

Problems concerning Horace Benbow's
Incestuous Feelings in the Manuscript
and the Typescript of the Original
Version of *Sanctuary* (2)

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V

Horace knows, through his revelatory dream, that love cannot be purely cultured: it must step into the mire (or cannot help stepping into the mire, which comes to the same thing), yet it is still of great value when it is impervious to the mire. To put it another way, Horace learns, at this time, the true sense of "imperviousness" in love and the genuine ideal of love. Motivated by his innate sense of justice, Horace makes a decision to help Ruby. But what supports that sense—or, rather, particularly in the original version, what becomes the mainspring of his activity through being supported by Horace's sense of justice—is his profound feeling for the impervious Ruby who maintained her love without yielding to the pressure from outside. He has been living solely on his belief in ideal love for the past forty-three years. Now that he has perceived his previous ideal to be false, in order to salvage his past, he desires to prove his newly acquired ideal can prevail in this world. But the farther Horace, who has set forward with this decision, goes on his way, the more he encounters Temple's dreadful corruption. What makes him pursue his way is partly his fear of and shock at how bottomlessly women can fall. He sees in Temple the type of woman who is only corrupted by being violated. And, moreover, Horace knows that the world is filled with various evils which further contribute to the corruption of

that kind of woman, and that some of those women, out of a selfish wish to be unhurt and to keep their territory white and unstained as a "sanctuary," eventually encourage evil—or, rather, they accelerate other women's corruption inasmuch as they themselves become evil. Horace's tragedy is that his sister, the ideal woman to him during his past thirty-five years, typifies that kind of woman and becomes one who lends a definitive hand to Temple's fall. Yes, he has tasted defeat. Surrounded by numerous enemies, who could help being beaten? Horace realizes anew how desperately he and Ruby have struggled under wholly helpless conditions. Women like Ruby are a minority among females; love that can wallow without tarnishing is a rarity in love—this is ultimate recognition that Horace obtains. Describing how, for a reason he cannot understand, Narcissa comes to be of little worth in Horace's mind after he met with Ruby, Faulkner writes: "But he had merely exchanged one unreality for another" (Chapter II: MS. 14, TS. 35). He thought at first that reality was what was apparent in Ruby, but this was only another too optimistic view. He sees the last, bitter, and somber reality which lies beyond a reality he thought true.

He meets with defeat because he is outnumbered—Horace has no alternative but to acknowledge that fact. In the original *Sanctuary*, Horace is described coming back again to his house where Belle lives as before, without having seen Goodwin's death and without talking to Ruby about her future. If one interprets this to mean that Horace is a mere mental infant searching for his mother's and mother-substitutes' protection all the time, one who has dabbled in a serious matter and, in fear of the grave consequences, has laid aside everything to run back to "that familiar sanctuary of insisting that he is in no way to blame for what happens," as Lawrance Thompson says,⁽⁴⁴⁾ then what shall we say of *Sanctuary*, or, rather, of a writer

(44) Thompson, *William Faulkner*, p.108.

named Faulkner? Thompson says that Horace goes back to Belle "without any indication that he has achieved any self-recognition."⁽⁴⁵⁾ Langford states that although Horace achieves self-discovery, it is the discovery of "a comparable wrong [to one committed by Popeye] within himself"—that is, the discovery that he had felt sexual desire not only for Little Belle and Narcissa but also for Ruby. Thus, Langford is dissatisfied that Faulkner seems not to have thought of the problem of how Horace dealt with his new self-knowledge.⁽⁴⁶⁾ I must say that their views are both extremely irrelevant. Through having Horace return to Belle, Faulkner has shown Horace's decision to continue to live in this world—Horace's new self-recognition, in this respect, which he has gained in compensation for his defeat. In fact, Horace was defeated; the biggest factor which reduced him to a beaten condition was a base lust for the self-preservation of his flesh and blood and of the class to which he belongs. He cannot help thinking, with an awareness of his ineffectuality, about the fact that the underdogs are, in any case, unable to win in this world, even if one underdog tries to help another. One of the reasons why Horace left Ruby is doubtlessly this self-knowledge of his ineffectuality. But if one takes Horace's action, like Michael Millgate, to indicate that "he [Horace] realises that he has no moral right to advise" because of "his inescapable association with Narcissa and Temple and other members of his family and class,"⁽⁴⁷⁾ his interpretation is the very reverse of Faulkner's intentions, unless that description means to illuminate, paradoxically, Horace's ultimately conscientious feelings of self-accusation. What occupies Horace's mind again at the time when he loses the Goodwin's trial is the problem of "imperviousness" in the actual world. To the members of his family and class, "imperviousness"

(45) *Ibid.*, p.110.

