

Spring 2019

# “ALL I WANTED TO KNOW WAS HOW TO LIVE IN IT”: RITUALS AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING IN HEMINGWAY AND FAULKNER

Marissa Ortosky

John Carroll University, mortosky20@jcu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://collected.jcu.edu/mastersessays>

Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Ortosky, Marissa, "“ALL I WANTED TO KNOW WAS HOW TO LIVE IN IT”: RITUALS AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING IN HEMINGWAY AND FAULKNER" (2019). *Masters Essays*. 111.

<https://collected.jcu.edu/mastersessays/111>

This Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses and Essays at Carroll Collected. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Essays by an authorized administrator of Carroll Collected. For more information, please contact [connell@jcu.edu](mailto:connell@jcu.edu).

“ALL I WANTED TO KNOW WAS HOW TO LIVE IN IT”: RITUALS AND  
THE QUEST FOR MEANING IN HEMINGWAY AND FAULKNER

An Essay Submitted to the  
Office of Graduate Studies  
College of Arts & Sciences of  
John Carroll University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

By  
Marissa A. Ortosky  
2019

The parameters for classifying a writer as modernist has been the subject of some critical debate. While many scholars view the employment of difficult stylistic techniques as a requirement, others like David E. Chinitz and Gail McDonald prefer to classify modernism in more historic terms, contending that techniques like fragmentation are “characteristic but not indispensable” (2). Most agree, though, that the period documents a shift away from tradition, marked by what Gerald Graff calls an “apocalyptic sense of disappointment with history, tradition, [and] culture” (109). T. S. Eliot’s 1925 poem, “The Hollow Men,” certainly depicts this fragmented worldview, and may be viewed as a haunting portrayal of a crumbling world. The fifth section, in particular, demonstrates the inadequacy of previous traditions. It begins with an altered version of a childhood nursery rhyme, where the lush, familiar mulberry bush has been replaced with the more desiccated, formidable cactus: “here we go round the prickly pear/Prickly pear prickly pear” (68-69). Mulberry bushes, it would seem, cannot survive in this harsh, new wasteland. Nor can traditional religion survive. In this final section, lines become interspersed with italicized verses of the Lord’s Prayer, only to have even this intercession, central to the Christian faith, fracture and fall apart:

*For Thine is the Kingdom*

For Thine is  
Life is  
For Thine is the (91-94)

The familiar refrain crumbles, rendered into little more than insignificant, incomplete phrases. Like many of Eliot’s other works, “The Hollow Men” articulates the impossibility of finding meaning in old traditions, and demonstrates how these old rites fail to retain significance in a post-war world.

Yet at its core, “The Hollow Men” *does* depict an element of tradition—a ritual. The poem centers on Guy Fawkes Day, the celebration of the failed 1605 Gunpowder Plot. This annual commemoration reflects centuries of repeated acts; “The Hollow Men” opens with depictions of straw effigies waiting to be set aflame, a customary activity for the holiday. Even the epigraph evokes one of the event’s central rituals: “A penny for the Old Guy” (p. 673). The line, of course, references the tradition of children going door to door, requesting pennies to purchase fireworks for the evening’s celebration. These repeated actions—begging for pennies, alighting straw dummies, fireworks displays, et cetera—have a rooted place in the country’s national consciousness. Every fifth of November, engaging in these holiday rituals enable participants to connect with an event that first occurred centuries earlier.

The inclusion of such rites are of particular note given Eliot’s modernist era, a time in which old values seemingly no longer apply. One may assume that, given rituals’ association with the past and tradition, modernists might dismiss them. Rather than reject rituals outright, however, many modernist writers—including the American giants Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner—incorporate these significant, repeated actions into their fiction. Though both Hemingway and Faulkner differ dramatically in narrative style, an examination of each’s portrayal of rituals results in a striking similarity; for both these authors, rituals are used in an attempt to reestablish meaning in a world seemingly dominated by insignificance and emptiness. Some characters succeed, some fail—yet their engagement in rituals speaks to the human spirit’s ability to endure.

