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# The Caste Taboo in William Faulkner's "Elly" and "Mountain Victory"

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> Miscegenation is "the ultimate horror."
> —Flannery O'Connor, "Everything That Rises Must Converge" (414)

## I

In William Faulkner's social milieu, white male hegemony fostered a double standard which condoned one form of miscegenation, between white men and black women, while vehemently prohibiting the other form. Both condonement and prohibition had to do with maintaining the existing racial structure. To be more specific, one means of ensuring white dominance was, as James Kinney has pointed out, to extend their mastery over blacks to the bed, where the sex act itself served as ritualistic re-enactment of the daily pattern of social dominance (5). Another means of sustaining white dominance was to deny the offspring produced from miscegenetic liaisons. By relegating mulattoes to the status of blacks, whites could maintain the sharpness of racial distinctions and the attendant power relationships. A corollary

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of the imposed classification is the evolution after Reconstruction of a more stringent line of racial demarcation called the "one-drop rule." The rule classed as a Negro any individual with a *known* trace of Negro blood in his veins. The notion that "one drop of black blood makes a Negro" eventually came to color all discussions on the subject of miscegenation, particularly the taboo form.

As Gunnar Myrdal has noted, the entire Negro problem in America hinges upon this social definition of "race," with which came the whole stock of valuations, beliefs, and expectations in the two groups, causing and constituting the order of color caste (117). Joel Williamson expresses a similar view when he says summarily that one central fact about the transformation of race relations during the years from 1850 to 1915 is that the whites of the South led the nation in turning from a society in which some blackness in a person might be overlooked to one in which not a single iota of color was excused (109). Booker T. Washington explained the situation quite graphically at the turn of the century: "It is a fact that, if a person is known to have one per cent of African blood in his veins, he ceases to be a white man. The ninety-nine per cent of Caucasian blood does not weigh by the side of one per cent of African blood. The white blood counts for nothing. The person is a Negro every time" (158).

Closely associated with the evolution of the one-drop rule were three strains of thought that interacted to shape white America's attitudes toward interracial mixture and the nature of mulattoes: polygenism, Lamarckism, and Darwinism.[1] Polygenism contributed ideas about racial differences and inferiority, especially through its emphasis upon notions of racial "genius" and of race as a supraindividual entity. Lamarckism offered an explanation for the evolution of races and the development of the racial essence which, once in the blood, passed on to succeeding generations. The Darwinian notion of hereditary variation not only reinforced feelings of racial superiority and inferiority but in its concentration on evolutionary change also underscored the need for care in terms of which characteristics should be perpetuated or

[1] For an excellent discussion of the three schools of thought and their interactions, see John G. Mencke, *Mulattoes and Race Mixture*, especially pp. 41-50. Mencke's book is a seminal study on how white America viewed the mulatto and the idea of miscegenation in the years between Reconstruction and the First World War.

eliminated.

These strains of thought operated together to shape the racial thought in the half-century after Emancipation. They provided late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century academicians the theoretical basis for "scientific" ideas about race in general and miscegenation in particular.[2] The academicians shared the following beliefs: (1) Negroes were temperamentally, physically, and intellectually *different* from whites; (2) Negroes were also *inferior* to whites in at least some of the fundamental qualities where-in the races differed, especially in intelligence and in the temperamental basis of enterprise or initiative; (3) Such differences and differentials were either permanent or subject to change only by a very slow process of development; and (4) Because of these permanent or deep-seated differences, miscegenation, especially in the form of intermarriage, was dangerous, for the crossing of such diverse types invariably resulted in a short-lived and unprolific breed.

Such beliefs offered white supremacists and professional racists a principal rationale for perpetuating white hegemony. As relations between blacks and whites grew more embittered and violent after 1890 when there was an ostensible rise in black criminality, including, most significantly, the rape of white women and girls, there arose among whites a mounting fear that blacks were retrogressing to a bestial state. John Dollard in his mid-1930s study, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town*, maintained that "around this issue of black 'attacks' on white women centers quite visibly the whole caste problem; it is experienced as the most acute and agonizing of issues and one calling for the utmost in defense and aggression on the part of the white caste" (165). He further confirmed the seriousness of the caste taboo when he said, "We have seen white men guarding the border line of their caste, belligerent and suspicious, repelling every overture of a Negro across the caste line" (166). In *The Negro's Image in the South*, Claude H. Nolen agrees that "amalgamation of the races was a nagging worry in the South; much theorizing on race relations stemmed from this basic fear" (29).

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[2] Major figures in establishing the "scientific" position vis-à-vis race and miscegenation were Dr. Josiah C. Nott, Frederick L. Hoffman, Nathaniel S. Shaler, Edward D. Cope, Joseph LeConte, Robert B. Bean, Eugene S. Talbott, Joseph A. Tillinghast, Edward A. Ross, George O. Ferguson, and Edward B. Reuter. For a discussion of the racial beliefs of these scientists and social scientists, see Mencke, 54-87.

Inextricably linked to the white fear of black retrogression was the growing myth of black super-sexuality or the heroic proportions of his genitalia. The myth arose from the alleged beastly nature of the black man or his susceptibility to "sexual madness and excess," which was, in the words of Dr. William Lee Howard, "the African's birthright." The black attacks on defenseless white women, Howard insisted, could be attributed physiologically to "the large size of the negro's [*sic*] penis" (qtd. in Fredrickson 279). The violence-provoking theory of the superpotency of the black superpenis, as Eugene D. Genovese has pointed out, did not become an obsession in the South until well after Emancipation, when it served the purpose of racial segregationists (461-62).

