SHERLOCK HOLMES IN YOKNAPATAWPHA:

FAULKNER'S *KNIGHT'S GAMBIT* AND DETECTIVE FICTION

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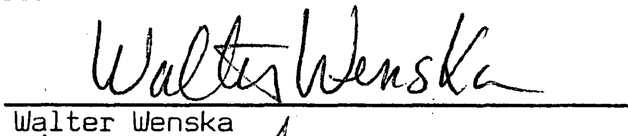
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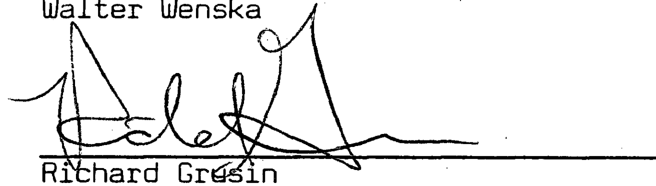
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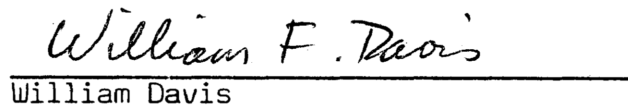
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ABSTRACT

William Faulkner's Knight's Gambit, a sequence of six detective stories has attracted little critical attention. What critical attention it has drawn has been uninspired and has failed to focus on the most important aspect of this story sequence--its claim as detective fiction. The purpose of this paper is to rectify this oversight of literary criticism and to do so in the light of recent major developments in critical work on detective fiction.

The paper is composed of two sections. The first is a compilation of those recent critical developments regarding detective fiction. This recent critical commentary on the genre has two distinct strands--the psychological and the sociological. These strands intertwine around the themes of guilt projection and guilt purgation, which occur, on the levels of both the mind and the community.

The second section of this paper then builds upon this watershed of commentary, using it in a story by story analysis of Knight's Gambit. Each story, from "Smoke" to "Knight's Gambit," affords a glimpse of Faulkner's adaptation of detective fiction to his narrative talents and vision. His ability to utilize the thematic and allegorical potential of the detective's unique relationship with the criminal is particularly notable.

This close analysis of Knight's Gambit, bolstered by the findings of recent critical work on detective stories, suggests that Faulkner's detective story sequence is more complex than had been previously thought. Each story reveals itself to be a narrative which exhibits the allegorical process of fathoming and ordering the darker, baser sides of man and his community. The detective story allows--and Faulkner takes advantage of--easy access to this process through the comprehending and apprehending central conscience of the detective figure.

SHERLOCK HOLMES IN YOKNAPATAWPHA:

FAULKNER'S *KNIGHT'S GAMBIT* AND DETECTIVE FICTION

In November of 1940, William Faulkner hurriedly dispatched a short story, "Error in Chemistry," to his agent Harold Ober with the accompanying comment that "This strikes me as being a pretty good Who-done-it . . .[,] as usual will take the quickest sale"[1] The previous month Faulkner had complained to Robert K. Haas that "I am doing no writing save pot-boilers."[2] Faulkner's incessant money troubles, glimpsed in this letter of 1940, plagued him throughout most of his career. They have long been a controlling element in all biographical or bio-critical considerations of his work. Unfortunately, these troubles have also been, for too long, an easy way to explain away his detective stories, and the basis for some altogether too simplistic dismissals of those stories--particularly those collected in Knight's Gambit. As early as 1966, Michael Millgate observed that Knight's Gambit "has perhaps been too readily dismissed as simply a miscellaneous collection of not especially distinguished detective stories"--an observation that remains remarkably accurate to this day.[3] Serious critical work on Faulkner's excursions into the fiction of detection continues to be inadequate.

Faulkner's interest in whodunits and pot-boilers is not without literary precedent. American writers, for reasons of survival, have often been driven to produce pot-boilers, frequently turning to popular formulaic sub-genres of the novel which the general public appears to embrace. The enormous popularity of detective fiction, as well as its adaptability to times and places and local interests, has led

serious writers to turn to it from time to time. As John Cawelti has noted, the genre's flexibility allows the writer to incorporate "specific cultural materials" into the genre's formulas.[4] Mark Twain, his bank account perilously low, penned detective stories whose scenarios included the popular venues of the Wild West ("The Double-Barrelled Detective Story") and New York City ("The Stolen White Elephant"). He even inserted his most popular heroes, Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer, into their own detective story, _Tom Sawyer, Detective_, hoping for a large cash dowry from this marriage of popular genre and popular characters. Faulkner's efforts in this genre, while certainly uneven, occasionally rise to some typically Faulknerian heights. Unlike Twain's, they deserve consideration for what they reveal about what Faulkner would call the "conflict of the human heart with itself" and with its "time and place, [its] environment."[5]

Faulkner's minor affair with detective fiction has been adequately documented.[6] He was an avid reader of detective fiction, something which his library confirms with a wide range of titles from John Dickson Carr, Agatha Christie, Wilkie Collins, Dashiell Hammett, Edgar Allan Poe, Ellery Queen, Dorothy Sayers, Georges Simenon, and Rex Stout.[7] Faulkner's major works reflect some of this interest. _Sanctuary_ reverberates with the dark tones of the detective story. Andre Malraux has remarked that it is in this novel that we witness the intrusion of the Greek tragedy into the detective story.[8] Joseph Blotner, in describing Faulkner's early work on _Sanctuary_, notes that "Faulkner was still working after the fact--unlike most detective-story writers. Throughout the intensive rearranging to come, his tendency would be toward greater suspense and stricter chronology, further from Joseph

Conrad and closer to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle."[9] Absalom, Absalom!, perhaps his greatest work, has been called "the greatest detective story in American literature."[10] and Light in August marks the appearance of Gavin Stevens, the key figure of both Intruder and Knight's Gambit. The Stevens of Light in August, with his theorizing and speculations, anticipates the Stevens of Faulkner's detective stories, providing an instructive link between Faulkner's greatest novels and Knight's Gambit and Intruder in the Dust. Still, whatever hints his most outstanding novels provide, it is Faulkner's ostensible detective narratives, the stories of Knight's Gambit and the novel Intruder in the Dust, which testify most unequivocally to his abiding interest in the methods and meanings of detective fiction. The major novels simply substantiate that interest.

In general, critical responses to Faulkner's detective stories have tended to ignore or downplay the detective elements in these works, and to miss the psychological and sociological implications of the detective form. For example, D. Hutchinson, commenting on Intruder, says that "the Detective Story allows no development of character through Time. Hence Faulkner is using the thriller-pattern and Yoknapatawpha County to serve the unities of Action and Place respectively, but they are merely vehicles . . . ."[11] Similarly, while Millgate recognizes that the Knight's Gambit stories all "have the underlying structure of a detective story," he is quick to add: "but whereas 'Smoke' must be judged almost entirely upon its merits as a representative of that particular genre, the later stories often have other, and more valuable, qualities--qualities which might easily be overlooked by the reader whose approach has been limited and channelled by the initial encounter

with 'Smoke'."[12] Such responses typify the reaction to Faulkner's detective stories. In my view, however, the stories of Knight's Gambit deserve interpretation as detective fiction and not merely as tales that employ devices and structures from detective fiction.

I

Conflict is at the core of Faulkner's art. Among his most famous statements, and certainly his most repeated, is an observation on the seeds of his work: "I'm interested primarily in people, in man in conflict with himself, with his fellow man, or with his time and place, his environment."[13] This statement attains greater significance when considered with Richard Wilbur's remark, in a review of recent Poe criticism in 1969, that in Poe's detective stories the soul fathoms and orders itself.[14] Faulkner's dictum illustrates the parallel notion in his art: Wilbur's theory of fathoming and ordering suggests Faulkner's "man in conflict with himself"; the conflict within the human heart which underlies Faulkner's art is pivotal to any detective story. Poe, of course, is the father of all detective fiction. In his review, Wilbur remarks the "undercurrents" (the "submerged significance") in Poe's stories and traces "an allegorical dimension in which his characters are not distinct individuals but components of one personality." The doubling and oppositions in Poe's detective stories, particularly the relationships which evoke Dupin's "several natures," also draw his attention. His conclusion about "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," but applicable to Poe's other stories, is that "Allegorically, the action of the story has been a soul's fathoming and ordering of itself, its 'apprehension' of that base or evil force within it."[15]

Wilbur's notion that various characters function as components

of one central personality, the detective's, may be usefully employed in a psychological reading of Faulkner's detective stories. The very nature of the detective story permits Faulkner the necessary access--through the detective--to this central conflict of the soul, as well as coaxes the reader into identifying with the detective. Moreover, Wilbur's notion can be extended to include the sociological implications of the genre as well. Faulkner's detective stories display both the individual soul, the detective's and the reader's, in the act of psychologically fathoming and ordering itself, and the societal soul--the collective conscience--recognizing and then purging itself of the "base or evil force within it."

The act of recognition--of confrontation--between the detective and his "base" side (as represented by the criminal) is archetypal. Faulkner himself often affirmed the decidedly archetypal nature of his craft. He asserted "there are so few plots to write about" that writing must focus on "man in the ageless, eternal struggles which we inherit."[16] Man's conflict with himself is, for Faulkner, a universal and eternal struggle. Locating his dark side and purging it is equally universal and eternal: "the heart . . . has the desire to be better than man is, the up here [the mind] can know the distinction between good and evil, but it's the heart that makes you want to be better than you are."[17] The detective story allows Faulkner to explore, through a popular form, the conflict between good and evil, light and dark.

The archetypally significant discovery of evil, of course, constitutes the very center of some of Faulkner's greatest novels. Faulkner's

South is a patchwork quilt of sharp delineations between good and evil, light and dark, white and negro. Faulkner notes of the Southern white man that "because he's white and that Negro is not white . . . he's going to do everything he can to keep that Negro black, because it makes him feel good."[18] The Southern white man, according to Faulkner, "has forced the Negro to be always a Negro rather than another human being."[19] Faulkner explores the implications of these statements most boldly in Intruder in the Dust. In it he confronts the Southern white man's practice of projecting his psychological darkness onto the physical blackness of his culture: the negro has been the traditional (and easy) scapegoat for the white man's purging of guilt. Gavin Stevens, Faulkner's detective, illustrates this way of thinking nicely in Light in August. Theorizing about Joe Christmas' actions, Stevens claims that "his blood would not be quiet, let him save it. It would not be either one or the other and let his body save itself. Because the black blood drove him first to the negro cabin. And then the white blood drove him out of there, as it was the black blood which snatched up the pistol and the white blood which would not let him fire it."[20] Among other things, such neat compartmentalizing characterizes the southern white man's belief that metaphysical good and evil is represented by physical color. The stratified South--black is black (and thus evil), white is white (and thus good)--and Faulkner's interest in man's conflict with himself and with his environment find their apt expression in the form of the detective story. It permits ready identification between protagonist-detective (good) and antagonist-criminal (evil) at the same time that it recognizes the falsity of this opposition: Joe is, in Stevens' view, both white and

black, good and evil.