Before one can begin a suitable examination of Hemingway’s and Faulkner’s rituals, certain definitions and qualifications must be established. To that end, I join

several critics<sup>1</sup> in citing religious scholar Mircea Eliade. Eliade's discussion, particularly in his text *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, can provide a foundational framework for understanding the seemingly loaded terms of "ritual," "sacred," "profane," et cetera. For Eliade, both "sacred and profane are two modes of being in the world, two existential situations assumed by man in the course of his history" (14). To oversimplify Eliade's argument (if only for expediency's sake), to engage with the sacred is to supersede the limitations of one's present moment. During a sacred encounter with the divine, one psychologically enters into an earlier "historical time" (88) and, as a result, establishes a deeply meaningful contact with a higher being, typically—although not necessarily—a god. When one achieves this position, however brief the duration, Eliade determines the individual to be in "sacred time" (65).

In order to achieve this divine connection, Eliade argues, humankind relies on various myths and legends. Ultimately, it is the retelling of these myths—and enacting their associated rituals—that allow humankind to move out of "profane time" (one's present moment, including its accompanying constrictions) and into "sacred time" (Eliade 68-69). To again use Eliot's "The Hollow Men" as an example, the retold "myth" of the holiday is Fawkes's failed bombing attempt. Participating in the rituals associated with this myth (giving pennies to children, purchasing fireworks) allow participants to transcend their present historical moment, granting them a connection back to the time of Fawkes's demise and subsequent national celebration; as such, they succeed in moving out of profane time and into sacred time.

---

<sup>1</sup> Of the critics cited in this essay, Luminita M. Dragulescu, David Hein, and Larry E. Grimes all utilize Eliade's discussions of myth, ritual, the sacred and the profane.

Rituals, then, become essential to one's connection to the divine. Eliade argues that "sacred time is indefinitely recoverable, indefinitely repeatable" (69). One cannot remain in sacred time forever, but through rituals one can perpetually reestablish this connection. Another oft-cited scholar, William James, shares a similar view on the impermanence of divine connection. James refers to this impermanence as the experience's "transiency," observing that "[m]ystical states cannot be sustained for long" (370). Because of this quality, rituals gain much of their evocative power through the frequency of their replication. Eliade further affirms that "the repetition of certain paradigmatic gestures" allows one to be "transported into the mythical epoch in which [a] revelation took place" (qtd. in Dragulescu 204). In other words, regularly engaging in rituals can result in a sacred encounter with the divine. These rituals could be repeated annually, monthly, weekly, or at some otherwise more innocuous interval. Expanding on this definition further, James classifies rituals as personal, participatory acts. James refers to this as a religious experience's "ineffability" (370). The rituals that result in sacred encounters "must be directly experienced" and cannot easily be "imparted or transferred to others" (370). A ritual, then, must be a repeatable action of specific gestures, enacted with the intent to obtain some revelation from a divine entity, experience, or concept.

Though Eliade's and James's terminology seem to implicitly link rituals to organized religions, this is not to say that the discussion should be limited to faith-based rites. While religious rituals are fairly commonplace and often significant (both appear in Hemingway's and Faulkner's fiction) secular rituals are also worthy of examination. In fact James does not exclusively link religion to any specific theology. James instead considers religion to be "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men... in

relation to whatever they may consider the divine” (32). Religious experiences, by this definition, are internal, individualized quests for personal meaning, from which organized theologies only “secondarily grow” (32).

Eliade, too, acknowledges that not all rituals originate from organized religions. Myths, he observes, permeate culture at all times, and one encounters them almost daily. They are “camouflaged in the plays that he enjoys, in the books that he reads” (205). But the “countless mythical motifs” (205) employed in the entertainment industries still, Eliade insists, reflect the ability to move from profane time into sacred time. Here again Eliot’s “The Hollow Men” provides a useful example; the rituals surrounding Guy Fawkes Day are not centralized in any one particular faith. Engaging with the myth of the Guy Fawkes story nevertheless prompts a sacred encounter; in this case, what might be considered the divine could be a reinvigorated sense of national pride. Though secular, these rituals and their revelations should not be discounted. As James succinctly affirms, “Religious melancholy...is at any rate melancholy. Religious happiness is happiness” (26).