The white man's obsessive fear of black sexuality and criminality found a powerful outlet in the subject of racial amalgamation. Hence the spate of racist books that appeared around this time to demonstrate the dire effects of sexual contacts between the races and to advocate repressive policies against blacks.[3] Moreover, as racial animus peaked around 1907, numerous disfranchisement and Jim Crow laws were enacted and the number of lynchings ballooned. In his psychohistorical study of white racism, Joel Kovel indicates that the archetypal lynching was reserved "for the archetypal crime of having a black man rape (= touch, approach, look at, be imagined to look at, talk back to, etc.) a white lady" (67). Indeed, as Gunnar Myrdal has discovered, the bar against intermarriage and sexual intercourse involving white women held the highest place in the white man's rank order of social segregation and discrimination (60, 606). Finally, the white man's adamant opposition to miscegenation between black men and white women helped create the myth of the pure white woman.

Contrary to the dominant ideology, William Faulkner usually portrays the offspring of black-white unions as victims rather than offenders. The array of mixed-blood characters in such novels as *Absalom, Absalom!* and

[3] Books passionately devoted to the theme of black inferiority and of the threat of miscegenation include Robert W. Shufeldt's *The Negro: A Menace to American Civilization* (1907), William P. Calhoun's *The Caucasian and the Negro in the United States* (1902), William B. Smith's *The Color Line: A Brief in Behalf of the Unborn* (1905), Alexander H. Shannon's *Racial Integrity and Other Features of the Negro Problem* (1907), and Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916). For a discussion of the radical thought in the fairly widely-read books, see Mencke, 109-22.

*Go Down, Moses* are almost always the products and by-products of miscegenation involving the white man, a fact that testifies to his inability to master his sexual desires and to abide by the social and moral precepts he preaches. Furthermore, Faulkner exposes the whites' paranoid and often violent reactions to the taboo of miscegenation between white women and black men in several works, particularly *Light in August* and "Dry September." In her recent essay, Karen M. Andrews made an in-depth exploration into Faulkner's critique of the "miscegenation complex" in "Dry September." But apart from the better-known *Light in August*, *Absalom, Absalom!* and "Dry September," which is "probably the most anthologized of [Faulkner's] short fiction" (Andrews 497), the taboo of miscegenation is also vividly dramatized in "Elly" and "Mountain Victory." In "Elly," the title character's unabashed liaison with a supposedly part-Negro Louisianan not only intensifies the tension between her and her grandmother but also causes the tragic death of Elly's lover and her grandmother. In "Mountain Victory," a young mountaineer becomes desperate because he suspects that the handsome Confederate officer to whom his sister may give herself might be a Negro.

Strangely enough, the theme of miscegenation in both stories has received relatively little attention. As a matter of fact, the two stories have been largely ignored by critics (Ferguson 1; Skei, "Beyond Genre?" 71). Though James Ferguson in his book-length overview of Faulkner's short fiction repeatedly praises "Mountain Victory" as one of the very best of Faulkner's stories (1, 13, 36), he makes virtually no mention of the motif of miscegenation. Though Hans H. Skei concurs that "Mountain Victory" is "among the best Faulkner ever wrote" ("Beyond Genre?" 71), his four-page discussion of the story centers on the existential experience of the protagonist. Likewise, there has not been a full-length study on the threatening possibility of miscegenation in "Elly." *Faulkner and the Short Story* edited by Evans Harrington and Ann J. Abadie contains only a passing remark by James B. Carothers that several of Faulkner's women characters, including the title character of "Elly," "are all driven to perverse or violent rebellion against the prevailing community standard" (49). Ferguson in *Faulkner's Short Fiction* only hints at the significance of miscegenation when he remarks in passing that the cold and implacable grandmother "somehow knows that Elly's friend Paul de Montigny has Negro blood" (70). Finally, the few

essays on the story, as is demonstrated in the following section, either fail to be objective in their analyses or are limited in focus.

## II

Probably written in early 1929 and twice published in 1934,[4] "Elly" exemplifies one of Faulkner's many attempts to explore the idea of miscegenation and its ramifications. The story treats of the conflict between Ailanthia and her namesake grandmother;[5] the most salient feature of their conflict lies in the question of the granddaughter's miscegenation. Under the incessant vigilance of her cold and tyrannical grandmother, Ailanthia alias Elly grows up hating the old woman. In her rebellion, the eighteen-year-old woman comes to indulge herself in sexuality which, in the words of Sally R. Page, becomes "the single driving force of [her] existence" (95). As a matter of fact, before she meets Paul de Montigny, a handsome young man believed to be part Negro, Elly has dated and necked with many youths and even visitors of the town.[6] As the omniscient narrator says of her necking sessions on the shadowy veranda prior to the advent of Paul:

> In this shadow she half lay almost nightly with a different man—youths and young men of the town at first, but later with almost anyone, any transient in the small town whom she met by either convention or by chance, provided his appearance was decent. (Faulkner, *Collected Stories* 208)[7]

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[4] "Elly" was written at least before February 23, 1929, the date of a letter from *Scribner's* declining the story. According to Joseph Blotner, Estelle Oldham Franklin, whom Faulkner married on June 20, 1929, had written an early draft of the story. "Elly" was first published in the February issue of *Story* and then collected in *Doctor Martino and Other Stories*, which was published on May 16, 1934, by Smith and Haas in New York (Blotner I, 604, 828-30; Ferguson 190).

[5] M. E. Bradford, one of the few scholars to comment on the story, perceives nothing noteworthy in the fact that both women are named identically. In fact, he looks upon them as exact opposites (182). Alice Hall Petry, on the other hand, argues in her recent article that the grandmother and the granddaughter are actually doubles, representing the Old South (the superego), and the New South (the id)(222).