(46) Langford, *Faulkner's Revision of "Sanctuary,"* p.22.

(47) Michael Millgate, *The Achievement of William Faulkner* (New York: Random House, 1966), p.119.

means keeping their territory as a safe and unstained sanctuary by excluding all things from outside. It is borne in on Horace that to exclude whatever looks like the mire eventually becomes an evil practice and leads this world into corruption. Horace reflects, however, that he is not substantially different in this respect, as he tries to flee from the mire of Belle. The important thing is to possess the imperviousness that can wallow in the mire, yet not tarnish; Ruby is able to live as a woman of such a quality in any kind of adversity. What allows Horace to decide to leave Ruby to the actual world and to return to the mire of Belle is his reflection on his own previous conduct and the immense trust which he has had in Ruby.

The whole of Chapter XXV in the original version is Horace's following letter to Narcissa which he wrote after his return to Kinston (There are slight differences between the manuscript and typescript versions):

June 23.

"Dear Narcissa—

"I ran. Once I had not the courage to admit it; now I have not the courage to deny it. I found more reality than I could stomach, I suppose. Call it that, anyway. I dont seem to care. Only I wish Belle had stayed in Kentucky. At least, that's out of the whole damned state where such things can happen.

"She was at home. When Jones—you remember him: the one who says he used to lead Kinston society; now he drives it—put me down at the corner, I saw her shade up and the rosy light, and I thought of that unfailing aptitude of women for coinciding with the emotional periphery of a man at the exact moment when it reaches top dead center, at the exact moment when the fates have prized his jaws for the regurgitated bit. Thus (your own words) like a nigger I left her; like a nigger I returned (via the kitchen); entered the house and stood in the door while she laid her magazine down and watched me from her pink nest while I shed the ultimate cockleburr of errant itch and the final mud-flake of the high pastures where the air had been a little too ardent and a little too stark, and so into the old barn and the warm twilight and the old stall fitting again to the honorable trace-galls, and, ay, the old manger lipped satin-smooth by the old unfailing oats.

"Little Belle is not at home. Thank God: at what age does man cease to believe he must support a certain figure before his women-folks? She is at a house-party. Where, Belle did not say, other than it divulging to be in the exact center of bad telephone connections. Thank God she is no flesh and blood of mine. I thank God that no bone and flesh of mine has taken that form which, rife with its inherent folly, knells and bequeaths its own disaster, untouched. Untouched, mind you. That's what hurts. Not that there is evil in the world; evil belong in the world: it is the mortar in which the bricks are set. It's that they can be so impervious to the mire which they reveal and teach us to abhor; can wallow without tarnishment in the very stuff in the comparison with which their bright, tragic, fleeting magic lies. Cling to it. Not through fear; merely through some innate instinct of female economy, as they will employ any wiles whatever to haggle a butcher out of a penny. Thank God I have not and will never have a child—and for that reason I have assailed not only a long distance, but a rural, line at eleven P.M. in order to hear a cool, polite, faintly surprised young voice on an unsatisfactory wire; a voice that, between polite inanities in response to inanities, carried on a verbal skirmishing with another one—not feminine—without even doing me the compliment of trying to conceal the fact that she had been squired to the telephone; needs must project over the dead wire to me, whose hair she has watched thinning for ten years, that young mammalian rifeness which she discovered herself less long ago than I the fact that, to anyone less than twenty-five years old, I am worse than dead.

"I ran. I dont try to palliate it. But I want to rectify it as far as possible. I know this will be distasteful to you, but it will be the last time, I promise that: next time I may not even have the courage to return. I want you to find that woman yourself; tell her that I must give up the case because I do not think I am good enough, and that I am putting it in the hands of the best criminal lawyer I can find, for an appeal, and that she is not to worry. Do this, my dear. You will have no trouble finding her. She's there now, in front of the jail with that child, standing where he can see them from the window: have I not seen her there a thousand times? God, if he were the only one who had to see her there now. (sic)

"Horace."

(MS. 133, TS. 346-48)

As to this letter, Massey, Langford and Millgate all regard it as Faulkner's great failure because it presents nothing worthy of being

the end of a drama.⁽⁴⁸⁾ However, the complete reverse is the case. It is precisely this letter which clarifies the entirety of what Faulkner has tried to state in *Sanctuary*—all the things that I have been relating so far in this article—by conveying a message which is a fitting conclusion to the novel.