Recent critical theorizing about detective fiction, like Stevens' on Joe Christmas, resonates with sociological and psychological interpretations--what detective stories portend and mirror in terms of the individual and society. Cawelti argues that "popular story patterns [including detective fiction] are embodiments of archetypal story forms in terms of specific cultural materials." His book-length study of popular story formulas claims "that formulas are ways in which specific cultural themes and stereotypes became embodied in more universal story archetypes": "a formula is a combination or synthesis of a number of specific cultural conventions with a more universal story form or archetype."[21] Faulkner in his fiction often employs such combinations, adopting the more universal structure of the detective story and coloring it with the idiosyncracies and provincial attitudes of Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi.

Generally, most critics agree with Cawelti: the culture provides the texture for the text, the landscape for archetypal struggles between good and evil. Larry Landrum recognizes that "the investigation of wrongdoing and the search for solutions to problems found in detective fiction reaches beyond recorded history. The particular forms that such interests take are not universal, they emerge in particular cultures at particular times . . . ."[22] Dennis Porter, in The Pursuit of Crime, concurs: detective fiction is "a reflector and valuable barometer of the society's ideological norms"; "detective novels invariably project the image of a given social order and the implied value system that helps to sustain it," and "while we seem to be taking

only innocent pleasure in our popular readings we are always at the same time inserted into a cultural value system." Moreover, the relation of the environment to the crime is of great significance to any understanding of the author's own social values: "Landscapes appear either as the source and extension of the crimes reported or as their antithesis; the background a writer chooses for his work and his perception of its relationship to the evil events narrated express a socially evaluating vision."[23] Thus, the crime in a detective story both questions and reflects the work's inlaid sociological and psychological value systems; as Cawelti notes, "literary crime serves as an ambiguous mirror of social values reflecting both our overt commitments to certain principles of morality and order and our hidden resentments and animosity against these principles."[24] As Landrum observes, detective stories "seem to represent a way of reflecting upon the darker social metaphors of life."[25]

In general, Cawelti and Stephen Knight, among others, regard detective fiction as a genre of select sociological traits brushed onto a canvas of universal archetypes (e.g., fear of the unknown, the struggle between light and dark) and each detective story's unique landscape as reflecting those sociological characteristics. Knight's book, Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction, which "tries to establish the social implications, the ideologies of texts themselves," surveys the historical development of detective fiction and its sociological relevance in great detail, revealing the manner in which works by Poe, Doyle, Christie, and Chandler, to name a very few, represent extensions of the cultural worlds in which they appear.[26] Most usefully for my purposes, he also discusses the difference between the British and

American schools of detective fiction, between traditions epitomized by Sherlock Holmes and Sam Spade, between deductive ingenuity and macho hard-boiledness. Ironically, the British school has its origins in an American, Edgar Allan Poe. Generally, this school conforms to Poe's "principle of the detective hero as amateur of genius, who is drawn to the solution of mysterious crimes as to a superior form of ratiocinative play." The British school is recognized for its concentration on those ratiocinative powers--for its focus on the intellectual and intuitive prowess of its detective heroes. Often, "esoteric learning or scientific expertise" is a deciding element in the detective's triumph.[27] The focus is on the power of the grey cells. Not surprisingly, Gavin Stevens' successes result from his intellectual talents--he is "a Harvard graduate . . . who could discuss Einstein with college professors"--and not from street-wise physical prowess.[28]

Faulkner's notorious anglophilia probably tilted him toward the British school, leading him to concentrate on the Holmesian methods of deductive reasoning rather than the violent individualism of the hard-boiled school. Knight's Gambit and Intruder in the Dust are certainly not overtly traditional "British" detective stories, but they do maintain some basic affinities with the classical detective narrative. Faulkner himself, in response to a question about writing from the glands as opposed to the heart, criticized the American school. He noted that the writer "can successfully do it [write from the glands] like what's his name? Spillane and the toughs theme, but it's not good writing, it's not worth doing in my opinion. It's successful but it ain't worth doing."[29]

Despite this disclaimer, something of the American "tough guy" school of detective fiction may be discerned in Faulkner's treatment of crime and punishment in Sanctuary, particularly in his handling of Popeye, his consummate hard-boiled villain, and Horace Benbow, his ineffectual Holmes. The violent nature of the American hard-boiled school, according to Porter, "suggests the metaphor of the spreading stain," and Porter metaphorically defines the contrast between the two schools as that of the British monocle versus the American spittoon:[30] stains and spitting, it is worth noting, figure prominently in Sanctuary. Landrum observes that the American detective "becomes an extension of the atmosphere rather than its mediator," a perception that illuminates the differences between English and American responses to their respective environments.[31] The English tradition has been largely intellectual, cultural, and pastoral while the American experience has been harshly urban and marred by violence, superficiality and corruption. The two respective traditions of detective fiction reflect, for the most part, divergent sociological phenomena. Violence, not perspicaciousness, has been the American private eye's mastering tool of leverage, and like Benbow he has been as much a part of the pervasive evil as the criminal. The typical American private eye is something less than an exemplary representative of law, order, and righteousness. Unlike Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot or Gavin Stevens, he creates and follows his own laws. The criminal whom he pursues is no individual exception to a law-abiding society. He is, rather, a lawless extension, like the private eye, of a lawless culture.

In addition, the British school features two very important motifs. First, in the solving of the crime, the detective re-establishes

the firm grip of the status quo. He rejuvenates and reaffirms the middle-class values which he upholds. Porter notes that "a crime implies the violation of a community code and demands a response in terms of the code," adding that "there can be no transgression without a code, no individual criminal act without a community that condemns it."[32] By extension then, the solution of the crime or "transgression" is the unmasking of non-conformers. The unmasking of the criminal is, in effect, the re-establishment of a sociological code, the return of conformation. It is the repair of the broken fence and the return to pasture of the violating cow, to the relief and satisfaction of the orthodox, obedient herd.

Secondly, and more importantly, this restoration of the status quo is accomplished through a projection of guilt. Cawelti theorizes that

> instead of laying bare the hidden guilt of bourgeois society the detective-intellectual uses his demonic powers to project the general guilt onto specific and overt acts of particular individuals, thus restoring the serenity of the middle-class social order. Both Freud and Sherlock Holmes are intellectual investigators of the illicit secrets of middle class society.... But where Freud and other social and psychological critics such as Marx and his followers discovered everyone's guilt. Holmes and the other classical detectives absolved society by exposing the least-likely person or the master criminal.[33]

The projection of guilt is, as we shall see, crucial not only to a sociological reading of Faulkner's detective stories, but also to a psychological reading. The re-establishment of the herd's ideologies results from its projection of guilt: "Against a background of order and harmonious social relationships in a hierarchical society, crime is the exception that proves the rule . . . a sign of the persistence

of old Adam or of the diabolic principles eternally at work in the world."[34] The herd is as guilty as the violating cow, yet it ostracizes the wayward cow for its submission to the lure of the dark side. The herd, needing to punish the violation, to project its guilt, to preserve its self-esteem, locates a scapegoat--a procedure which allows it to experience vicariously the attraction of the old Adam without suffering the penalties of the sociological code. Thus, both psychological and sociological imperatives find satisfactory expression. The herd is absolved without ever having been indicted.

Cawelti extends these observations to the reader as well: "Ultimately he [the detective] uses his powers not to threaten but to uphold the reader's self-esteem by proving the guilt of a specific individual rather than exposing some general guilt in which the reader might be implicated."[35] The complicity between detective-protagonist and reader, Cawelti argues, differs from that usually found in "mimetic" literature. In formulaic literature such as the detective story the "escapist" function is paramount: "Its purpose is not to make me confront motives and experience in myself that I might prefer to ignore but to take me out of myself by confirming an idealized self-image."[36] The detective becomes, then, a mediator through which the reader can vicariously experience and deal with otherwise forbidden lures such as murder.

Cawelti, I believe, misapprizes somewhat this detective-reader relationship. The reader, I would suggest, does confront the conflicts, the evil, the guilt which the detective faces. However, he does so by conjoining with and becoming the detective, not by escaping his

world and entering into the world of the detective. This genre, perhaps more than any other, relies on reader participation and not detached spectatorship, and to this detective-reader alliance we must add a third party--the criminal. As a result the genre bristles with potential identifications. The reader becomes the detective. The criminal becomes an element of the detective. The reader then becomes the criminal. The simple act of reading permits, and even encourages, these kinds of connections; the reader's identification with the detective initiates this tripartite fusing of identities. Cawelti claims that "in the detective story the inquirer--protagonist and the hidden guilt are conveniently split into two separate characters--the detective and the criminal--thereby enabling us [the readers] to imagine terrible crimes without also having to recognize our own impulses toward them.[37] But in my view our imagining of the crime is the implicit recognition that we can identify with the criminal as easily as the detective. We affirm our demonic capacities while applauding the criminal's momentary successes. This reader-criminal identification, rather than that of reader and detective, is responsible for the chill and thrill of the detective story.

My point here may be seen in another feature of the British school of detective fiction. Following Poe's lead by way of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, it inserted a mediator between the reader and the detective. This, of course, was Watson, the faithful apostle. Watson became the reader's window, the innocent medium through which the reader views the action of the story. Yet, as innocent or naive or witless as Watson may appear, a high level of manipulation is involved in his presentation. The author, of course, determines what Watson perceives, why

he perceives it, and when. Watson becomes more than simply a mediator: he serves as a buffer between reader and detective, preventing full and immediate identification with the detective. He becomes what Porter calls a "false detective" and in this role helps to prolong the suspense of the story through his well-intended but misdirected solutions.[38] Moreover, by distancing the reader from the detective, and (through his witlessness) from himself the Watson-figure permits a range of possible identifications to emerge.