The ultimate goal for enacting a ritual, then, is some sort of meaningful epiphany; James calls this the experience’s “noetic quality” (370).<sup>2</sup> In effect, encountering the divine results in “illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance” (370). When a ritual results in the participant engaging with a divine or successfully entering into sacred time, subsequently achieving a revelation, these rituals may be considered

---

<sup>2</sup> Including the “ineffability” and “noetic quality” of religious experiences, James offers two additional traits that occasionally, but not always, accompany sacred encounters: transiency (discussed above) and passivity (the feeling that one is in the control of some higher power). For a full discussion, see James’s “Lectures XVI and XVII” in *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, pp. 369-421.

sacred—whether the rites themselves are faith-based or secular. However, some repeated actions do not result in meaningful realizations at all. Instead, these activities merely reemphasize the sense of meaninglessness already present, or else redefining this nothingness into some new concept of insignificance. These rituals, then, can be considered profane, preventing participants any transcendent revelation or access to sacred time. Though the sacred moment itself may be transient, the revelation can be long-lasting, and subsequently reattained through the repeated enactment of rituals.

And though this notion of achieving meaning through rituals may initially seem at odds with modernism's typical rejection of old traditions, Irene Visser reminds us that "modernism is not to be defined only as rebellion and critique; it is also a blending and merging of fragmented concepts" (486), and these concepts include the creation of and engagement in rituals both sacred and secular, old and new. Faulkner himself has commented on the necessity for writers to incorporate a search for the sacred into their fiction. During his time at Virginia University in 1957, Faulkner regularly conversed with students and community members; at one of these sessions, Faulkner affirmed that he believed "no writing will be too successful without some conception of God, you can call Him by whatever name you want" (*Faulkner* 161). Faulkner's comments align with Eliade's and James's views of the personalized and potentially secular religious experience; whether one's concept of "God" is inherently linked to a deity, or whether "God" instead acts as a more abstract sense of meaning, rituals grant one access to this sense of significance.

As we will see, both religious and secular rituals abound in Faulkner's fiction; one may recall, of course, Dilsey's Easter devotions or Quentin's desperate struggle to

reconcile old Southern rituals with modern values in *The Sound and the Fury*, or the Bundren family's botched attempts to complete Addie's funeral rites in *As I Lay Dying*. Hemingway's works similarly involve rituals, particularly Nick Adams's fishing routines in "Big Two Hearted River" and, more prominently, Jake's participation in both Parisian and Spanish rites in *The Sun Also Rises*. In all of these cases, these characters' creation of and participation in rituals demonstrate their intentional attempts to reestablish a sense of personal significance, regardless of whether this attempt is directly linked to a specific theology or a more abstract concept of meaning. They do not always succeed—sometimes engaging in profane rituals that only result in redefining their perceived insignificance. But when they do succeed, these rituals enable participants to make meaning in an otherwise meaningless world.

Critics often discuss the influence of Hemingway's personal spirituality on his fiction. In particular, scholars emphasize his 1927 conversion to Catholicism. The devout family of Pauline Pfeifer, Hemingway's second wife, may have motivated Hemingway's choice, but his exposure to the Catholic faith nonetheless resonates within his writing. In his study on Hemingway and religion, Richard Grimes emphasizes that Hemingway remained Catholic and even reportedly engaged in prayer until his death, even after the marriage to Pfeifer had ended (3). Moreover, Grimes traces Hemingway's religious awareness back to his childhood days in Oak Park, Illinois, in a house that Grimes calls a "bastion of Victorian morality" (3). The exposure to these traditions would have provided Hemingway with a personal foundation of the faith—and its emphasis on rituals. Catholicism, in particular, incorporates many ritualistic acts: the repetition of specific prayers and creeds, the consumption of transubstantiated bread and wine, et cetera. Given

this influence, it is unsurprising that such emphasis should be placed on rituals within Hemingway's fiction.

Hemingway's most apparent portrayal of ritual can be found in "Big Two Hearted River." This pairing of stories, originally published in the 1925 edition of *In Our Time*, centers on Nick Adams's return from war—of which, true to his iceberg theory, Hemingway neglects to overtly mention. In an attempt to keep his psychologically tormented mind calm, Nick ventures to the titular river to fish. For novice readers of Hemingway, what follows seems to be a detailed guide to proper fishing technique. But Nick's purposeful engrossment in these tasks constitutes his strategy for occupying his mind, fixing his thoughts firmly on the present so as to avoid the past. But Nick's actions while fishing also constitutes his performing of a ritual, one that begins his movement from profane time, where he is constrained by his present fragility, into sacred time; these rituals act as the catalyst for Nick's eventual progression towards a revelation—in this case, mental healing.