[6] Elly is not, as Dorothy Tuck thinks she is, a unique female character in Faulkner's fiction (166). Actually, Faulkner's presentation of her reminds one of Juliet in "Adolescence," Cecily Saunders in *Soldiers' Pay*, Caddy Compson and Miss Quentin in *The Sound and the Fury*, Patricia Robyn and Jenny (Genevieve) Steinbauer in *Mosquitoes*, Temple Drake in *Sanctuary*, and Zilphia in "Miss Zilphia Gant."

[7] Further references to "Elly" in this section and all references to "Mountain Victory" in the

Because her grandmother keeps a close watch on her, however, Elly with her prescribed role as a woman of the upper class dallies with them only "until the courthouse clock [strikes] eleven," and she never rides in the cars with them at night (*CS* 208).

The palpable fear and hatred Elly feels towards her grandmother manifest themselves every time she enters the "dark house" where the old woman is waiting for her to turn in for the night (*CS* 208).[8] As she passes the door of the lighted room where her grandmother sits, Elly sometimes looks into the room and for an instant they glare eye to eye:

> the old woman cold, piercing; the girl weary, spent, her face, her dark dilated eyes, filled with impotent hatred. Then she would go on and enter her own room and lean for a time against the door, hearing the grandmother's light click off presently, sometimes crying silently and hopelessly, whispering, "The old bitch. The old bitch." (*CS* 209)

Elly's "impotent hatred" is often mixed with fear because her grandmother is capable of detecting evidence of kissing: "tomorrow she must face the old woman again with the mark of last night upon her mouth like bruises" (*CS* 209). Then the appearance of an alleged mulatto brings the conflict into the light of day.

After meeting Paul de Montigny for the first time at the home of a girl friend, Elly is cautioned by her girl friend that Paul might be a Negro passing as a white: "You didn't notice his hair then. Like a knitted cap. And his lips. Blubber, almost" and that his uncle, it was said, "killed a man once that accused him of having nigger blood" (*CS* 209). If her friend's description signifies a stereotyping of the Negro in terms of his physical traits, it is echoed toward the end of the story by the grandmother who, in response to Elly's denial that Paul is a Negro, tells her to "look at his hair, his fingernails," if she needs proof. So far as she is concerned, the grandmother continues to say, she does not need any proof, for she used to live in Louisiana and knows

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next section will be abbreviated as *CS*.

[8] Faulkner seems to have a special liking for the image of the "dark house." It is worth noting that the original working titles for both *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom!* were "Dark House" and "A Dark House" respectively (see Blotner I, 701-2, 828-30), that miscegenation, either in fantasy or in fact, exists in all the dark houses, and that the two dark houses in both novels were burned down in the end.

"the name (de Montigny) his people have borne for four generations" (*CS* 218). Because Paul never mentions his racial identity and the omniscient narrator neither verifies nor denies the grandmother's remark, the reader does not know for certain if Paul really has Negro blood in him. But here the important point is not whether Paul is in reality a mulatto, but how the Jefferson people think he is.

That Grandmother Ailanthia believes Paul to be a Negro is first revealed in her reaction to Elly's initial introduction of the young man. No sooner has Elly screamed the name of her new acquaintance to her deaf grandmother than Elly "saw the grandmother, without moving below the hips, start violently backward as a snake does to strike" (*CS* 211; emphasis added).[9] Obviously, it is her familiarity with the name that has produced in her the shock witnessed by Elly. Furthermore, in comparing the old woman to a snake, the narrator (the author) has subtly passed his judgment on her. Finally, the old woman's violent reaction not only betrays her deep-rooted bigotry but also displays her shocking indignation that her granddaughter, a Southern belle, should have an affair with a "Negro."

In the scene that ensues, the supposed mulatto becomes the very agent that accelerates the tension between the two white women. To the cold, implacable grandmother, Elly's illicit liaison with Paul is indeed a cause for fear, for it violates the Southern code—the taboo against Negro men-white women miscegenation. Her fear crystallizes on the night when she finds Elly quitting the veranda, her customary rendezvous. In an attempt to "protect" Elly from the "mulatto" Paul, the grandmother literally walks in on them while they are tusseling in the close clump of shrubbery on the lawn:

> The grandmother stood just behind and above them. When she had arrived,

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[9] Grandmother Ailanthia's response to Elly's mixing with an alleged part Negro foreshadows the more famous scene in *Absalom, Absalom!*. When she is restrained by Clytie from going up the stairs to find out who or what is hidden in the rooms above, Miss Rosa Coldfield feels that her "*entire being seemed to run at blind full tilt into something monstrous and immobile, with a shocking impact too soon and too quick to be mere amazement and outrage at that black arresting and untimorous hand on my white woman's flesh.*" Finally Rosa discharges the outrage building in her with: "*Take your hand off me, nigger!*" (*Absalom* 139-40; Faulkner's italics).

> how long she had been there, they did not know. But there she stood, saying nothing, in the long anti-climax while Paul departed without haste and Elly stood, thinking stupidly, 'I'm caught in sin without even having time to sin.' (*CS* 211)

Besides preventing the threatened miscegenation, old Ailanthia's presence on the lawn also gives her a means of controlling the spoiled granddaughter——by keeping the latter in constant fear that she might tell her son-in-law (Elly's father), of whom she is demonstrably afraid.