Faulkner borrows the Watson-figure from Doyle, but he employs this device in his own way and for his own distinct purposes. Charles Mallison, of course, plays Watson to Gavin Stevens' Sherlock Holmes. Yet, unlike the bumbling Watson, Mallison evolves into a character who is often more perceptive and "detective-like" than his acknowledged master. At first, in <u>Knight's Gambit</u>, Mallison is the willing yet passive student of Stevens, although he is not nearly as obtuse as Watson. But by "Knight's Gambit" Chick graduates to equality with Gavin, if not clearly surpassing him. In so doing, Mallison exhibits a maturation and development which Dr. Watson never attains. Just as importantly this formerly weak link between the reader and the detective is strengthened. In fact, Stevens and Mallison, in the title story, fuse together: Mallison provides the courage and persistence exhibited by a younger Stevens in <u>Knight's Gambit</u> and Stevens provides the intellect and planning. In Faulkner's detective stories, the doubling/splitting of detective and criminal is extended to include detective and narrator/point of view character. Mallison and Stevens both contribute necessary elements to the solving of the crime (as in <u>Intruder in the Dust</u>) and in doing so become aspects of the same

central conscience which controls the novel.

The detective's kinship with the criminal and the resulting psychological fusing of the two in the reader's mind provide the axis on which a detective story turns. Sherlock Holmes often mused about what a superb criminal he would have made. The boundary which separates the detective and the criminal, like that between love and hate, good and evil, is, as we have recognized, a fine one. The bond which holds together these ostensibly opposed psychological impulses has a firm archetypal base in the Cain and Abel story. Born of the same father and mother, the brothers have become paradigms for inherent evil and inherent good, respectively. Physical representations of two distinct but equal psychological impulses, Cain and Abel are two different aspects of what I would term the Original Psyche--Adam. Detectives and criminals have opposed each other since that very first murder in which the dark side of the psyche sought to eliminate the light side, but they are kin nonetheless.

Along with the Oedipus story, the Cain and Abel story contains the seeds of a prominent element in the classical British detective story: family discord. Cawelti notes that "the classical detective story enabled readers to entertain some very powerful latent feelings generated by the repressiveness of the family circle by treating in fantasy a domestic murder, but in such a way as to negate any feelings of implication or guilt on the part of the reader."[39] The hub of the British detective novel, the family is equally central to Faulkner's great novels, most notably The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom! Given this similarity in purpose, it was inevitable that Faulkner would

produce detective stories based on classical British models. Knight's Gambit, particularly the title story, provides examples of parricide and potential parricides, as does Intruder.

The British classical detective story also employs another motif which is significant for Faulkner's detective stories and, in fact, his entire canon: the disruptive intruder or outsider, a notion closely related to Cawelti's theories on the projection of guilt in detective fiction, especially his concept of the "least-likely person."[40] The consequence of this feature is that guilt in the British detective novel, as we have seen, is shouldered by a person with whom the reader and the detective maintain no lasting sympathies beyond the momentary recognition of their dark sides in that criminal figure. Thus, the status quo is absolved of any enduring responsibility and guilt, as are the detective and reader. Cawelti affirms that "the reader is metaphorically threatened with exposure and shame. Then the detective proves that the sympathetic characters cannot be guilty . . . ."[41] Similarly, Porter outlines methods utilized by such British figures as Agatha Christie and Q. K. Chesterton to portray this "threat from without."[42] In Faulkner's detective stories this "threat" materializes from Beat Four or Frenchman's Bend. These external regions of Yoknapatawpha offer a constant menace to the existing moral foundations of Jefferson.

Porter suggests, in reference to Christie and Chesterton, that "the detective novel of the above type implies a complicity against civilized order between the natural savagery without and the criminals among us."[43] Porter's observation is certainly pertinent to Faulkner's

detective stories. Faulkner's excursions into this genre illustrate both "the natural savagery without" and "the criminal among us" and, more importantly, a firm connection between the two. The "savagery without" fittingly characterizes the detective story's sociological vein. The Faulkner criminal is always a member of Yoknapatawpha's exterior layer. Thus, Jefferson itself is cleansed; the status quo is restored. Guilt is located in an outsider or the least-likely person. The collective sociological conscience redeems itself through this communal projection of guilt. Jefferson purges the sin--the "savagery without"--and orders its psyche. The sociological dark side is uncovered and eliminated.

On the other hand, Porter's notion of "the criminals among us" characterizes the psychological vein of the detective story. The criminal resides in our psychological backyard--in our minds and in our families. As Cawelti observes, the crimes of the British school novels frequently involve the family and stem from deep family hates, jealousies, and loves--any hidden or harbored emotion. Faulkner must have relished this aspect of the detective story, for he panoplied his stories with twins, brothers, and sisters. The most important relationship of his detective stories is that between Gavin Stevens and Charles Mallison (uncle and nephew). Likewise, Faulkner must have relished introducing murder into his families. One of the dramatic and telling effects of <u>Intruder</u> is the sudden apprehension that Vinson Gowrie was murdered by his brother--a "criminal among us"--and not by the black "outsider," Lucas Beauchamp, embodiment of "the natural savagery without." We must look to the mirror for the sources of evil, not out the window.

This survey of recent scholarship on detective fiction provides the basis for my examination of Knight's Gambit. The socially reflective nature of the detective story; its role as a "barometer"; its importance in guilt-projection and guilt-purgation; the strong psychological bond between detective (by extension, reader) and criminal; the restoration of the status quo; the threat from without; these will mark the boundaries of my investigation of Faulkner's detective stories.

This compilation of recent, important, critical commentary regarding detective fiction is invaluable to an intensive study of Knight's Gambit because Porter, Cawelti, Landrum, and others define so clearly those elements which appear in Faulkner's detective stories. Knight's Gambit reflects the psychological and sociological landscape of this genre which is so precisely sketched by these critics.

II

All of the stories in Knight's Gambit save the title story were fully completed by 1941, and, remarkably, Faulkner did not tinker with them in their journey from magazine to book form. "Error in Chemistry," although not sold until 1946, was probably finished in late 1940.[44] "Smoke" appeared in Harper's in April, 1932. "Monk" surfaced in Scribner's in May, 1937. The Saturday Evening Post published "Hand Upon the Waters" in November, 1939, and "Tomorrow" a year later. "Error in Chemistry" materialized in the Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine of June 1946. The title story, "Knight's Gambit," experienced a much different and rougher road to its inclusion in the volume which bears its name. Faulkner wrestled with the story for over seven years, yet he was never able to place it anywhere and it remained unpublished until the appearance of Knight's Gambit in 1949.[45]

Faulkner's conception of this volume whose marrow would be Gavin Stevens in the role of Holmesian detective took form in 1945. He wrote to Haas in late September or early October that "some day I might collect or finish out a series of Gavin Stevens detective pieces."[46] A month later Faulkner wrote to Saxe Commins confirming his explicit interest in the project and reaffirming some of the frustrations he was experiencing as he labored to restructure "Knight's Gambit":

> I am thinking of a 'Gavin Stevens' volume, more or less detective stories. I have four or five short pieces, averaging 20 pages . . . . There is one more which no one

> has bought. The reason is, it is a novel which I tried to compress into a short story length . . . . This is the story I seem to be hottest to write now.[47]

Indeed, Faulkner was "hot" to finish "Knight's Gambit." As part of the Faulkner revival inaugurated by Malcolm Cowley's Viking Portable Faulkner, plans for a volume of collected stories were also proceeding rapidly, but Faulkner felt strongly that the Stevens stories deserved their own vehicle. His affection for the title story, and especially the figure of Gavin Stevens in that story, motivated his desire for a separate volume, perhaps because Stevens is often compared to Faulkner's lawyer friend Phil Stone. But as Joseph Blotner notes, "In terms of significant events, however, Stevens was more indebted to Faulkner than to Stone."[48] Certainly, Stevens' marriage to an early sweetheart many years after the original courtship echoes Faulkner's own life, a connection which may explain his special feeling for "Knight's Gambit."

The swift process from conception to publication of Knight's Gambit was highly uncharacteristic of Faulkner books. He made no revisions of the five stories previously printed in the various magazines. The only hurdles, and they were minor ones, surfaced in his struggles with the title story. He had expanded his original 1942 version of "Knight's Gambit" from a short story into a novella. According to Blotner, "there was one major addition to the story line: the solution of the mystery and prevention of the crime were now followed by Gavin Stevens' reuniting with the sweetheart he had lost twenty years before."[49] Faulkner sent the finished piece to Saxe Commins on June 1; there were some assorted inconsequential editor--author hagglings, but no deep rifts over any proposed changes in the story. Even the galleys "required none of the painstaking work he had expended on galleys of

major works."[50]

These pre-publication matters bear on the question of unity which has consistently been a crux in the interpretation of Faulkner's short story sequences. Faulkner considered the stories assembled in volumes such as Go Down Moses and The Unvanquished to be informed by some central purpose, theme, or figure, and conceived Knight's Gambit as a sequence akin to Go Down Moses--controlled by an operating focus. As he remarked in a letter to Cowley in 1948, "the one worthwhile purpose of any book...even a collection of short stories, form, integration, is as important as to a novel--an entity of its own, single, set for one pitch, contrapuntal in integration, toward one end, one finale."[51] As early as March of 1949 he outlined to Saxe Commins in detail the order of the six stories which would appear in Knight's Gambit in the late fall.[52] Faulkner re-iterated his original plan in another letter to Commins on May 1, asking him to "set these titles [of the Knight's Gambit stories] in smaller type, more like chapter headings."[53] Thus Faulkner clearly envisioned the separate stories as interdependent chapters, a view which suggests how we should read and interpret Knight's Gambit.

"Smoke", the opening story, apparently held some fascination for Faulkner. The first of the six stories which he wrote and the first to be published, following some frenzied revising, the story appeared in publication on three occasions. Faulkner reprinted the story in the Doctor Martino collection prior to its appearance in Knight's Gambit. Michael Millgate regards it as "the weakest of the six" and believes it "extraordinary that Faulkner should have been

attached to so undistinguished a work."[54]

Perhaps Faulkner looked upon "Smoke" with the bias of a father for his first born, for "Smoke" was Faulkner's first plunge into detective fiction. While not his best effort in this genre, the story presents certain motifs which are central to any interpretation of his other detective narratives. "Smoke" opens with a recounting of the apparently accidental death of Anselm Holland, Sr. Holland had frequently quarrelled, we learn, with his twin sons, Anselm, Jr., and Virginius, mostly over the care and inheritance of the farm belonging to their dead mother. In anger, Anselm, Jr., had left the farm fifteen years prior to his father's death, Virginius departed ten years later to stay with a cousin, Granby Dodge. Holland leaves the estate to Virginius, but before Judge Dukinfield can validate the will he is murdered. At the Grand Jury hearing Stevens tricks Dodge into revealing himself as the murderer: he had hired a Memphis hitman to kill the judge and had murdered Holland himself after finding the latter beaten by Anselm, Jr., for digging up his mother's grave.