In addition to the psychological undercurrents of "Big Two Hearted River," Agori Kroupi has also noted the Christian implications of many of Nick's actions. Kroupi links, for example, the trout Nick catches to the Christian symbol of fish.<sup>3</sup> More important than symbols, though, are Nick's actions. As Kroupi argues, "[T]he importance of Nick's fishing is not just to catch fish; it is to do it according to the rules" (111). Nick's technique—a technique taught to him by his community of like-minded fishermen—

---

<sup>3</sup> Fish are often associated with Jesus Christ, and appear several times throughout the Gospels. When first gathering his disciples, Jesus says, "I will make you fishers of men" (*King James Bible*, Matthew 4:19). Jesus also uses fish to perform a miracle, dividing five loaves of bread and two fish to feed a multitude (Mark 6:41).

differs from the less-refined method of the fly-fishers. Nick acknowledges this distinction, deciding that he “did not like to fish with other men on the river. Unless they were of your party, they spoiled it” (“Big” 255). Nick performs all of his fishing tasks with the same level of engagement and degree of reverence: collecting only the medium-sized grasshoppers; precisely “thread[ing] the slim hook under [the grasshopper’s] chin, down through his thorax and into the last segments of his abdomen” (224); killing and subsequently cleaning the trout with precision (231).

As Grimes affirms, Nick’s attentiveness to his actions is “his response to the desacralization of life,” and his response consists primarily of “adhering to a rigid code of self-control” (51) in each task performed.<sup>4</sup> Nick’s experience in war has altered his perception of the world, unsettling him; he engages in rituals, then, in the attempt to reestablish some sense of meaning and balance. Indeed, James cites an “[a]n uneasiness” as the primary cause for participating in rituals (499). This uneasiness, according to James, centers on an inherent “sense that there is *something wrong about us* as we naturally stand” (499, emphasis in original). However, this definition may be widened to include a general sense of unease—including uncertainty pertaining to both oneself as well as the world at large.

Participating in these fishing rituals, then, brings Nick closer to entering sacred time. The swamp in “Big Two Hearted River,” often read as representing Nick’s

---

<sup>4</sup> Grimes expands on this discussion by distinguishing various levels of success at connecting with the divine. Grimes views certain characters as operating in what he calls the “fifth dimension” (5), wherein they transcend sacred time and enter a state of bliss. While the fifth dimension is not relevant to this discussion, those wishing to pursue this distinction should consult Grimes’s chapter, “Fiction in the Fifth Dimension” in *The Religious Design of Hemingway’s Early Fiction*, pp. 5-33.

repressed mental trauma, borders the landscape, always on the fringes of Nick's conscious attention. For much of the first half of Nick's excursion, he refuses to acknowledge the swamp and as such remains in a stagnant mental state. But as Nick continues to perform the fishing rituals, engaging in these repeated actions, he gradually moves from complete avoidance closer towards confrontation and acceptance. In the first part of "Big Two Hearted River," Hemingway mentions "swamp" only four times. In the second part, the frequency of "swamp" more than triples to fourteen times.<sup>5</sup> The dramatic increase in emphasis demonstrates Nick's progression towards actually entering the swamp and confronting his mental unease. While Nick does not successfully complete this transformation by the story's end—still calling the bog "a tragic adventure" that he "did not want" ("Big" 231)—the ending of "Big Two Hearted River" is implicitly hopeful: "There were plenty of days coming when he could fish the swamp" (232). In this way, Nick's performance of fishing rituals demonstrates his attempt to reestablish his sense of self and meaning after his psychological trauma. To use James's terminology, Nick engages in rituals in order to move closer to a revelation, and reestablishing his place in a post-war world.