Horace starts back to Kinston with his new decision. After this decision, however, he can by no means calmly face Belle: "Only I wish Belle had stayed in Kentucky" (Horace has been informed of Belle's going back to her parents' house in Chapter III)—that is his real feeling. But a woman is a creature who infallibly catches hold of the time when a man's emotion is utterly weakened. Horace finds himself surrounded by the same conditions as before in almost no time. Yes, he has exerted himself at the cost of his forty-three year life; but what traces have his endeavors left in reality? He is forced to think about the thickness of the walls of reality, looking around at the aspects of the actual world which he was never able to change despite his efforts. On the other hand, he has now surely come to perceive the true nature of woman. Little Belle's virginity is not the alembic of his mind any more. She is making her way in the world in just the fashion he has feared. It may have been Horace's last expectation of Little Belle that he only wanted to hear once again her cool, polite, and faintly surprised young voice in his wish of washing away the terrible dirtiness with which his current affairs have doused him. What reaches his ear, however, is no more than something young and abundantly mammalian—an indication of a female who only mates and breeds with a male. That girl, who has

(48) Massey, "Notes on the Unrevised Galleys of Faulkner's *Sanctuary*," 201; Langford, *Faulkner's Revision of "Sanctuary*," p.21; Millgate, *The Achievement of William Faulkner*, p.117. Blotner, too, treats Horace's letter lightly, saying that the letter is a device which occurred when Faulkner's energy flagged. He further states that Horace's letter bears the tones of madness. Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography*, I, 616.

watched Horace's hair thinning for ten years, became conscious of her female nature about that time when he found himself worse than dead to anyone less than twenty-five. What sexual desire toward Little Belle can we find within Horace, her stepfather, who writes this? The deceptive immaculacy of some women is nothing but a lure to catch a male. And once capturing man, the false immaculacy no longer pretends to avoid dirt, but endeavors to strew its filthiness all around. When Horace thinks this way, it is safe to say that for him Temple is, first and foremost, that kind of woman, and even Little Belle as well. And when this matter is further considered in connection with his statement "I thank God that no bone and flesh of mine has taken that form which, rife with its inherent folly, knells and bequeaths its own disaster, untouched. Untouched, mind you. That's what hurts," Horace's vitriolic irony toward his sister who has now laid bare her abominable egoism clearly emerges. He no longer dreams an impossible *dream* of reality.⁽⁴⁹⁾ "Not that there is evil in the world; evil belong in the world" (sic)—Horace accepts this *fact*. Needless to say, to live is to cherish hope, however. It seems to Horace that the world "is the mortar in which the bricks are set." Only because the bricks can be impervious to the mire—only because they can wallow without losing their essential qualities in the given conditions—are they capable of enduring value. What gives him the will to live is his vision of *truth* that there surely exist and will continue to exist those who can believe, like himself, in the worth of those bricks, and those who embody in themselves that very value, such as Ruby.

In contrast to that value, however, there is a counterfeit which is

(49) Faulkner says: "an ideal is a hope, an aspiration, it could be an impossible dream. Truth is not an impossible dream, it's not an ideal or aspiration. Truth is a quality which one must accept or cope with," and "Fact is not too important and can be altered by law, by circumstance, by too many qualities, economics, temperature, but truth is the constant thing." (*Faulkner at Nagano*, pp.101-2.)

deceptively and superficially fine; it is no more than a "bright, tragic, fleeting magic," contrary to its appearance as a brick impervious to the mire. "Cling to it," sneers Horace again at Narcissa. He clearly sees now that such clinging is not even out of fear of dirtiness; it is merely a peculiar female egoism, a mental meanness, which exposes them as being anxious to lose nothing of their own while keeping their lands as unstained sanctuaries without diminishing even one inch square of them.

Narcissa, who, according to the description in *Sartoris*, always finds Horace's writing difficult (and parts that she can decipher mean nothing to her),⁽⁵⁰⁾ cannot apprehend the true sense of Horace's letter; she is not aware of his vitriolic irony. Thus, she gives Horace his quietus by laying bare her cruelty and egoism, in her exclusively flat reply that is in sharp contrast to her brother's writing. The three above-mentioned scholars cannot be said to be as limited as Narcissa with respect to their ability to understand Horace's letter. Nevertheless, their misunderstanding has resulted from the fact that they wished to view Faulkner from a Freudian perspective; and, unfortunately, they have misrepresented Faulkner and his literature very much, despite their sincere academic attitude.

vi

To establish a sanctuary by excluding indiscriminately all things appearing to be evil is not merely to act on behalf of genuine evil; it is to make oneself evil. In so far as that is the recognition Horace has obtained, it is obvious that Horace is a man more impervious in spirit than any of those who disdain him. Horace keeps on helping Ruby because of his belief in unstainable and uncorrupted beings in the world. It is an extremely deep misunderstanding to reduce him to a man who "has no will of his own" and "possesses no courage."