One notable feature of "Smoke" is the clear-cut opposition between Jefferson and various "outsiders," an opposition that Faulkner would later employ in Light in August and Absalom, Absalom! Both one victim, Anselm Holland, who "came to Jefferson many years ago, where from, no one knew," and his murderer, Granby Dodge, are outsiders to Jefferson, though both have resided in the area for many years. The other victim, Judge Dukinfield, is an old member of Jefferson's firmly established status quo. The embodiment of justice, "probity and honor" (p. 11) in Jefferson, he has been judge as long as Gavin has been county

attorney--seventeen years, and, as such, is not only an insider but a member of the ruling class, a representative of the values of the Jefferson community. Given his standing in this community, his death must be avenged. When Dodge's guilt is exposed, Jefferson is vindicated, its rule of law restored, the threat to its communal self-esteem revealed as proceeding from "foreign" elements. Not only is Granby Dodge an outsider, but the man hired by Dodge to murder the Judge is a "city man" (p. 30) from sin-riddled Memphis.

For most of the story, however, attention is focused on Anse, Sr.'s often violent disagreements with his sons. Faulkner craftily directs suspicion first toward one, then toward the other of Anse's twin sons and away from Dodge. As Porter observes, such uses of the false criminal--basic to detective story structuring--impede the progress toward a solution as well as provide suspense.[55] Faulkner rarely mentions Dodge while alternately manipulating our sympathies and suspicions towards Anse, Jr. and Virginius. Then, in some last-minute sleight of hand, he unmasks the guilt of Dodge, the "least-likely person," thereby illuminating the innocence of Anse's sons, one of whom has become part of the Jefferson community, and absolving Jefferson from whatever doubts it may have entertained about itself.

A very substantial portion of "Smoke" consists of the long trial scene in which Stevens reconstructs--at length--the crime and the criminal's psyche. Porter observes that "detective fiction is preoccupied with closing the logical-temporal gap that separates the present of the discovery of the crime from the past that prepared it." A detective novel, then, "is composed of two contradictory

elements": it progresses toward a solution while digressing away from it.[56] This apparent anomaly provides the resident tension inherent in the genre--the tension which is transformed into suspense. Ravelling and unravelling occur on the same spool. Faulkner employs Gavin Stevens in this way: the attorney's lengthy digression on the Holland case also manages to progress toward a solution.

More importantly, Faulkner's use of Stevens accomplishes two other purposes. First, Faulkner coaxes the reader into identifying with Stevens. Secondly, Faulkner depicts Stevens' identification with--or empathetic understanding of--the criminal and, metaphorically, his dark side. Faulkner manages the reader-Stevens identification through, in part, his use of the first person plural point of view: "Now and then we would stop and talk to him" (p. 14); "We could not see yet what he was getting at" (p. 24). In addition to suggesting Jefferson's sense of itself as a community, this maneuver implicates the reader in the story's events. The reader adopts the town's point of view, eventually coming to preside in the judge's chambers as a jury member--"we, the jury" (p. 26)--and participate in the unmasking of the criminal. But the town's representative/surrogate is Stevens the detective. The narrator laments on numerous occasions that "we must have known all the time" (p. 24,29) and observes on others that "we were not surprised" (p. 4). What Stevens discloses is only what the town, at some level, already knows. Thus, the impulses of all three--detective, jury, and reader--are conjoined. They seek to solve the crime. Gavin Stevens, of course, solves it first, but this fact does not deprive the audiences of and in the book of their roles as potential detectives. It simply relegates their status to passive, Watson-like amateurs.

Stevens' identification with the criminal is suggested in a number of ways, primarily through various doublings in the story. Like much of Poe's work, "Smoke" incorporates doubling on many levels. The physical doubling of the twins Anselm Jr. and Virginius Holland is the most obvious: "the two brothers sitting at opposite ends of the bench, with their dark identical, aquiline faces, their arms folded in identical attitudes" (p. 14). Faulkner also doubles father and son: "Old Anse and Young Anse were like water. Dark water, maybe . . . " (p. 6); they were "so much alike" (p. 5). Faulkner complicates these relationships, however: "Virginius, the other twin, act[ed] as mediator and [was] cursed for his pains by both father and brother; he was that sort, Virginius was" (p. 4). The twins thus are split, "separated, not by the living father, but by what each had inherited from him" (p. 15). Here, Faulkner evokes the Cain-Abel antagonism, intimating that each twin embodies a part of his father. Virginius--"farming the land his father had never done justice to" (p. 5); temperate: honorable--apparently is the good side, while Anselm Jr.--"the one who was most like his father" (p. 4)--represents the furious passion which so consumed his father. Together they establish an archetypally-based atmosphere in which good and evil appear as different sides of the same coin--two children of the same father. Significantly, only the sociable Virginius will become a part of Jefferson; the choleric Anse, "a man without citizenship, with a blemished name," has in effect given up "'that damned farm'," preferring to live "alone . . . like a hermit" in the hills (pp. 23, 5). Like his equally choleric father, Anse is effectively banished from the community. Evil--in his case, anger, in Dodge's, avarice--has been routed; Jefferson has been purged.

The Hollands' dual nature alerts us to other doublings in the story. In his essay on Poe, Wilbur detects in Dupin, Poe's detective, "two distinct speaking voices, one high and one low," and concludes that "the narrator thus introduces, early on, the crucial idea that one person may contain several natures."[57] Stevens exhibits a curiously similar proclivity. Faulkner describes this quality soon after introducing his detective:

> He was a Harvard graduate: a loose-jointed man with a mop of untidy iron-gray hair, who could discuss Einstein with college professors and who spent whole afternoons among the squatting men against the walls of country stores, talking to them in their idiom. (p. 16)

Stevens' dual nature echoes in every Faulkner detective story. He can effectively communicate with both the upper and lower strata of his society. His impressive catalogue of degrees from Harvard and Heidelberg does not isolate him in an ivory tower, nor prevent him from understanding and relating to the passions and failings of less educated men.

Dodge, whom Stevens unmasks, is something of a split personality: "no farmer either," he is "half a stock-trader and half a lay preacher" (p. 7). Usually the object of "pity" and "disgust," "on Sundays, in the pulpits of country churches, he became a different man, changed; his voice then timbrous and moving and assured out of all proportion to his nature and his size" (p. 19). In his unmasking of Dodge, Stevens completely adopts the criminal's point of view, imagining his motives, his worries, his actions, his panic: " . . . 'imagine the waiting,' Stevens said, 'with that man knowing what was going to happen before it happened . . . '" (p. 19). Like Stevens, Dodge "is a shrewd man, a man

of self-control and foresight" (p. 15), but like Moriarity, he meets his match in Jefferson's Holmes.

One last doubling deserves remarking: that of Anse, Sr. and Judge Dukinfield. They are both patriarchs, fathers--though one is the father in his most malevolent aspect; the other, his most benign. Anse is an interloper who acquires his authority and lands (which he "mistreats" [p. 6]) from his wife's father and who desecrates the graves where his wife and "his wife's people rested" (p. 4); the Judge is a father to Jefferson, "a man who never did man, woman, or child aught but good as he believed that he and God saw it" (p. 22). That both are killed by Dodge suggests something of the Oedipus story--the necessary psychological substitutions being made. One might easily see the city killer--whom we last hear of in jail, snarling--as a surrogate for Anse, Jr.: after a heated quarrel with his father he leaves home for ten years; returns; quarrels again with father and brother; is convicted and jailed for moonshining; eventually removes himself to the country hills, becoming "a dark, silent, . . . man whom neighbors and strangers let severely alone" (p. 5). And one might regard Dodge, whom Virginius moves in with and with whom Virginius executes a "mutual deed-of-trust will" (p. 33), as a surrogate for Virginius as well as a double of the Memphis killer: Jefferson has problems 'seeing' either killer (pp. 7, 27, 30). The psychological symmetry is almost perfect. Both sons have their wicked counterpart or double and, through their substitutes, kill first the wicked father and then the would-be avenging father. As noted earlier, however, only the virtuous, socialized son benefits from these parricides. Fittingly enough, Anse, who confesses to killing his father because he thought he actually had, disappears

back into the hills. Poetic and social and psychological justice is served.

Once characterized by Faulkner as "Not too good,"[58] "Monk," the next story in the sequence, reverberates with psychological and sociological implications. Unlike most detective stories, it is character-centered rather than plot-centered, and despite Faulkner's judgment, it remains an unsettling portrayal of the mentally impotent and Christ-evoking Monk Odlethrop's exploitation by a corrupt society.

"Monk" traces the life of Monk Odlethrop, a simple, moronic man with a "dog-like" obedience and devotion--first to his grandmother, then to a whiskey-maker named Fraser--who is accused and convicted of two murders. The first murder, for which Monk is imprisoned at the state penitentiary, occurs at a filling station where he works and lives. Five years later one of the murdered man's two companions confesses to the killing, but Monk refuses to leave the penitentiary when Gavin Stevens informs him of his freedom: he had found a home. Then, unaccountably, a week later he murders Warden Gambrell. Befriended by Gambrell, he had kept the warden's house and was knitting a sweater for him at the time of the killing. Nonetheless, no mistake had been made this time: witnesses saw Monk pull the trigger. Stevens suspects that Monk has acted at the urging of someone else, that he does not comprehend what he has done. Only a fluke incident some time later at a meeting of the State Pardon Board sets Stevens onto the actual murderer, convict Bill Terrel. The Governor refuses to act on Stevens' information and includes Terrel among the convicts he has determined to pardon.

Michael Millgate correctly observes that "this is not, in the end, Monk's story, but Gavin Stevens'."[59] Stevens emerges as the only person concerned with righting justice or pursuing the truth about the crimes that Monk is punished for: "nobody except my Uncle Gavin seemed to be concerned about Monk" (p. 46). "Monk" becomes Stevens' story because the lawyer-detective is forced to confront the evil epitomized by the actions of Terrel, the governor and southern society with regard to Monk. In this story, he learns, the society-criminal relation is reversed: the putative criminal is the victim of the society whose laws he ostensibly transgresses. Despite a considerable effort, he is overpowered by the forces of darkness. Stevens cannot cope with a society which blinds itself to wrongs committed in its service and permits the guilty to go free. He returns to Jefferson, an apparent failure.