Nick's movement towards significant revelations, per James's and Eliade's qualifications, classifies his rituals as sacred. However, profane rituals appear alongside sacred ones in *The Sun Also Rises*. In his discussion of the novel, Floyd C. Watkins affirms, "The theme of *The Sun Also Rises* is essentially a search for meaning despite the belief that no meaning can be significant and certain. Religion or love of God, sexual

---

<sup>5</sup> In the first part of "Big Two Hearted River," the word "swamp" may be found on pages 214, 216, and 218. In the second section, "swamp" appears on 221, 225, 227, 230, 231, and 232.

love, idealistic romance or love, patriotism or love of country—all is vanity. After belief has gone, only method remains” (97). This method, of course, takes the form of rituals. One repeated rite that Jake enacts both in Paris and Spain is drinking. Drinking is a social ritual, intended to forge meaningful connections and relationships through the shared consumption of spirits. However, this ritual takes on either profane or sacred quality depending on its locale and its participants.

The novel begins in Paris, a place dominated by unease and affording little personal significance. As Grimes describes, “Paris is motion, noise, anxiety, darkness, and, most of all, Brett Ashley” (89). Indeed, Brett seems to embody modernity, and is at the center of most profane rituals. In Paris, drinking is reduced to an everyday routine that leaves Jake unfulfilled. Alcohol accompanies nearly every social encounter in France, be it the casual drink Jake has with Robert Cohn, cocktails at one or more Parisian bars, or the drinks Jake prepares for Brett and Count Mippipopulous at his apartment. On this particular occasion, the Count voices the inadequacies of the ritual even as he partakes in it. Poking fun at Brett, he says, “You’re always drinking, my dear. Why don’t you just talk? ...I should like to hear you really talk” (*Sun* 65). That the count does not regularly hear Brett “really talk” implies that the conversations Brett usually conducts are somehow vapid, inexpressive, and meaningless. Brett instead regularly adopts a façade of flirtation and cheer. But when she finally gains a moment alone with Jake, Brett confesses, “Oh, darling, I’ve been so miserable” (32). Though Brett regularly engages in social drinking, it does not result in a connection to the divine. In this case, the divine may be seen as a meaningful interpersonal connection. Indeed, by the novel’s end the expatriate group has shattered almost completely: Jake must rescue Brett in Madrid,

Cohn flees, Mike rents a hotel in Saint Jean de Luz, and Bill returns to Paris. Though designed to establish community among drinkers, participating in this profane ritual results in exactly the opposite for Jake, only redefining his sense of isolation.

But in Spain, the drinking Jake experiences on a bus en route to the Irati River acts as a stark contrast to his time in Parisian bars. Jake and Bill travel to the river for a pre-fiesta fishing trip. On the bus, the two engage in a drinking ritual with the local Basque people. This moment has profound consequences for Jake. As Grimes notes, “the whole atmosphere of the book undergoes a change” (89); the tension and alienation Jake felt while in Paris shifts to a sense of peace and inclusion on the bus. For these peasants, sharing alcohol is a ritualistic formation of community, a rite in which they insistently include Bill and Jake. The Basque peasants refuse to sip from Bill’s glass wine bottle, “wagg[ing] a forefinger at him” in mock-taunt (*Sun* 110). Instead, the peasants teach the American expatriates their own “art of drinking” (Grimes 89), an event in which everyone on the bus participates:

When [Bill] stopped drinking and tipped the leather bottle down a few drops ran down his chin. “No! No!” several Basques said. “Not like that.” One snatched the bottle away from the owner, who was himself about to give a demonstration. He was a young fellow and he held the wine-bottle at full arms’ length and raised it high up, squeezing the leather bag with his hand so the stream of wine hissed into his mouth. (*Sun* 110)

The wineskin is subsequently shared with the rest of the travelers, foreigner and native alike. The Basque people welcome Jake and Bill into their community via this ritual, enabling Jake and Bill to connect with these locals in a way that they could not connect with their drinking partners in Paris. This sense of connectedness extends throughout the duration of their fishing trip; Jake and Bill forge a friendship with an Englishman named

Harris, with whom the two also share drinks. This, too, results in a profound sense of community for all involved. As Bill and Jake leave, Harris gives them each handmade lures and confesses, “Really you don’t know how much it means. I’ve not had much fun since the war” (134).<sup>6</sup>