Alice Hall Petry is obviously mistaken when she comments that "Faulkner does not indicate which of Elly's parents is the child of the grandmother. If it is the father, then Elly and her grandmother also share the same surname" (233, n. 9). Actually, Faulkner does imply, however obliquely, that Elly's mother is the child of the grandmother. For example, shortly after Elly's engagement to an assistant cashier named Philip, her grandmother "departed to visit her son in Mills City" (*CS* 214). About two months later, Elly's mother told her to go with Philip to pick up her grandmother. When Elly went with Paul, rather than her fiancé, to her uncle's house, the latter confronts her: "Not contented with deceiving your parents and your friends, you must bring a Negro into my son's house as a guest" (*CS* 217).

To the willful, rebellious granddaughter, Paul as an alleged Negro seems all the more tempting because his presence affords her the means to pain her tyrannical grandmother, as is revealed in her thin exultation following their initial rendezvous on the shadowy veranda: "A nigger. A nigger. I wonder what she [her grandmother] would say if she knew about that" (*CS* 210). Then, in her second rendezvous with Paul, Elly exults vindictively on the brink of surrender: "I wish she were here to see!"——a wish that clearly indicates her deliberate attempt to antagonize the Negrophobic grandmother. Interestingly enough, Elly's vindictive exultation on both occasions is accompanied by her grandmother's "discovery"——first, of Paul's racial identity and then, of her lovemaking with Paul. The grandmother's discovery of her lovemaking with Paul produces in Elly mixed feelings of fear and outrage. On the one hand, she is afraid that the old woman will tell on her; on the other, she is angry at the grandmother's stifling protectiveness. In her confused state, she unjustly blames the grandmother for her own actions: "She drove me to it [miscegenation], then prevented me at the last moment"

(*CS* 211). Elly's unjust accusation not only indicates her fundamental inability to assume responsibility for what she has done but also reflects the intense hatred she feels toward the "enemy."

Furthermore, Elly in her sexual contact with Paul envisages a possibility of escaping from the stifling parental authority and the dull, uneventful existence of the small town. The grandmother's unwelcome appearance on the lawn intensifies Elly's desire to get away from Jefferson, as is manifested in her outburst the following morning when she finds that her grandmother has not told on her:

> "What else can I do, in this little dead, hopeless town? I'll work. I don't want to be idle. Just find me a job—anything, anywhere, so that it's so far away that I'll never have to hear the word Jefferson again." (*CS* 212)

But what really concerns her is not so much the desire to have a job, but the attempt to use the job, if possible, as a means of escape. Elly's desire to have a job is, however, only half-hearted at best, as Alice Hall Petry aptly remarks (233, n. 22). Her only choice, then, is to marry the suspected mulatto. Hence Elly's proposal to Paul when she meets him again downtown. In fact, Elly wants to marry Paul desperately, so much so that she begs him over and over, even willing to lose her virginity to him if he only promises to marry her. Yet Paul refuses, not because he is afraid of miscegenation but because he is not a marrying man. An amoral young man who has apparently left a string of sexual conquests throughout the South, Paul is interested only in her body. As he tells her honestly: "I don't marry them" (*CS* 212, 213). His message is clear: casual sex, yes; formal marriage, no.

Since Paul's persistent refusal has now shattered her hope for change, Elly for a period submits to becoming engaged to Philip, "a grave, sober young man of impeccable character and habits," and passes "the monotonous rounds of her days in a kind of dull peace" (*CS* 213). But her temporary acquiescence is far from genuine, as is revealed in her thoughts: "At least I can live out the rest of my <u>dead</u> life as quietly as if I were already <u>dead</u>" (*CS* 213; emphasis added). Therefore, three weeks before her wedding, Elly makes one last desperate attempt to escape from the dull, empty life lying in wait for her. Contrary to her mother's bidding that she and Philip drive down to Mills City to fetch her grandmother back, Elly goes with Paul de Montigny and,

while they are approaching the city, surrenders herself to him in the woods. By initiating his defloration of her, she hopes that he will marry her and take her away from Jefferson. Try as she may, however, Paul remains firm in his stand: no marrying. The desperate young woman proposes again on their way back the next day, but her proposal is again turned down, even after her concession that "if it's that story about nigger blood, I don't believe it. I don't care" (*CS* 222). Actually, if she does not care whether Paul has Negro blood or not, she would not have used it as a bargaining ground to obtain her own end. When Elly in her next move threatens Paul with scenarioes of unwanted pregnancy and he still refuses, she forces the car out of the curving road, thereby killing Paul and her grandmother.

What compounds Elly's plight prior to her final showdown with Paul is that the grandmother, seeing that Elly will not give up the "Negro," is resolved to tell her father what Elly has done. The old woman, who remains silent while at her son-in-law's house presumably because she does not want to embarrass Elly's father by telling him how to discipline his daughter, speaks out against her when she learns that Elly has brought the "Negro" into her son's house, and that when the wedding is only three weeks away:

> . . ."Not contented with deceiving your parents and your friends, you must bring a Negro into my son's house as a guest."
> "Grandmother!" Elly said.
> "Having me sit down to table with a negro man." (*CS* 217)

Thus, the grandmother's blatant racism expresses itself when her silent reproach becomes open accusations. Her subsequent edicts that Paul "must not sleep under this roof,"[10] that he shall not drive her and Elly home to Jefferson, and that "no <u>blood</u> of hers shall ride with him again" indeed capture the very essence of late-nineteenth-century segregationism and Jim Crowism (*CS* 218; emphasis added). As Elly persists in defying these edicts, the grandmother has to resort to her trump card: "Then I will have to tell your father" (*CS* 218). In response, Elly challenges the old woman to "tell [my father]! Tell him we went into a clump of trees this morning and stayed there two hours" (*CS* 218).