Has Stevens really failed? His attempt to right the wrong of Monk's hanging founders, in part, because he wanders outside his sphere of influence. We are reminded of Faulkner's description of the Stevens in <u>Light in August</u>: "he had got out of his depth."[60] Stevens departs Jefferson and suddenly becomes ineffectual. Like <u>Sanctuary</u>'s Horace Benbow, with whom he shares various traits, Stevens discovers evil at the very core of society. The discovery appalls and disgusts him. The Governor, who "would hand out pardons to various convicts in the same way that the English king gives out knighthoods and garters on his birthday" (p. 51), is the rot at this core. When Stevens realizes that the Governor will not re-incarcerate Terrel, and, in fact, "refuses" to hear Stevens recount Terrel's confession (p. 59), he starts

> back to Jefferson at once, riding across the broad, heat-miraged land, between the cotton and the corn of God's long-fecund, remorseless acres, which would outlast any corruption and injustice. He was glad of the heat, he said; glad to be sweating, sweating out of himself the smell and the taste of where he had been. (p. 59-60)

Stevens must return to his Jefferson world, where the criminal is "the exception that proves the rule . . . a sign of the persistence of old Adam," and not the ruler himself.[61]

But is Jefferson really exempt from the corruption Stevens discovers? Unlike "Smoke," wherein we see the good Judge Dukinfield avenged, justice served, and order restored, "Monk" portrays a judicial system rife with incompetence and corruption from top to bottom, from Jackson to Jefferson. Together an ambitious young District Attorney and an incompetent young Jefferson public defender collaborate in Monk's initial wrongful conviction. Three years after Monk's execution, the Governor, who has "the Pardon Board completely under his thumb" (p. 51), denies Stevens the opportunity to clear Monk's name. Moreover, to gain "votes from the kin of the men he would pardon" (p. 51), he lets go free the men who "killed them [Monk and the Warden] both as surely as if he had fired the pistol and sprung that trap" (P. 53).

Society, as in Sanctuary, is Monk's "trap." From the first, Monk, the least among us, is society's unwanted child. His early life is a horror: raised first by a "hermit" grandmother who dies when he is six (p. 41), then by Fraser the bootlegger, this "homeless dog" (p. 43) eventually finds a home in Jefferson--in the back room of a filling station. After he is convicted, however, he finds his sociologically appropriate home in the penitentiary and becomes literally a ward of the state. To the warden he transfers "the same doglike

devotion which he had given to old Fraser" (p. 47). At this point in the story psychological and sociological implications fuse. The unwanted son kills the man who both embodies society's coercive power and figures as a substitute for the father he never had (Oedipal strife may also be discerned in Terrel's relations with his children [p. 56]). But he does so as the agent of "poor ignorant country folks that hadn't had no chance" (p. 57). The Monks of the world are continually victimized by "rich folks"; "we have sinned against God but it wasn't our fault because they hadn't told us what it was He aimed for us to do" (p. 55). Parricide becomes a crime against the state, against its corrupt and arbitrary authority as exercised by both the governor and the warden (see p. 57), against society's callous indifference and its casual countenancing of injustice. As even the governor recognizes, "politics in the twentieth century is a sorry thing" (p. 54).

Despite the occasional disturbing psychological undertones, "Monk" is essentially a sociological commentary, more so than any other in Knight's Gambit. Stevens sets out to right a specific injustice. Ultimately, he stumbles upon the larger injustice which he finds at the center of Mississippi's social organization, not in the nooks and crannies of society. Twentieth-century evil is incarnate in the symbolic figure of the governor, who will blandly free murderers in return for votes. "Monk" provides no spiritual or psychological cleansing for Stevens. Rather, it ends with his discovery of the persistent evil in man and his works. Sweating in the sun only momentarily cleanses the guilt Stevens feels for his own personal failure and that of his corrupt, compromised, or indifferent fellow Southerners. Like

Horace Benbow, Stevens cannot fully face his discovery and so returns to his former comfortable environment where black, he thinks, is never white.

As we have seen, however, if he believes this he is mistaken. Although he plays no part in it, the story is told by his nephew, Chick Mallison. This device enables Faulkner to distance the reader from the action of the story, to see Monk for what he is: a sociological case-study. Unlike the communal spokesman-narrator of "Smoke," Mallison vicariously experiences Monk's story and inherits his uncle's perception of a society whose traditional, "rural" values have been cheapened, if not entirely lost. Jefferson had shown Monk little interest or charity. Instead, in "one of the shortest trials ever held in our county" (p. 46), it convicted a man who "should never have gone to the penitentiary at all" (p. 39), a man whose chief crime seems to be that "he was no loss to anyone" (p. 43).

In "Hand Upon the Waters" Stevens encounters another moron and solves another murder. The focus, as in "Smoke," is on his detective skills, not, as in "Monk," on what he learns about Southern justice. At one point, Stevens laments that "It don't add. Something more that I missed, didn't see" (p. 70). That "something" proves to be the paddle found in the boat near Lonnie Grinnup's body. Stevens will recognize that Lonnie had no use for a paddle with a trotline strung across the river. This deduction leads to the eventual unmasking of the criminal, Boyd Ballenbaugh.

The story begins with Lonnie Grinnup found dead, hanging on a trotline. Gavin Stevens, who alone knows that Grinnup was the sole

descendant of Louis Grenier, one of Yoknapatawpha's founding families, investigates and comes to suspect Tyler Ballenbaugh of the killing, Tyler having taken out, in another county, a $5,000 insurance policy on Lonnie. Stevens confronts Ballenbaugh and his young, hot-headed brother Boyd at Lonnie's dilapidated river shack, and learns that the latter has killed Lonnie. Boyd, in a fit of rage, turns on his older brother Tyler and shoots him with his own gun. As he turns to shoot Stevens, Joe, Lonnie's idiot ward, jumps from the tree where, for nine days, he had waited loyally and kills Boyd. Boyd's body is later found on the trotline.

As in "Smoke," a good deal of doubling is employed. The Ballenbaugh brothers, Tyler and Boyd, come immediately to mind. At first they seem peas from the same evil pod. Tyler has a "reputation for self-sufficiency and violence, who had been born in the county and went out West and returned, bringing with him, like an effluvium, rumors of sums he had won gambling" (p. 70). Boyd is the younger brother, a man with an unsavory Memphis past who engages in occasional "brawls and fights at country dances and picnics" (p. 71). This introduction to the Ballenbaughs, however, proves a piece of detective-story misdirection. By the conclusion of the story our sympathies have shifted towards Tyler. He condemns his younger brother's actions and attempts to punish Boyd for his deed:

> 'This is the end of the row. I was afraid from that night when you came home and told me. I should have raised you better, but I didn't. Here. Stand up and finish it.' (p. 78)

The brothers, by this point, have evolved into Cain and Abel. Boyd's attempt to kill his brother can also be seen as a blow against

"paternal" authority: Tyler is "the older brother who made him work about the farm," the family head who refused to "give [him] ten dollars" (pp. 71, 78).

The Ballenbaughs are not the only set of brothers in "Hand." Joe, Lonnie's "deaf-and-dumb companion" (and like Monk, another of Faulkner's idiots), is figuratively Lonnie's son and brother (pp. 66, 67). By killing Boyd, he avenges the attacks on both father-brothers and closes the psychological circle. In this story, justice is an "eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth" (p. 77).

Gavin Stevens' kinship with the murdered Lonnie Grinnup also deserves notice. Faulkner calls attention to their special relationship following the discovery of Lonnie's body: "He [Stevens] was going to look at the dead man's face for a sentimental reason" (p. 65). Stevens and Grinnup are the last descendants of the "three simultaneous" pioneers who founded Yoknapatawpha county (p. 66). Ironically, Grinnup "had never even known he was Louis Grenier," descended from one of Jefferson's original founders (p. 66). With Grinnup murdered, Stevens is now the very last. Faulkner notes that Grinnup had been "an orphan, too, like Stevens" (p. 66), thus strengthening the psychological bond between Stevens and Grinnup. Faulkner intertwines psychological and historical interests by linking them.

Psychologically speaking, when Joe swoops out of the tree to save Stevens' life, he is, in light of the Stevens-Grinnup bond, rescuing his father. Similarly, Stevens' covering-up for the child-like Joe--"How did Boyd get on the trotline, Gavin?' 'I don't know,' Stevens said" (p. 80)--is the action of a father protecting his son. If Stevens

feels a certain kinship with Lonnie Grinnup, he also understands the actions of the Ballenbaughs. Understanding criminal psychology (cf. p. 74), he knows they will return to the scene of the crime.

With their identification of detective and criminal, their intricate linking of various characters and their use of family relationships, Faulkner's detective stories reveal what Wilbur recognizes in Poe's:

> The implication is that the mastermind Dupin, who can intuitively fathom all the other characters of the narrative, is to be seen as including them all--that the other 'persons' of the tale are to be taken allegorically as elements of one person, whereof Dupin is the presiding faculty.[62]

Stevens is able to enter the criminal mind. He also allies himself with the victim, Lonnie Grinnup. (Stevens' similar kinship with Judge Dukinfield, the victim in "Smoke," comes quickly to mind.) Thus, the detective merges into the principal psyches, criminal and victim (dark side and light side): they become elements of his psyche. The reader, in identifying with the detective and his efforts, experiences a similar kind of identity fragmentation and consolidation through the events of the story. When murderer and victim exchange places on the trotline, his psychological equilibrium is restored.

Historical and sociological interests emerge in "Hand" through Faulkner's concern with the deterioration of the South's traditional economic and value systems. The decay of the South is a notion central to all of Faulkner; in his detective stories it often appears as an opposition between outsiders and Jeffersonians, between farmers and non-farmers ("They said of old Anse, 'Wherever he came from and whatever he was bred to be, it was not a farmer' [p. 5]), and between city and

country values, often imaged in appearance and dress. Monk's mother is "a woman with hard, bright, metallic city hair and a hard, blonde, city face" (p. 41); as an indication of Jefferson's corruption, when Monk comes to town he becomes "Known about town now, in the cheap, bright town clothes for which he had discarded his overalls" (p. 43).

In effect Lonnie Grinnup's life and fate is a paradigm of the South's historical fall from grace and Faulkner's takes some pains to delineate his importance as a symbol. Lonnie, of course, is the unaware descendant of one of Yoknapatawpha's founding families, yet "He could not even spell the Lonnie Grinnup he called himself" (p. 66). The once proud names are now lost or corrupted. Lonnie does not live on an expansive plantation, which might be expected for a man of such stock, but "year in and year out, in the hovel he had built himself of an old tent and a few mismatched boards and flattened oil tins" (p. 66). Significantly, Lonnie's "hut and trotline and fishtrap were in almost the exact center of the thousand and more acres his ancestors had once owned. But he never knew it" (p. 66). The traditional old South ends with Lonnie Grinnup, who doesn't even know who he is let alone who his storied ancestors are. Lonnie is dependant, not on the work of slaves and the riches of cotton, but on his meagre trotline and the occasional benevolence of his neighbors. His murder marks a final stage in Southern history, as does the execution of Stonewall Jackson "Monk" Odlethrop. Despite his incapacities, Lonnie was "of the earth which belongs to all, to every man for his use and pleasure" (pp. 66-67). Boyd Ballenbaugh, on the other hand, represents the citified "New South" which scorns farming and in its greed is willing to sacrifice "a good name" (p. 77).