Two parallel scenes in the novel further demonstrate the distinction between drinking as sacred and drinking with Brett as profane. The first occurs in Paris, before the fiesta. Brett, already drunk, arrives at Jake’s apartment in the middle of the night and the two briefly converse over cocktails. Brett soon departs, returning to the count. This interaction—and their goodnight kiss—torment the impotent Jake. The drinking ritual, again, fails to establish a meaningful connection between the two, and only redefines and reemphasizes Brett’s unattainability. Jake “felt like hell again” (*Sun* 42) after Brett’s departure, and contemplates the empty glasses before cleaning up the remnants: “On the table was an empty glass and a glass half-full of brandy and soda. I took them both out to the kitchen and poured the half-full glass down the sink” (42).

In Spain, Jake experiences a similar profane drinking ritual, again in the presence of Brett, when the two share drinks with young matador Pedro Romero. During this encounter, Jake wordlessly gives Romero permission to engage in a relationship with Brett. Even though Montoya, the hotel owner who shares Jake’s *afición* for bullfighting, warns Jake that Romero “ought to stay with his own people” because foreigners “don’t

---

<sup>6</sup> During the fiesta, local Spaniards also teach Brett how to drink wine. Rather than act as a sacred, community-forming rite, Brett’s presence turns ritual into spectacle, with her as its centerpiece: Brett was “seated on a wine-cask” with “a wreath of garlics around her neck” (*Sun* 160). She becomes “an image to dance around” (160), elevated above and isolated from the other participants. While it can be argued that Brett is welcomed into the Spaniard’s ritual, her inclusion prevents Jake and the other expatriates from fully participating.

know what he's worth" (*Sun* 176), Jake still permits Brett and Romero's relationship. Despite Jake's previously rewarding experience drinking onboard the bus with the Basques, he succumbs again to the profane Parisian version of drinking because of Brett—who warps an activity meant to establish community into an opportunity for herself to bed Romero. Grimes argues that Jake's experience in Spain should be defined by both his (albeit tepid) Catholicism, as well as his *afición* for bullfighting; however, "under Brett's influence he cannot make either of his 'faiths' stick" (Grimes 91). Far from granting Jake a revelation or furthering a sense of community with either Romero or Brett, this drinking ritual leaves Jake alone, again, watching the remains of their encounter wiped away: "The coffee-glasses and our three empty cognac-glasses were on the table. A waiter came with a cloth and picked up the glasses and mopped off the table" (*Sun* 191). In both of these instances, drinking with Brett only succeeds in furthering Jake's alienation. No transcendent realization occurs, and the uneasiness predating the ritual remains at best unaddressed, and at worst reaffirmed.

Faulkner's characters, too, engage in both sacred and profane rituals. *The Sound and the Fury*, for example, abounds in both religious and secular rites; this is hardly surprising given its backdrop of Yoknapatawpha County. Fictionalized though it may be, Faulkner's setting reflects his own experiences in the South—a region that, historically, has encompassed the ritualistic legacy of slavery. Indeed, Visser argues that Faulkner is "a writer who explores the ills of his time and society and questions the workings of its religion, ethics and politics" (485). In *The Sound and the Fury*, this questioning centers on the crumbling Compson family. The "trouble with the Compsons," according to Faulkner, is that "[t]hey are still living in the attitudes of 1859 or '60" (*Faulkner* 18),

abiding by social codes that no longer apply. Through the Compsons, Faulkner offers a critique of the overly “ideological notions of valour and honour in the South” (470). No Compson struggles more valiantly to reconcile these old Southern values with modernity than Quentin. Donald M. Kartiganer regards Quentin as one who was raised to see the “Old South” as “an era of tranquility and elegance... [and] an exemplary mode of existence” despite its wrongs (“So I” 625). Ultimately, though, Quentin is unable and unwilling to escape the “powerful legacy of his upbringing” (Visser 470).