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[10] Grandmother Ailanthia's proclamation echoes Mrs. Compson's injunction about Negroes sleeping in the bedrooms in "That Evening Sun."

Elly's rash confession of her miscegenation has put the matter out of her control, for the grandmother thereupon demands her stick, a symbol of authority, and stalks away, leaving Elly to understand that there is nothing more to be said because she has decided to tell her father. To prevent the grandmother from telling her father about the tabooed liaison with Paul, the desperate young woman decides that the former must die. She wants Paul to fake a car accident when they go back to Jefferson the next day, thereby killing the old woman: "You can keep her from telling daddy" (*CS* 220). But Paul refuses to do it. Paul's refusal makes Elly even more desperate. So, the next day she issues her ultimatum while the car is approaching the precipice: "And this is the last time. Will you [marry me]? Quick!" (*CS* 222). When Paul again flatly refuses, Elly in utter despair jerks the wheel and sends the car off the road.

Alice Hall Petry has apparently misinterpreted this part of the story when she comments that "the grandmother's threat to tell Elly's father is an idle one" (228). If so, why is Elly afraid? If, according to Petry, "Elly's determination to 'keep [the grandmother] from telling daddy' rings false," then what motivates Elly to plot the murder? Petry's argument that this is "one last excuse for [Elly] to beg Paul to marry her" is also problematic because it contradicts the textual evidence. Actually, Elly's primary concern at this point is to get rid of the grandmother first. As she says to Paul: "You needn't marry me, then. You can help it without marrying me" (*CS* 220).

Some critics have virtually no sympathy for Elly. M. E. Bradford, for one, perceives in Elly "a bundle of the very traits which [Faulkner] utterly despises" (186). Dorothy Tuck flatly calls her "self-pitying, selfish, and hateful, a sexual tease, utterly cold and amoral" (166). Actually, Elly's sexual misconduct is not a result of her natural badness. Her parents, with whom she has little contact, and her grandmother, whose constant watch-keeping stifles her, are also responsible for her predicament. Hans H. Skei is perhaps closer to the truth when he notes that "Elly is a young girl who experiences great difficulties while passing from childhood to womanhood. She is unable to cope with an adult world where one's freedom of choice is severely curtailed by traditions and expectations, and by social and sexual taboos . . . the author leaves no doubt about some of the influences which are responsible for her conduct" ("The Trapped Female Breaking Loose" 16).

## III

Much as it does in "Elly," the specter of miscegenation also looms large in the white consciousness in "Mountain Victory."[11] Hailed by Irving Howe as "probably Faulkner's best piece of writing about the Civil War," the story is concerned, not with the war itself, but with its immediate aftermath (264). A Confederate major named Saucier Weddel and his Negro servant are making their way to Mississippi through East Tennessee when they have to stop for the night at a dilapidated cabin owned by a poor white family. Because the father and the elder son are Union sympathizers, they begrudge their hospitality. Indeed, fanatical in his hatred of Confederates, Vatch, the elder son, is particularly rude to the one-armed officer. In spite of Vatch's rudeness, the Confederate officer remains undaunted and good-mannered. Entangled in the hostility which Vatch expresses toward the major is the social and class difference. While Vatch belongs to the poorest segment of the white population in the South, Major Weddel is a member of the Southern aristocracy. Another complication arises when the daughter of the family, overcome by Major Weddel's graceful manners and obvious nobility, evinces love and admiration for him. Even Hule, the younger son, is so impressed with Major Weddel's personal charm and courage that after learning of his true identity——half-Choctaw, half-French rather than a Negro——he urges him to marry his sister and take them away from the harsh, loveless mountain life.

Before he is certain of Weddel's racial identity, however, Hule has been haunted by the possibility of miscegenation. As Charles Peavy has noted, the otherwise gentle young mountaineer becomes desperate not because his sister may offer herself to Weddel but because Weddel might be a Negro (37). As the narrator says of his reaction when his sister wants him to send the message that she will meet the officer in the attic:[12]

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[11] "Mountain Victory" was accepted on first submission by the *Saturday Evening Post* on October 4, 1930. But it was not published until December 3, 1932 as "A Mountain Victory" (Blotner I, 669, 679; Ferguson 193).

[12] Insofar as Hule is tormented at this point by the threat of miscegenation between his sister and a man whom he admires, his dilemma is not unlike Henry Sutpen's in *Absalom, Absalom!*.

> . . . The boy cried quietly, with a kind of patient and utter despair.
> "I told her if you was a nigra, and if she done that——I told her that I——"
> "What if she did what? What does she want you to tell me?"
> "About the window to the attic where her and me sleep. There is a foot ladder I made to come back from hunting at night for you to get in. But I told her if you was a nigra and if she done that I would——" (*CS* 767)

The boy's "I-told-her" lament arises from the suspicion that Major Weddel might have Negro blood in him, for he has "a dark face, with dark eyes and black hair" (*CS* 747). As he is torn between his admiration for Major Weddel and the potential threat of miscegenation, the seventeen-year-old boy sometimes wishes that he and the officer were both dead.