"Tomorrow" is the Knight's Gambit story which lays the most limited claim to detective fiction, being a twenty-year flashback to Gavin Stevens' first case. Buck Thorpe--"Kinless, who had appeared overnight from nowhere, a brawler, a gambler," a bootlegger and a thief (p. 86)--has been shot and killed by Bookwright because he had attempted to elope with Bookwright's infatuated daughter. Bookwright's acquittal in the murder trial seems to be a foregone conclusion until the jury is hung by a stubborn Stonewall Jackson Fentry. Stevens, Bookwright's attorney, must know why. Part of the story he learns from Fentry's neighbor: the rest from Isham Quick. Years earlier Fentry had left the family farm to work at the Quick sawmill, where he had met and married a woman abandoned by her husband and pregnant with his child. The wife died in childbirth shortly after Fentry married her, and Fentry brought the baby back to the Fentry homestead, where a few years later the wife's family appeared, with legal papers, to claim the child. That child, named Jackson and Longstreet Fentry by Fentry, came eventually to be known as Buck Thorpe after his mother's family. Stonewall Jackson Fentry simply could not acquit the killer of his "son" regardless of the circumstances.

Millgate claims that "none of the qualities which give [it] interest derive from [its] detective aspects," adding that Faulkner's treatment of Jackson Fentry and characters of "his type and background" had been covered "sufficiently" in The Hamlet and that Faulkner was "drawing on work which was already behind him, which had been absorbed into his creative equipment as part of his repertoire, his always available stock-in-trade."[63] Millgate's point is well taken: certainly, Stevens chases no criminal in "Tomorrow," nor does he solve

a crime. However, he does unravel a mystery, and in so doing learns something more about the human "complexity of passions and instincts and beliefs" (p. 87).

Faulkner establishes the sociological context of the story very early. In his defense of Bookwright, Stevens notes that "All of us in this country, the South, have been taught from birth a few things which we hold to above all else," adding that "the first of these--not the best, just one of the first--is that only a life can pay for the life it takes; that the one death is only half complete" (p. 87): eye for eye, tooth for tooth. But Stevens also outlines the extenuating circumstances involved in the slaying: confronted by "the inevitable misery of his child who, with the headstrong folly of youth . . . was incapable of her own preservation," Bookwright solved his "problem to the best of his ability and beliefs, asking help of no one, and then abode by his decision and his act" (p. 87-88). Against Old Testament retributive justice must be weighed other "things which we hold to"--among them, no doubt, and to the point of self-sacrifice, a father's love for his child. Bookwright's shooting of Thorpe is excusable in terms of the full Southern code of "right and justice" (p. 85). His exoneration is, in fact, a foregone conclusion: "The jury went out and we didn't even leave the room. Even the judge didn't retire" (p. 88). The inevitable verdict of justifiable homicide would appear to be anticlimactic: the sociological value system, reconfirmed.

However, one man, Stonewall Jackson Fentry, seems to defy the code, stubbornly refusing to acquit Bookwright despite his acknowledgement of the 'justice' of Bookwright's action (p. 89). Uncovering

Fentry's motivation is Gavin Stevens' objective. When he does so, he is able to sympathize with the man who defeats him in his first case: "Years afterward he still said it was the only case, either as a private defender or as a public prosecutor, in which he was convinced that right and justice were on his side, that he ever lost" (p. 85).

Early in the story Charles Mallison notes that Stevens "could already talk so that all the people in our country--the Negroes, the hill people, the rich flatland plantation owners--understood what he said" (p. 87). They can understand him because--despite the fact that he "would forget now and then and his language would slip back to Harvard and even to Heidelberg" (p. 91)--he understands them. The strongest evidence of this empathy appears when Stevens refutes his nephew's contention that he "would have freed him [Bookwright]. Because Buck Thorpe was bad" (p. 104). Stevens interrupts Chick--"No, you wouldn't"--and then details Stonewall Jackson Fentry's psychological motivations for not voting to acquit Bookwright:

> 'It wasn't Buck Thorpe, the adult, the man. He would have shot that man as quick as Bookwright did, if he had been in Bookwright's place. It was because somewhere in that debased and brutalized flesh which Bookwright slew there still remained, not the spirit maybe, but at least the memory, of that little boy, that Jackson and Longstreet Fentry, even though the man the boy had become didn't know it, and only Fentry did. And you wouldn't have freed him either. Don't ever forget that. Never.' (p. 105)

From Fentry's story he learns, and teaches Mallison, that even "in the hills . . . out of the rich flat land, among the pine and bracken, the poor soil, the little tilted and barren patches of gaunt corn and cotton which somehow endured, as the people they clothed and fed somehow endured" (p. 90), the human "capacity for love" (p. 98) can still

flourish among the "lowly and invincible of the earth" (p. 104). In this story family ties and loyalties are paramount, preceding and superceding abstract questions of social justice. Bookwright, the murderer, and Fentry, the victim's father, it turns out, complement one another, act out of the same sense of paternal obligation, seek to defend their children in ways that demonstrate that legal "right and justice" tell only part of the Southern story. The Thorpes, who legally if unjustly seize and take their "kin" from Fentry, in turn have him taken from them by a father unwilling to surrender his child and willing to defy the law to keep it.

"An Error in Chemistry" is Faulkner's purest effort in the detective genre. It is a masterful mix of sleight-of-hand foreshadowings, false leads, and misdirection bolstered by an ingenious plot. In fact, the story received second prize in the 1946 Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine short story contest, missing the top prize, and $2,000, by a single vote.[64] In "Error," Joel Flint, an outsider to Yoknapatawpha, marries resident Wesley Pritchel's daughter. After the wedding, Pritchel, a crochety, ascerbic old man, would have little to do with either. One Sunday Flint kills his wife, then calls for the sheriff. Pritchel locks himself up in a back room in his house, refusing to leave, screaming at anyone who comes near, apparently afraid for his life. Flint is jailed, but escapes that night. The sheriff, worried that Flint might come after the old man, posts a guard at Pritchel's door. Flint, we discover later, manages to elude the guard in the night, kills Pritchel, hacks up his face beyond recognition, and buries him. Then Flint, disguised as the old man, assumes his place and soon sells the house and its land, valuable because of rich clay deposits, to three

strangers who for some time have been interested in purchasing it despite being repeatedly rebuffed by Pritchel. The overconfident Flint is unmasked during a toast with Stevens, Mallison, and the sheriff when he fails to mix properly a "cold toddy," a Jefferson custom which he was known to disdain because of its "effeminacy." We later learn that Flint had been a certain Signor Canova, circus performer and master of disguise and illusion.

"Error" presents Faulkner at his detective-story best. Moreover, the structures and formulas constituting the genre permit Faulkner to fully and succinctly entertain certain notions which also inform, though in a less central way, his novels. By employing the central consciousness of the detective he can explore the nuances of man's recognition of, attraction towards, and then purging of his dark side. This sequence, only an element of the mimetic novel, is at the center of the detective story. Likewise, psychological doubling, so integral to the detective narrative because of the criminal-detective consanguinity, and the sociological aspects of detective fiction, including the all-important communal projection of guilt which generally results in some form of cultural scapegoating, receive less emphasis in the mimetic novel. Detective fiction is a reader-centered genre and the vicariousness of reader immersion in that detective-criminal sequence of recognition, fathoming, and ordering must have attracted Faulkner, whose paramount concern often was with the "story" and the reader's involvement in constructing it.

Can't _Absolom, Absalom!_, in the final analysis, be seen as the account of Quentin's detective-like discovery of the dark side of his society and its past as represented by Sutpen and Charles Bon--the

two outsiders? Similarly, can't his suicide in <u>The Sound and the Fury</u> be seen as a self-scapegoating, the ultimate purging of his psychological dark side imaged in <u>Absalom, Absalom!</u> in the incest-minded Bon? For Quention as for the detective, the dark side attracts as well as repells. Quentin can recognize his dark side but he can never order it, except through death. Stevens, on the other hand, is able to repeatedly acknowledge--and live with--the dark "other." "Error in Chemistry" is just one more example of his ability to sympathize with the criminal mind, yet, in the end, detach himself from it, something Quentin is never able to do.

At the center of the mystery is Signor Canova's "gift," his ability to assume different identities and deceive others, even for a while Gavin Stevens. Significantly, Canova's "talent" parallels that of his opponent, Stevens, whom he challenges ("Get that lawyer Stevens. I hear he claims to be pretty slick!" [p. 123]) and who psychologically becomes other characters, most notably criminals. Gavin Stevens not only apprehends Canova, he understands the carnival man's need to use "the gift, the talent, which at the last he . . . misapplied and betrayed and which . . . then turned and destroyed him" (p. 128).

This gift is further considered in an exchange between Stevens and the sheriff near the close of the story:

> 'That's one reason he did it,' Uncle Gavin said.
>
> 'One reason?' the sheriff said. 'What's the other?'
>
> 'The other is the real one. It had nothing to do with the money; he probably could not have helped obeying it if he had wanted to. That gift he had. His first regret right now is probably not that he was caught, but that

> he was caught too soon, before the body was found and he had the chance to identify it as his own; before Signor Canova had had time to toss his gleaming tophat vanishing behind him and bow to the amazed and stormlike staccato of adulant palms and turn and stride once or twice and then himself vanish from the pacing spotlight--gone, to be seen no more.' (p. 131)

Stevens can appreciate this compulsion to exercise a talent. He, too, often seems driven to exercise his gift: throughout the story, long before anyone realizes there is a mystery, he uncannily seems to intuit something rotten beneath surface appearances (see pp. 118, 121). Sherlock Holmes would frequently admit that many of the crimes he solved he might have committed had he been a criminal. Instead, he committed those crimes vicariously through Moriarity and others and in the process gratified his latent desires while expelling them. In "Error" as well, criminal and detective differ, not as night to day, but as dawn to dusk.

Similarly, Gavin Stevens' conceptions of and working through the criminal psychology provide him a therapeutic outlet. The apprehension of Canova does not signal the end of Gavin Stevens' sympathies with him and with that part of his psyche that Canova represents. The final lines of "Error" suggest this psychological splitting (of light and dark, detective and criminal) quite nicely:

> 'Yes,' the sheriff said. 'The Book itself says somewhere, Know thyself. Ain't there another book somewhere that says, Man, fear thyself,...You ought to know; you claim to be a book man. Didn't you tell me that's what that luck-charm on your watch chain means? What book is that in?'
>
> 'It's in all of them,' Uncle Gavin said. 'The good ones, I mean. It's said in a lot of different ways, but it's there.' (p. 131)

The sheriff's comments point to the crux of this and all detective

fiction. The struggle between detective and criminal revolves around knowledge. The inevitable solution of the murder and unmasking of the criminal depend on the detective's self-knowledge. He can solve the crime only because he can enter the criminal mind and know it. And, if we perceive the criminal to be merely a physical extension of the dark elements of the detective's own psyche, then on an allegorical level the apprehending of the criminal represents the fathoming and ordering of the detective's soul. We may congratulate the detective by saying: "You have known thyself."