(50) *Sartoris*, p.265.

We recognize that no one can be stronger than Horace, who meant to live for the sake of human truth alone. And *Sanctuary*, irrespective of version, is never a shocker. It is not sensational literature, but a work whose essential problem is humanity itself and which is moral in the strictest sense of the word.

Limiting our examination to the original *Sanctuary*, it can be said that this work is fundamentally a love story—a story of Horace's itinerant search for true love. It might have been a tragic *Don Quixote* written by Faulkner. (When "even tragedy is in a way walking a tightrope . . . between the bizarre and the terrible,"⁽⁵¹⁾ to be tragic may simultaneously involve an element of the bizarre. But what we must take to heart is the fact that Horace's "method of trying to put them [ideals] into practice"⁽⁵²⁾ was, at least to Faulkner, never nonsensical.) In MS. 125 and TS. 329 of Chapter XXIII of the original version, there is a description of Ruby thinking Horace's act to be "a quixotic folly" because she regards Horace's help toward her and her husband as a mask of his desire for her body. (Chapter XXIII is Chapter 27 in the revised version, with this description eliminated.) This expression appears in Ruby's incredulous interpretation of Horace's endeavors. But the fact is that the true relater is the author himself—the author speaks for Ruby in his own words, choosing the word "quixotic" from his vocabulary. This fact may indicate that Faulkner intended to make Horace a Don Quixote. It is an unwarranted conjecture. Nevertheless, it is not impossible to think that Narcissa has been a Dulcinea to Horace for thirty-five years, only for him to discover her to be a mere peasant woman, even the most selfish and vicious among women. In fact, I cannot keep from thinking, considering the structure of the original version, that it is Narcissa, not necessarily Temple, who has her true nature

(51) See *Faulkner in the University*, p.39.

(52) See *Faulkner at West Point*, Joseph L. Fant, III and Robert Ashley, eds. (New York: Random House, Vintage edition, 1969), p.94.

laid bare in contrast to Ruby's genuine Dulcinea. Brooks says: "In nearly every one of Faulkner's novels, the male's discovery of evil and reality is bound up with his discovery of the true nature of woman."⁽⁵³⁾ He is eminently correct, I believe, though it is more appropriate, in the original version, to put the emphasis on *the discovery of the true nature of woman*, which is linked with the discovery of evil and reality. And if it is so, "man" is indisputably the problem which Faulkner took up in the original *Sanctuary*. It is a mistake to read this novel as an allegory of confrontation between Tradition and Modernism, as Marion O'Donnell⁽⁵⁴⁾ and Richard Chase⁽⁵⁵⁾ maintain, or to search in it for a legend of a limited region, the South. Concerning the above problem, Faulkner replied to Malcolm Cowley: "I'm inclined to think that my material, the South, is not very important to me. I just happen to know it."⁽⁵⁶⁾ We know now that this utterance of Faulkner's was a really sincere one containing no sophistry or pretence whatever.

And the argument which I have been making so far on the basis of the original version is also valid for the revised version. In the latter, Horace is further emphasized, as a man who believes in the value of being truly impervious to evil and who fights against it, though another side of his personality—the pursuer of true love—was eliminated one and a half years later during the rewriting of the original *Sanctuary*.⁽⁵⁷⁾

(53) Brooks, *William Faulkner*, p.127.

(54) See Marion O'Donnell, "Faulkner's Mythology," *Faulkner*, Robert Penn Warren, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p.28.

(55) See Richard Chase, *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1957), pp.238-39.

(56) Malcolm Cowley, *The Faulkner-Cowley File: Letters and Memories 1944-1962* (New York: The Viking Press, 1967), p.14.

(57) According to the date written by Faulkner on the title pages of the manuscript and typescript of the original *Sanctuary*, he began his work in January, 1929, and finished it in May of the same year. In the meantime, the original version was presumably rewritten during the period from toward the end of November, 1930, to early the following month. See Note 1.