Like the two white women in "Elly" who judge Paul de Montigny to be a Negro by his physical traits, the three mountaineers also suspect Saucier Weddel to be a Negro on account of his dark face, dark eyes and black hair. The suspicion or judgment has to do with the widespread belief in the Lamarckian theory of inheritance. Commonly termed "the doctrine of the inheritance of acquired characteristics," Lamarckism involved the belief that an organism specifically developed the physical means of coping with its environment and was then able to pass such characteristics on to its offspring. Moreover, Lamarckists viewed race formation as a social process operating through biological means of inheritance. Central to such a process was the idea of adaptation; that is, changes in organic behavior or physical structure caused by specific environmental influences were transmitted by heredity from parent to child. Over a long period of close breeding, such characteristics became common to the group as a whole and served to distinguish it from other racial groups. This notion of a hereditary transmission of social characteristics allowed many racists to see the future of a racial group as following patterns thoroughly established in the past. Viewed from such a perspective, blacks with their African heritage in the blood could never become the equal of the white man.

Overall, this Lamarckian view of race derived its strength from the way in which it fitted in and interacted with the Darwinian theory of evolution and polygenist notions of mulatto inferiority and sterility, of the "unnaturalness" of racial intermixture, and the need to maintain racial purity. The gist of the ploygenist view was that man had originated in several places by separate acts of creation and that from then on the various species had remained dis-

tinct. The very use of the term "species" indicates how unnatural polygenists felt racial amalgamation to be. Moreover, if the races of man had been created as distinct species, then it followed that maintaining racial purity was a task of utmost importance. Another important polygenist view was the belief that because the union of dissimilar species was "unnatural," the offspring of such unions tended toward sterility. The word "mulatto" is etymologically derived from "mule." Like the mule, the mulatto was often believed to be the product of an unnatural union. In a similar vein, polygenists considered hybrids inferior to either parent group.

In "Mountain Victory" and "Elly," whites like Vatch, Elly's girl friend and her grandmother subscribe to the "scientific" notion that blacks are intelligently inferior to and physically distinct from whites. Their repeated attention to the physical features that are said to distinguish a Negro recalls Joel Williamson's remark that the whites of the South would not overlook any blackness in a person (109). To the old-fashioned grandmother, "one drop of black blood makes a Negro." Indeed, Paul de Montigny's "white blood counts for nothing to her. He is a Negro every time" (Washington 158). Just as the grandmother is haunted by the hallucinating possibility of miscegenation involving her granddaughter, Vatch with his deep-rooted prejudice against Negroes also cannot tolerate the fact that his sister is attracted to a suspected Negro who is bent on staying at their place for the night. In short, what underlies their hostility toward each alleged Negro is the whole set of racist beliefs concerning the intersection of race and sex.

In "Mountain Victory" the suspicion that Major Saucier Weddel might be a Negro is first expressed by Vatch. While the stranger, with a tumbler of corn whiskey in his left hand, is walking toward the door to the kitchen, Vatch rudely orders him to stay away from that door:

> "Come away from that door," Vatch said. "You damn nigra."
> "So it is my face and not my uniform," the stranger said. "And you fought four years to free us, I understand." (*CS* 751)

Vatch's order arises from his attempt to protect his younger sister—a white woman—from the suspected "Negro." In other words, his vehement opposition to any contact between the stranger and his sister bespeaks his subconscious fear of the possibility of miscegenation. Furthermore, if Vatch's

being a Unionist intensifies his opposition to the contact, the major's reply serves as an ironic commentary on the mountaineer's judging people by their physical appearances. Later in the night when his sister attempts to meet the officer, Vatch taunts her: "Make him marry you quick because you are going to be a widow at daylight" (*CS* 767). Vatch's taunting remark is as much a warning to her as it is to the Confederate officer.

The same suspicion is expressed by the head of the family while the three men and the boy are at the supper table: " 'Vatch says you are a nigra,'. . . 'Are you a nigra?' the father said" (*CS* 758). Regardless of Major Weddel's reply that he is the son of a Choctaw chief named Francis Weddel,[13] the father turns increasingly unfriendly toward the major when he finds that the latter has now become the object of his daughter's admiration. Indeed, the father is so concerned about the fearful possibility of miscegenation that he repeatedly warns the major not to stay. For example, when the girl appears while the men are having supper, the father first orders her to go back to the kitchen and then urges the major to leave at once: " 'Take your horses and go,' the father said" (*CS* 762). After supper, when the girl in an effort to see the officer shows up in the dark hall, her father tries to intimidate her by whipping her with a leather strap. As the Negro servant gets drunk on corn whiskey, the father again admonishes the officer against staying at his place. This time he suggests that the officer ride on without the drunken Negro, for "[h]e is nothing but a nigra' " (*CS* 765).

During the night when the girl is trying again to see the officer, her father tells her, " 'If you go out that door, don't you never come back' " (*CS* 767). As to the officer, the father warns him for the last time:

> "Take your horses and nigra, and ride on."
> "If you mean your daughter, I never saw her but once and I never expect to see her again."
> "Ride on," the father said. "Take what is yours, and ride on." (*CS* 770)

In spite of the father's persistent warnings and the boy's offer to show him a short cut down the valley, Major Weddel never wavers in his stand that he

[13] Through its brief and slightly different account of Chief Francis Weddel's visit to Washington, "Mountain Victory" is loosely connected to one of the four Indian stories called "Lo!." In "Lo!," Francis Weddel is Chief of the Chickasaw tribe.

will not leave the drunken Negro servant behind and that he will leave early next morning. But while they are riding down the mountain path at daybreak, both of them are ambushed and killed by the two Union sympathizers. Before Vatch shoots the Negro, however, he or his father has mistakenly killed the boy, who has been trying to persuade the officer to turn back and marry his sister. As the father emerges from the thicket of trees, he is horrified to see what they have done:

> The Negro watched [the father] run forward, crying monotonously, "The durned fool! The durned fool! The durned fool!" and then stop suddenly and drop the gun; squatting, the Negro saw him become stone still above the fallen gun, looking down at the boy's body with an expression of shock and amazement like he was waking from a dream. (*CS* 777)

The father's monotonous cry apparently refers to the major. But he is shocked to speechlessness when he realizes that one of the bodies lying on the ground is his own kin, Hule.