A secondary, but still integral, aspect of this sheriff-Stevens exchange is fear. Fear separates the detective from the criminal who acts out forbidden impulses. Signor Canova's downfall is a direct result of his lack of fear: "Now and then you meet a man that ain't ever been afraid, not even of himself," the sheriff observes, "He's one" (p. 112). This fearlessness, Stevens concludes, engendered "a supreme contempt for mankind": "Think of what he did: he convicted himself of murder when he very likely could have escaped by flight; he acquitted himself of it after he was already free again. Then he dared you and me to come out there and actually be his witnesses and guarantors in the consummation of the very act which he knew we had been trying to prevent" (p. 131). Unlike Flint/Canova, who lives out both sides of his psyche, Stevens "fears [himself, his] arrogance and vanity and pride," only allowing these vicarious expression through Flint. The "error" of the title refers, of course, to mixing sugar with whiskey: they won't mix; neither should Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

In "Error," psychological and topographical evil coincide. In every Faulkner detective story the criminal proves to be an outsider

of sorts. Signor Canova is only the most alien of these outsiders. The other criminals--Granby Dodge, Boyd Ballenbaugh, Max Harriss, and Crawford Gowrie of Intruder--are members of Yoknapatawpha's outermost social and geographical fringes, either Beat Four or Frenchman's Bend; like Joel Flint, they are from "the remote back-country region[s]" (p. 109) of Yoknapatawpha County. Signor Canova is "the foreigner, the outlander, the Yankee who had come into our county two years ago as the operator of a pitch" (p. 109). As such, he represents the criminal potential in Jefferson (and all communities) that has been banished or relegated to its outlying districts. The psychologically forbidden and the sociologically outcast are one.

"Knight's Gambit" completes Faulkner's sequence with, as most critics recognize, a measured attempt by him to unify the sequence and further develop the characters of Gavin Stevens and Charles Mallison. Patrick Samway argues that

> by using the title of the last story as the title for the entire work, Faulkner has indicated clearly enough, to me at least, that each story must be read in and through the meaning of the last story, something that makes the work unique, due in large measure to the technique of delayed revelation.[65]

Gavin Stevens solves no crime in "Knight's Gambit"; rather, he prevents one from occurring. Max Harriss is determined to kill his prospective father-in-law, Captain Gualdres. The only mystery involves the means by which he attempts to do this.

In "Knight's Gambit" Max, along with his sister, enters Gavin Stevens' law office one evening as Stevens is playing chess with his nephew, Charles Mallison. Harriss demands that Stevens force Gualdres,

their house guest, from the Harriss mansion, claiming that Gualdres is a Latin fortune hunter who has jilted his sister and is set on coaxing his rich mother into marriage. Stevens, of course, can and will do nothing. The enraged Max stalks away, vowing to take care of Gualdres himself, and his plans nearly succeed. Gualdres is an avid horseman, riding at night a gentle but near-blind horse which he owns. From Rafe McCallum Max buys a dangerous horse, an animal which Rafe has to beat in the face with a cudgel in order even to approach it. Max then substitutes this killer horse for the one which Gauldres normally rides at night. Only Charles Mallison's alertness and Gavin Stevens' last-minute actions persuade the proud Gualdres to forego his ride, thus saving his life. Stevens eventually marries Mrs. Harriss, who turns out to be the woman he was engaged to many years previous, Gualdres settles for marrying the Harriss girl, and Max is forced to enlist in the army.

Porter's assertion--that the detective story represents an attempt to close a logico-temporal gap by aligning the story of the present with the story of the past--applies to this story as well.[66] Most detective stories, that is, close the logico-temporal gap by bridging the story of the work with the story behind the crime. "Knight's Gambit" departs from this conventional detective story structure--with respect to the crime. The reader observes first-hand the story behind the crime. "Knight's Gambit" is the original journey through the crime, not the return journey culminated by the detective's solution. The reader is present for the (potential) crime, not merely for the recounting of it: as Stevens observes in another context, "The whole plot [is] hind-part before" (p. 148). The consequence of this structural

departure is that we are able to view and identify with Stevens as he struggles with the would-be criminal prior to the crime, not after it. Reader and detective are, as it were, on the same page.

"Knight's Gambit," however, is as much a story about love--and its mysterious, often unfathomable workings--as about hate and attempted murder. And as a love story its structure does fit Porter's description. The mysterious first-suitor of Mrs. Harriss, introduced early on--a man with "no face, no name . . . no past, no yesterday . . . a shade, a shadow"; a "nameless shadow" (pp. 145, 146)--is unmasked by Stevens and revealed to be Stevens himself. The detective's guilty (and hitherto secret) past is ultimately exposed, his sins revealed and then expiated. As we shall see, not only is Stevens both detective and "criminal," he is aligned in this story, as in others we have considered, with both (potential) murderer and (potential) victim, thus conjoining both strands of "Knight's Gambit."

As these observations suggest, "Knight's Gambit" is a much more complex and allegorically involved work than many have believed: "all the roles and parts [are] mixed-up and confused" (p. 148). Doubling, especially, plays a significant role, introduced immediately in the figures of the Harriss children. Mallison, playing chess with his uncle in Stevens' office, describes their appearance: "They were brother and sister. At first glance they might have been twins, not just to strangers but to most of Jefferson too" (p. 135). This portrait alerts us to the less obvious doublings that will appear in the story. The doubling of Stevens is established early in the story:

> his was indeed a split personality: the one, the lawyer,

> the county attorney who walked and breathed and displaced air; the other, the garrulous facile voice so garrulous and facile that it seemed to have no connection with reality at all and presently was like listening not even to fiction but to literature (p. 141).

This description of Stevens' "personality" reinforces the detective-story motif noted by Wilbur. In separating the body--"the county attorney who displaced air"--and the psyche, as represented by the voice, Faulkner establishes the potential for, as Wilbur observes of Poe's Dupin, "the other persons of the tale . . . to be taken allegorically as elements of one person, whereof Dupin is the presiding faculty."[67] The other characters of "Knight's Gambit" represent elements of Stevens' psyche.

Additionally, by equating "literature" with the unreal or non-real, with that which is not physically or readily apparent, Faulkner manages to make several points. Literature can provide access to experiences or depths of experience otherwise unattainable. Through it we can more fully if vicariously experience "life": just as Mallison participates in and learns from his uncle's experiences, cases, readers participate in and learn from his. Literature also provides substitutes, including false or inadequate ones, for living. "Knight's Gambit" is studded with references to writers and writing, to literature and specific literary works, to alternative, imaginative forms of "living." At one point Faulkner derisively refers to the women's "literary clubs" in the South and the books women like Mallison's grandmother read, peopled with "women who were always ladies and men who were always brave, moving in a sort of immortal moonlight without anguish and with no pain from birth without foulment to death without carrion, so that you too could weep with them without having to suffer

or grieve, exult with them without having to conquer or triumph" (p. 143). Opposed to these romances we have Mallison, in December, 1941, a "cadet lieutenant colonel" in his school's R.O.T.C., who feels "the heart's thirst for glory and renown," but fears the war will "be over and people [will] already have begun to be able to start forgetting about it before he [can] even reach officer's school, let alone finish the course" (pp. 195, 196). Reading the <u>Cid</u>--that "dusty chronicle of the past"--is not enough to "assuage the heart's thirst with . . . when not fifteen hundred miles away in England men not much older than he were daily writing with their lives his own time's deathless footnote" (p. 213).

Mallison's attitude here--his desire to "write" life and not merely read it or, like his uncle, talk about it--stands in direct contrast to his uncle's. Once a week "for twenty years now," more often when "displease[d] or affront[ed]," Stevens retires to his sitting room to work on his "Translation," "the rendering of the Old Testament back into the classic Greek into which it had been translated from its lost Hebrew infancy" (p. 207), preferring to "spend the evening in the [literary] company of scoundrels and felons who have not only the courage of their evil, but the competence for it too" (p. 205). Stevens' retiring nature, his preference of "writing" to living, we eventually discover, has been something of a life-long habit. Twenty years or so earlier, while in his late twenties, he had lost his sixteen-year-old betrothed to Harriss, a bootlegger with "the Midas touch": "there was no engagement prolonged or deferred here waiting for her to get another year older[,] . . . you had only to look at Harriss once to know that he would never abate one jot--or acquiesce one jot

to the abatement--of anything considered his" (pp. 147, 146). Like Stevens, Harriss is "old enough himself to be her father," but his is no "shadowy betrothal"; unlike lawyer Stevens, "he was successful not even despite the Law but over the Law as though the Law itself and not failure were his vanquished adversary" (pp. 147, 151). Stevens' current rival, Captain Gualdres, is another man of action, "pursuing or following or anyway drawn by not the daughter apparently but the mother, and so that pattern was upside down too since Captain Gualdres was no more senior to the girl than her father had been to his bride" (p. 163). Gualdres is loved by the Harriss girl and hated by Max, ostensibly because he is opposed to a "fortune-hunting Spick" marrying his mother (p. 137), but also because according to his sister, Gualdres "'always beats him. At everything!'" (p. 181). He even seems to be dallying with the country girl Max is interested in. Fearless, Gualdres refuses to believe "'that Max is dangerous. He says it would be like running from a child'" (p. 189). Only when Stevens acts-significantly, to do so he must desist working on his "Translation"--and saves Gualdres' life does he win Mrs. Harriss. He succeeds where Max fails, by causing Max to fail.