May Cameron Brown also notes that Quentin’s position as eldest son places him in a heightened position of responsibility; others regard Quentin (and Quentin certainly regards himself) as one who must “preserve the tradition which is central to the Southern experience” (Brown 544). The weight the Compsons place on these old values, including the value and idealization placed on women, is emphasized in several of the recalled conversations between Quentin and his father. Mr. Compson’s comments allude to this legacy of gentlemanly conduct according to cultural and family tradition. He reminds Quentin, “you will remember that for you to go to harvard has been your mothers dream since you were born and no compson has ever disappointed a lady” (*Sound* 178). But what haunts Quentin the most is the traditional value on which his sister Caddy “placed no value whatever” (*Sound* 208, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.): a woman’s virginity. This, of course, is partially tied to the Christian values of the South. Brown affirms that, at the time, many viewed “virginity as the equivalent of family honor” (546). When Caddy loses her virginity Quentin—who Faulkner calls a “bitter prophet and inflexible corruptless judge of what he considered the family’s honor” (*Sound* 208, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)—struggles and fails to reconcile both the apparent blemish on his family’s legacy and Caddy’s rejection of its importance.

Quentin's problem, simply, is time. Unable to reconcile his "obsessions with the past" (Brown 546) with Caddy's tendency towards modern values, Quentin instead strives to escape time altogether through suicide. Mr. Compson, guessing at his son's intent, suggests the potential temporality of Quentin's internal anguish, saying, "you cannot bear to think that someday it will no longer hurt you like this" (*Sound* 177). At this, Quentin again becomes stuck in time; he repeats "and I temporary" (177) over and over in his mind, fixating on and finally rejecting his father's notion of impermanence. In effect, Quentin is searching for a way to enter Eliade's sacred time—a transcendence of his present moment to an earlier mode—a mode where the old traditions and values of the South can still exist.

To achieve this, Quentin "attempts to reconstruct" the past (Brown 545) on the day leading up to his suicide through his participation in several "ritual acts" and "liminal rites" (Visser 475). These small rituals include keeping himself clean (as any respectable Southerner would), attempting to help a lost little girl (as any gentleman might help a lady), and penning a letter to his friend Shreve (as any reputable individual would ensure his affairs were in order). This letter, too, Quentin turns into a small ritualistic act, feeling for the envelope through his coat on at least four occasions. Quentin does this most often when he is confronted with the sound or sight of a clock: "I was hearing the watch, and I touched the letters through my coat" (*Sound* 96). While this tiny repeated action does not result in any substantial realization, it does help quell some of the unease present in his current place in time, and reaffirms his decision to transcend it. Indeed, Quentin's engagement in these small rituals culminates in the profound final paragraph of his section. Whereas in the several pages preceding this moment, Quentin's thoughts are

fluid, lacking punctuation and capitalization, this final paragraph shifts into a regimented, stoic description of Quentin's final participation in the rituals he has been enacting throughout his final day:

I entered the sitting room and turned on the light. I put my vest on. The gasoline was faint now, barely noticeable, and in the mirror the stain didn't show... I put on my coat. Shreve's letter crackled through the cloth and I took it out and examined the address, and put it in my side pocket. Then I carried the watch into Shreve's room and put it in his drawer and went to my room and got a fresh handkerchief and went to the door and put my hand on the light switch. Then I remembered I hadn't brushed my teeth, so I had to open the bag again. I found my toothbrush and got some of Shreve's paste and went out and brushed my teeth. I squeezed the brush as dry as I could and put it back in the bag and shut it, and went to the door again. Before I snapped the light out I looked around to see if there was anything else, then I saw that I had forgotten my hat... I had forgotten to brush it too, but Shreve had a brush, so I didn't have to open the bag any more. (178-179)

Quentin's engagement in the "meticulous washing, combing, cleaning and brushing" (Visser 475) becomes a part of Quentin's personal death rite. All of these activities reflect the Southern values Quentin was raised to embody. Quentin is tidy, presentable, concerned with gasoline stains and wearing his best, even though he would launch himself into a river within the hour.