Unlike his elder brother and his father, young Hule sides with his elder sister. Moreover, as he has come to trust Major Weddel, his fear of a potential miscegenation is assuaged. Instead, the sensitive young boy envisages in the major a dream of escaping to a less barren, less violent world than the one he and his sister are doomed to live in forever—a world where a man hunts all day, with a horse to ride on and Negroes to wait on him. Like Elly who longs to escape from Jefferson, Hule is dissatisfied with his living environment. With this dream in mind, therefore, Hule urges Major Weddel to marry his sister and take both of them with him: "We would work. She might not look like the Miss'ippi women who wear shoes all the time. But we would learn, we would not shame you before them" (*CS* 770). Despite Hule's persistent plea and his own subscious concern about the girl, Major Weddel refuses to marry her. Why does Weddel reject the girl, then? The story does not offer a direct answer to this question. It does imply, however, that the white men's fear of miscegenation plays a significant role in warping an otherwise potentially fruitful relationship between the Confederate officer and the girl.

I use the words "potentially fruitful" advisedly, not simply because the girl adores the officer and totally acknowledges his personal qualities like

nobility, courage and humanism but also because of a deep internal similarity between them, as is implied in their reaction to the first sight of each other. For example, the narrator describes the girl's initial reaction to the major's appearance: "There she saw the stranger for the first time and then she was holding her breath quietly, not even aware that she had ceased to breathe" (*CS* 749). Similar to this is the narrator's account of Weddel's reaction when he first sees the girl: "Again the father called that name [the girl's] which Weddel had not caught; again he did not catch it and was not aware that he had not" (*CS* 762). Besides the white fear of miscegenation, there are other factors involved in the major's rejection of the girl, like the impenetrable class barriers, Weddel's own feelings tormented and frozen by war experiences (" 'But it's hard to keep on feeling any way for four years. Even feeling at all' " [*CS* 758]), and his assumption that the girl already has a boyfriend ("She has a young man, I suppose—a beau" [*CS* 772]). Alexandre Vashchenko remarks that "the girl, without doubt, symbolizes 'the road not taken' by the Confederate major from Mississippi" (213).

Finally, in his characterization of Major Weddel, Faulkner dramatizes a theme that recurs in many of his war stories and novels—that of victory in defeat. The concept of "victory in defeat" or "the unvanquished" is also introduced by the girl. When her father whips her with an eye to preventing her from meeting the Confederate officer, the girl in response says simply: "You can whip me, but you can't whip him" (*CS* 763).[14]

## IV

If the Southern white man could, by virtue of his caste position, exploit black women sexually, he could never tolerate miscegenation between black men and white women. The caste taboo had to do with a series of racist beliefs within the dominant society concerning interracial sex/marriage. Most notable among them were that all blacks (including mulattoes) were inferior

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[14] As Faulkner writes in his review of Erich Maria Remarque's *The Road Back*: "There is a victory beyond defeat which the victorious know nothing of." The review was published in *New Republic* on May 20, 1931, which was about seven months after "Mountain Victory" was accepted by *Saturday Evening Post*. Viewed in this light, the title of the story is ironic. For Faulkner's remark, see *Essays, Speeches and Public Letters by William Faulkner*, ed. James B. Meriwether, 185.

to whites in temperament, physique and intelligence and that as amalgamation was "unnatural," maintaining racial purity was of utmost importance. Neil R. McMillen aptly describes the situation: "The unthinkable horrors of 'race degeneracy' justified the most barbarous forms of interracial violence and made the injunction against 'amalgamation' the first law of white supremacy" (14). In order to preserve white male dominance, radical racists are ever vigilant against the taboo of miscegenation and anxious to lynch any black male for this "crime" against the white race. The mounting white fear of miscegenation during the years between 1890 and 1920 gave rise to growing racial antagonism, which was characterized by Negro disfranchisement, increasing violence, and tightening segregation. In his "Preface" to *What Negro Newspapers of Georgia Say about Some Social Problems, 1933*, Rollin Chambliss succinctly summed up the racial situation then:[15]

> It might have been seen even then that most of those Negroes who were lynched were not charged with attempts to assault white women, and that many of those who were so charged were not clearly proved to be guilty. It might have been seen that what claimed to be a defense of white womanhood was more often than not merely a riot of race antagonism, brought into existence by rumors and swept along by a kind of fear. (4)

But if Southern White Manhood depended upon keeping black men away from white women, controlling black men in this manner likewise served to restrict white women's behavior, although it was rationalized as a defense of white womanhood (Andrews 498-99). John Dollard observed that the caste taboo is only acknowledged in terms of preventing black men access to white women, while in actuality the taboo also functions to prohibit white women from having intimate relations with black men (166). In other words, the white woman also suffered from the caste barrier. Lillian Smith, a white woman who grew up in the South, comments perceptively on how the racial system affected the mental and emotional growth of southern children: "The banning of people and books and ideas did not appear more shocking

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[15] Chambliss' "Preface" to his published master's thesis was quoted in full by Gunnar Myrdal in *An American Dilemma* on pages 1192-95. Incidentally, *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* issued in Winter 1995 a special number (124.1) entitled "An American Dilemma Revisited" to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Gunnar Myrdal's monumental scholarly work, *An American Dilemma*.

than the banning of our wishes which we learned early to send to the Darktown of our unconscious. But we clung to the belief . . . that our white skin made us 'better' than all other people" (75-76; emphasis added). In short, despite white racists' discrimination against black men as bestial other, the very restrictions also fueled white female desire for the taboo. John Dollard conceded that "there actually is a considerable attraction between white women and Negro men, that the white men are unconsciously aware of this attraction but dare not call up the intolerable idea, and that, as a result, they are jealous lest their women should make sexual contacts with the virile (in their stereotype) Negro men; consciously the whole matter is charged off to the sexual aggressiveness of the Negro men and in this way the complicity of the white woman is avoided" (170).