Stevens' success in preventing a crime and neatly removing a rival, however, is only half the story. Not only does he forego allowing the "prince" to eliminate his rival for the "queen" (pp. 198, 218); in marrying Mrs. Harriss he redresses a wrong that he himself committed against her many years earlier when he, in effect, ran "from a child" he had sought to marry. Initially he attributes her breaking-off their engagement and subsequent marriage to Harriss to a simple but honest mistake: she received a letter meant for a Russian woman

with whom Stevens was also corresponding: "I wrote them at the same time. I sealed and mailed them in the wrong envelopes" (p. 336). However, perhaps because he recognizes the similarity between his uncle's clandestine engagement ("'"You don't want me to wear it yet?" she said. "Yes," I said. "No," I said.'" [p. 235]) and Max's to the country girl ("'He . . . said first that maybe I better not wear the ring out where folks could see it for a while yet'" [p. 185]), Mallison suspects something more. Just before he leaves to fight in the war his heart had thirsted for, to write with his life as Stevens is now writing with his, his uncle makes a full confession. Having met the now-Mrs. Harriss in Paris during the war, he had asked her why she hadn't waited for him. "You didn't want me," she had answered. "I wasn't smart enough for you" (p. 245). Still very much the "little girl" (p. 244) when Stevens accosts her in Paris, she possesses the sometime wisdom of children. Appropriately, when Stevens' Gambit saves the queen for himself, Mallison says, "Bless you, my children" (p. 238).

"Knight's Gambit" is Stevens' most intensely personal story, and one of Faulkner's finest, probably (as noted earlier) because it draws on events in Faulkner's own life. Faulkner's "sweetheart had married an older man, had given him a boy and a girl, and had lived abroad for ten years before returning home and finding herself in effect single again."[68] Stevens' experiences are, almost too obviously, residues of Faulkner's relationship with Estelle Oldham. And echoes of Faulkner's youthful yearning for war and glory (he dropped out of high school to enlist in the RAF) may be found in Mallison's feelings about another, later war.

The Oedipal currents that flow through "Knight's Gambit" may have their spring in these autobiographical elements in the story. Stevens' eventual marriage to the former Mrs. Harriss, along with Gualdres' betrothal to Miss Harriss, evokes the Oedipus story, though with a Faulknerian twist to the ages-old conflict between fathers and sons. Stevens becomes not only Max Harriss' "father," but also Captain Gualdres', whose marriage then makes him Max's brother. Stevens and Gualdres are ultimately seen to be rivals for Mrs. Harriss; Stevens also pits himself against his (future) son, Harriss, in his endeavor to prevent Max from killing another (future) son, Gualdres. Alternatively, Max Harriss' attempt to murder Gualdres is, in effect, an attempt on his own (potential) father's life, because Gualdres at that time was courting Harriss' mother, as well as an attempt on his (future) brother's life. In addition to being expert fencers and horsemen, both "sons" possess the hardness and determination associated with Mr. Harriss, the dead father who had captured the child-queen of Stevens, the (potential) father who seeks to replace Mr. Harriss; each wants the queen for himself, wants to be king of her castle--as does Stevens. Stevens staves off these pretenders to the throne only by assimilating something of their capacity for direct and reckless action. Twice he speeds out to the Harriss estate--"'Step on it,' his uncle said"; "'So what are you poking along for? Are you afraid of motion?'" (pp. 210, 229)--first to prevent a crime, then to expiate one. The two trips to the mansion encapsulate the two strands of "Knight's Gambit" and the two roles Stevens plays in it: detective and lover. By preventing Cain from killing Abel he establishes a patriarch's authority and aggressively captures Mrs. Harriss: at story's end both sons have submitted to the authority of their "uncle in Washington"

(p. 21). Max has been coerced into enlisting by Stevens; Gualdres, also in uniform, sends him a message: "Now maybe you're satisfied" (p. 243).

Faulkner complicates and enlarges these psychological ramifications through Miss Harriss. If, as Freudian psychology suggests, the daughter is a surrogate for the mother, we should note that (1) Mrs. Harriss literally replaces the mother who died giving birth to her; (2) she subsequently marries two men old enough to be her father; (3) both men who seek her widowed hand are threatened by her son; and (4) her daughter completes the cycle by marrying a man who "is probably about twenty-five [years] older" than her (p. 195), this despite her brother's objections to the match. Faulkner also repeatedly links Max Harriss and Charles Mallison. Their ages ally them, a fact which Stevens emphasizes in depicting his office as "the one place where nobody nineteen or twenty-one named Harriss nor going on eighteen named Mallison either, can talk to me" (p. 205). More importantly, Mallison is educated by helping his uncle thwart a peer's murderous impulses. He learns from Max Harriss' mistakes, from his uncle's, and from his own. He learns the folly of "people of seventeen" who "are so convinced that octogenarians like [Stevens] are incapable of accepting or respecting or even remembering what the young ones consider passion and love" (p. 174). In the final pages Mallison--on his way "from preflight to basic" (p. 240)--demonstrates how well he has learned his lessons. Not only does he sound like Stevens ("tediously, himself recapitulant" [p. 242]), like Stevens he is able to sense the truth beneath the partial truth.

As in the other Knight's Gambit stories, much is made of the outsider-status of the main characters: both Harris and Gualdres are described as "the stranger" (pp. 146, 166). Together they represent the encroachment of modern values into a Jefferson long ruled by "spinster aunts," "the backbone of the South's social and political and economic solidarity" (pp. 146, 149). The Old South, represented by them and by "the old man who had sat on the front gallery with his weak toddy and Ovid and Horace and Catullus for almost fifty years" (p. 152), is challenged by outsiders who completely transform a house which "had been an old place even in his [Charles'] grandmother's time" (p. 143) into what "looked like the Southern mansion in the moving picture, only about five times as big and ten times as Southern" (p. 155): " . . . now there wasn't anything at all of the old owner left" (p. 153). Now, Jefferson sees "stables being built of better material than was in most of their houses" (p. 154). The "parvenue" Harriss (p. 162) even constructs a polo field. Jefferson has never seen such a spectacle:

> They would come by whole families in battered dusty cars and wagons, or simply on horses and mules taken last night from the plow, to stop along the road and watch gangs of strange men with enough machinery to have built a highway or a reservoir, disc and terrace the old fields once dedicated to simple profit-producing corn and cotton, and sow them to pasture grass costing more per pound than sugar. (p. 154)

The traditional, agrarian South is disappearing before its very eyes, perhaps because the values of the spinster aunts were themselves illusory (p. 143), their pursuit like the Harriss dogs "pursuing not even a phantom but a chimaera" (p. 159). Unlike Stevens, who recovers his past, Jefferson finds that history marches on.

The historical conflict, World War II, neatly replaces the familial, psychological, and sociological conflicts of Knight's Gambit. The great war consumes the smaller, yet no less important, battles of the detective story. Thus, the conflicts of detective fiction so evident in the final story and the narratives leading up to it are not ended but merely taken over by a larger and more immediate concern. Charles Mallison's romantic thirst for glory has finally been slaked, as has Stevens' romantic thirsting of an entirely different nature.

Faulkner's ability to employ detective stories only confirms his considerable narrative talents. Most importantly, as this paper demonstrates, his narrative purposes were not at odds with those inherent to this most formulaic of genres. Faulkner's first-rank novels, Absalom, Absalom! and The Sound and the Fury, in which the reader, in fact, becomes the most important detective, incorporate some of his interest in the forms of detective fiction and in the psychological and sociological ramifications of the genre. While these classic works suggest his grasp of detective story fiction and its potential, Knight's Gambit represents the crystallization of Faulkner's efforts. Detective fiction proves capable of sustaining a more than adequate level of complex themes and allegories. These six stories, Faulkner's pure detective tales, endure literary criticism and emerge a little brighter, a little more respected.

Notes

1 Joseph Blotner, ed., Selected Letters of William Faulkner (New York: Random House, 1977) p. 137.

2 Blotner, Selected Letters, p. 136.

3 Michael Millgate, The Achievement of William Faulkner (1st ed. 1966, rpt. Lincoln and London: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1978), p. 265; Edmond Volpe dismisses Knight's Gambit as "a collection of detective stories united only by the presence of Gavin Stevens in each" (A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner, p. 30). See also David Minter, William Faulkner: His Life and Work, p. 214. Most tellingly, perhaps, Cleanth Brooks' magesterial study, William Faulkner, The Yoknapatawpha County, does not consider Knight's Gambit at all.

4 John G. Cawelti, Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976) p. 6.

5 Joseph Blotner and Frederick Gwynn, eds., Faulkner in the University (Charlottesville: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1959), p. 19.

6 See, for example, Warren French, "William Faulkner and the Art of the Detective Story," in The Thirties: Fiction, Poetry, and Drama, ed. Warren French, 2nd ed. (Deland, Florida: Everett/Edwards

Inc., 1976), pp. 55-62; Mark Gidley, "Elements of the Detective Story in William Faulkner's Fiction," Journal of Popular Culture, 7 (1973), 97-123; D. Hutchinson, "The Style of Faulkner's Intruder in the Dust," Theoria, 39 (1973), 33-47; and Peter J. Rabinowitz, "The Click of the Spring: The Detective Story as Parallel Structure in Dostoyavsky and Faulkner," Modern Philosophy, 76 (1979, 355-69.

7 See Blotner, ed., Faulkner's Library--a Catalogue (Charlottesville: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1964).

8 Cited in Gidley, pp. 99-100.

9 Blotner, Faulkner: A Biography, 2 vols. (New York: Random House, 1974) I, p. 609.

10 French, p. 56.

11 Hutchinson, p. 37.

12 Millgate, p. 267.

13 Blotner and Gwynn, University, p. 19.

14 Richard Wilbur, "The Poe Mystery Case" New York Review of Books, 13 July 1969, p. 27.

15 Wilbur, pp. 16, 25-28.

16 Blotner and Gwynn, University, pp. 115, 239.

17 Blotner and Gwynn, University, p. 26.

18 Blotner and Gwynn, University, p. 223.

19 Blotner and Gwynn, University, p. 211.

20 William Faulkner, Light in August (New York: Random House, 1932), p. 424.

22 Larry Landrum, "Detective and Mystery Fiction," in Concise Histories of American Popular Culture, ed. M. Thomas Inge (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 111.

23 Dennis Porter, The Pursuit of Crime: Art and Ideology in Detective Fiction (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1981), pp. 1, 121, 190.

24 Cawelti, p. 77.

25 Landrum, p. 117.

26 Stephen Knight, Form and Ideloogy in Crime Fiction (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1980), p. 3.

27 Porter, p. 24: p. 166.

28 Faulkner, Knight's Gambit (New York: Random House, 1949), p. 16. All further references to this work appear in the text.

29 Blotner and Gwynn, University, p. 26.

30 Porter, pp. 40, 167.

31 Landrum, p. 116.

32 Porter, pp. 121, 120.

33 Cawelti, pp. 95-96.

34 Porter, p. 193.

35 Cawelti, p. 95.

36 Cawelti, p. 18.

37 Cawelti, p. 26.

38 Porter, pp. 32-33.

39 Cawelti, p. 105.

40 Cawelti, p. 90.

41 Cawelti, p. 90.

42 Porter, p. 193.

43 Porter, p. 194.

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