charlotte that he gives up his rigid solitude at the hospital where he serves his internship and the degree that he is only weeks away from obtaining for a single impulsive hope. Charlotte, creature of passion that she is, explains to Wilbourne that she believes that "'love and suffering are the same thing and . . . the value of love is what you have to pay for it and any time you get it cheap you have cheated yourself'" (p. 48). The price of their affair is the twelve hundred dollars Wilbourne finds in New Orleans, without which Charlotte would have ended their relationship. As they travel from Chicago to the lakeside cottage, back to Chicago, then to Utah, to Chicago again, and after a short stop in New Orleans, to the Alabama coast where Charlotte dies, they search continually for a way to live without money, respectability, the limitations of social convention. And they fail.

When Charlotte becomes pregnant as a result of one night's passion, she refuses to bring forth the child she and Wilbourne have created between them and requests that he perform an abortion. Her unwillingness to share him with anyone else, even a child, distinguishes their affair as one of passion rather than of love; for love is both expressed in and symbolized by the creation of another human life. Again plagued by respectability, Wilbourne looks for employment to support a family, but is unsuccessful in

obtaining it and finally agrees to the operation which leads to Charlotte's death. At the seaside cottage in Alabama where they spend her last few days, the landlord, a doctor, watches her as she gazes out over the water and recognizes in her "that complete immobile abstraction from which even pain and terror are absent, in which a living creature seems to listen to and even watch some of its own flagging organs, the heart say, the irreparable seeping of blood" (p. 5). When, on the night of Charlotte's death, Wilbourne wakens the doctor to try to save her, the man thinks: "There are rules! Limits! To fornication, adultery, to abortion, crime and what he meant was To that of love and passion and tragedy which is allowed to anyone lest he become as God Who has suffered likewise all that Satan can have known" (p. 280).

At the same time that he lives with Charlotte, the concern for respectability lingers in Wilbourne's thoughts. When he and Charlotte first plan to meet in a dingy hotel, he takes precautions that no one recognize them or what they will do; Charlotte, however, refuses to feel shame and is angered by his secrecy. When they leave the building without having accomplished what they came for, she insists that they leave together to avoid having the "'clerk and that nigger . . . snigger . . . because they saw us leave before I would have even had time to take my clothes off, let alone put them back on'" (p. 49). Throughout the novel, Wilbourne worries over the fact that they do not "look married." He thinks, too, of Rat Rittenmeyer who, for appearance's

sake, refuses to grant his wife a divorce (he is Catholic), although he personally delivers her to Wilbourne and even provides a cashier's check with which she can buy a railroad ticket whenever she decides to return home. When Rittenmeyer turns Charlotte over to Wilbourne, he (Wilbourne) realizes "with a kind of amazement, Why, he's suffering, he's actually suffering, thinking how perhaps it was not the heart at all, not even the sensibilities, with which we suffer, but our capacity for grief or vanity or self-delusion or perhaps even masochism" (p. 55). After the abortion, Charlotte goes home to say goodbye to her husband, and Wilbourne, waiting for her on a park bench, imagines their conversation. He knows that Charlotte will ask Rittenmeyer to take no action against him when she dies "for the sake of all the men and women who ever lived and blundered but meant the best and all that will ever live and blunder but mean the best. For your sake maybe, since yours is suffering too--if there is any such thing as suffering, if any of us ever did, if any of us were ever born strong enough and good enough to be worthy to love or suffer either. Maybe what I am trying to say is justice" (p. 225-26); and he knows that Rittenmeyer will act according to her wish, for even "in . . . being right there is nothing of consolation or of peace" (p. 227).

Although Rittenmeyer can act, the convention to which he adheres predetermines how he may act; he is vulnerable to the forces of society, just as Charlotte is vulnerable to those of passion. Wilbourne, however, claims that he is

"'vulnerable in neither money nor respectability'" (p. 140); unlike Jack Burden who only thinks he is invulnerable, Wilbourne actually is, for he remains incapable of action. He believes himself determined by the forces between which he is caught: "you are born submerged in anonymous lockstep with the teeming anonymous myriads of your time and generation; you get out of step once, falter once and you are trampled to death" (p. 54).

But Harry Wilbourne discovers a way to defy both convention and passion: by his very refusal to act at all. After Charlotte's death, he is arrested and taken to jail; he refuses to jump the bail that Rittenmeyer raises or swallow the cyanide tablet he gives him. He remains a passive anti-hero by choice, not believing in any possibility of reconciliation between the forces that have rendered him incapable even of hope.

CONCLUSION

In developing this paper, I have attempted not only to show the religious consciousness as it appears in six different anti-heroes as created by five vastly different writers but also to indicate a gradual maturing of the Southern anti-hero into a hero in his own right as he gains distance and thus perspective from the Civil War, the origins of which were also the origins of the awareness of the old and new ideals.

There is, however, a certain problem in limiting such an analysis to so few novels. To develop fully the growth of the religious consciousness--and thus of the anti-hero--one would, I believe, need to deal with the artistic developments of the individual writers and to consider more than one or two novels by each. In addition, one would need to examine the various interpretations of the term "religious consciousness." While the scope of this paper allowed me less ambitious goals, I feel nevertheless that my thesis is valid for much of twentieth-century Southern fiction.

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