As if to mirror the historical situation of the South, Faulkner in "Elly" and "Mountain Victory" creates two female characters whose desire for the taboo is in part fueled by the constraints and limitations of their respective living environment. To thwart their desire, the dominant society as represented by the cold grandmother and the ruthless Vatch reacted like Flannery O'Connor's Julian, the white character who fantasizes the horror of sex/marriage across the color line. In "Elly," the grandmother's fear of miscegenation is key to the rising tension between her and her granddaughter. Her fear is first revealed in her violent reaction to Elly's introduction of her new acquaintance, Paul de Montigny. As she believes Paul to be a Negro, the grandmother disapproves of Elly's liaison with him. Therefore, when the defiant granddaughter quits her customary rendezvous and meets the "negro" on the lawn, the watchful grandmother shows up to prevent the consummation. To Elly, part of Paul's attraction lies in his "mulattoness"; even to date him is, to quote Petry, " 'sexual liberation' with a vengeance" (226). Furthermore, in her sexual contact with Paul, Elly evinces a possibility of escaping from the dull suburban life and the suffocating strictures imposed on her as a Southern belle. Though she is engaged to the proper bank cashier one week after Paul's initial rejection of her proposal, her desire to escape remains. Thus, about three weeks before her wedding, she offers herself to Paul, hoping that he will then marry her and take her away from Jefferson. To the racist grandmother, Elly's renewed contact with the suspected Negro is something she cannot tolerate any longer. Hence the climactic confronta-

tion with her granddaughter, which ends in the grandmother's resolution to tell her son-in-law.

In "Mountain Victory," the presence of the dark-faced, dark-eyed, and black-haired officer has aroused in the father and his two sons a fear of potential miscegenation. It is such a fear that keeps them awake for some time that night because the girl is trying to see the officer in the loft where he sleeps. To the young Hule, such a fear is tempered with the possibility of leaving the frustrating environment where he knows only violence and hatred. To the Unionist Vatch and the father, however, such a fear greatly intensifies their hatred toward the Confederate officer. Once their Unionist sentiments are aroused, they feel obliged to murder him, even at the end of the Civil War, which is, as Lyall H. Powers has astutely observed, "the great American fratricidal holocaust" (111). Now the acrid irony is that as a result of the fratricide, the father not only loses a potential son-in-law but also his younger and better son. Thus, through the use of miscegenation motif, Faulkner dramatizes a theme that is most clearly developed, perhaps, in *Absalom, Absalom!*: war is fratricide and fratricide is suicide. Like Thomas Sutpen, the poor white father also encounters the threat of miscegenation. Just as Thomas Sutpen obliges his son Henry to kill Henry's brother, the unnamed father in cahoots with his elder son also murders another "brother." In both cases, the fratricidal act produces suicidal consequences.

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# 威廉·福克納〈依莉〉和〈山的凱旋〉中的階層禁忌

何文敬

## 摘要

本文旨在探討福克納〈依莉〉和〈山的凱旋〉裏的白女黑男之性禁忌議題。論文從美國社會思想史的角度切入，闡述該禁忌的歷史成因、思想背景以及「科學」根據，以建立本文之理論架構；第一部分最後則回顧相關的研究文獻並檢討其缺失。

在〈依莉〉中，女主角依莉的祖母認爲男主角保羅具有黑人血統而反對兩人交往，依莉卻渴望嫁給保羅以便脫離無聊的郊區生活，不料保羅拒絕她的求婚。後來，她跟當地的銀行出納員菲力普訂婚，卻仍渴望離開家鄉；婚前三週，她母親囑咐她跟菲力普去舅舅家接她祖母回來時，依莉卻私下約保羅同行，並在途中主動獻身，期盼他會因而娶她。她祖母於是決定將該事告知依莉的父親。隔日在返家途中，依莉因怕父親得知而向保羅提議陷害祖母，保羅反對並再度拒絕娶她；依莉在絕望下突然動手轉方向盤，結果車子翻覆，依莉受傷，保羅和她祖母則當場死亡。

〈山的凱旋〉同樣處理白女黑男通婚/性關係的恐懼。故事中的白女對打算在她家過夜的邦聯軍官魏德爾頗有好感。可是她父親、哥哥和弟弟卻懷疑這名「褐臉、棕眼、黑髮」的軍官是黑人；雖然他表明他是具有法國血統的原住民，她哥哥和父親仍無法釋懷，她弟弟休爾則勸魏德爾帶他們姊弟離開那沒有愛的山區生活。在她執意想要和魏德爾見面的情況下，她父親警告魏德爾立刻離開；魏德爾卻不願拋下酒醉的黑僕。翌日清晨，他和黑僕在休爾的引領下，在山路中遭女孩的父親和哥哥射殺，休爾則被誤殺。

總之，福克納在〈依莉〉和〈山的凱旋〉中同樣是處理階層禁忌的主題。男主角由於被懷疑是黑人而均遭到歧視，在白種女子渴望以身相許的壓力下，男主角結果都死於非命。