Death becomes the ultimate ritual for Quentin—and each smaller act completed throughout the day leads up to these final moments. Visser argues that Quentin views his suicide not as an act of surrender or a failure, but rather as a "search for a continuation of life in the timelessness of death" (477). Even Mr. Compson seems to anticipate Quentin's intent; in the fluid torrent of thoughts leading up to his final paragraph, Quentin recalls the words of his father, who says, "you are not thinking of finitude you are contemplating an apotheosis in which a temporary state of mind will become symmetrical above the flesh... you will not even be dead" (*Sound* 177). Indeed, Quentin vividly imagines

himself alive after death, viewing his act as an achievement of something sacred. Eliade seconds this notion of death-as-ritual; in many cultures, Eliade notes, “[d]eath is never felt as an absolute end or as Nothingness: It is regarded as a rite of passage to another mode of being” (qtd. in Grimes 121). While it is unsettling for contemporary readers to view suicide as anything approaching a success, Quentin does succeed in transcending the normal flow of time. Engaging in rituals allows him to arrive at the revelation that, to fully enter sacred time and to live in that sacred state indefinitely, death remains the only option. James reminds us that the revelation achieved through rituals is personal, and Mr. Compson affirms for Quentin that “every man is the arbiter of his own virtues whether or not you consider it courageous is of more importance than the act itself” (*Sound* 176). While we may view Quentin’s decision as psychologically unsound, it does allow Quentin to escape the confines of his present historical mode.

Yet Quentin is not the only Compson entrapped by the old Southern values. The entire Compson family (with the exception of Caddy, who rejects them, and Benjy, who retains the mental state of a three year old child) seems confined by their defunct worldview. Jason, for example, participates in a monthly ritual, in which he attempts to affirm his own self-importance. Jason’s ritual involves manipulating his mother. Each time Caddy sends the family a check for her daughter, young Quentin, Jason pockets the funds for himself, duplicates the check, and coerces Mrs. Compson into burning the forgery. But Jason, a character Watkins describes as “evil but with complete assurance of his own righteousness” (200), does not view this act as wrongful. Instead, through this ritual Jason achieves not only money but a sense of personal power, affirming his position as the last patriarch of the Compson line. Jason exerts control over young

Quentin by withholding money rightfully hers while simultaneously reaffirming Mrs. Compson's rejection of Caddy.

Though she participates, the ritual holds little significance for Mrs. Compson herself. In her customarily dramatic way, she questions whether she and Jason should burn the checks—suggesting, ironically, that Jason keep the money for himself instead. In response, Jason cites the ritual itself as a reason to continue it: “What would be the good in beginning now, when you’ve been destroying [the checks] for fifteen years? ... If you keep on doing it, you have lost nothing, but if you’d begin to take them now, you’ll have lost fifty thousand dollars” (*Sound* 219-220). Mrs. Compson participates in the profane rite out of a sense of duty. Her participation is mechanical, and as such she does not arrive at any transcendent realization. Instead, the ritual only perpetuates her view of Caddy as a family disgrace.

But even though stealing and destroying checks gives Jason a sense of power, the ritual ultimately remains a profane one for him as well. The head-of-family status offers him little comfort, and is too tenuous to be considered a connection to something divine. His apparent position of power only redefines his sense of having been victimized, a sense that Jason has harbored since childhood. Even the money itself holds little comfort; as Jason notes, “I say money has no value; it’s just the way you spend it” (*Sound* 194). If any significant revelation occurs, it occurs only after young Quentin has stolen the money and fled—a revelation *made possible* by the ritual, but not necessarily achieved *because of* it. In this moment, the sense of power Jason achieved through his check scheme and manipulation evaporates, and Jason is again confronted by the belief of his own

victimization, and the belief that he somehow deserves more than what his life currently entails.

The Compson family, as Brown argues, is a “deteriorating world” containing a “chaos of thought and feeling” (544). Despite this, though, one character living amongst the Compsons is able to successfully encounter the sacred: Dilsey. In each section, Dilsey demonstrates her dedication and deep sense of faith, both of which are made apparent in her regular performance of rituals. Indeed, Luminita Dragulescu views Dilsey as “engaged in ritualistic acts of repetition,” and such acts consistently place her close to—if not always directly within—Eliade’s sacred time (206). Dilsey performs the rituals of the household, cooking and cleaning and caring for first the Compson children, and later the elderly Mrs. Compson. Unlike Quentin, who harbors a fervent desire to transcend time, Dilsey is what David Hein calls “a temporal creature, existing in time” while still being able to be influenced by its “external currents” (575). Though the Compsons’ household clock sounds an incorrect hour, (the clock’s malfunction yet another sign of the family’s inability to relinquish the old values), Dilsey instinctively knows the time. When the clock “struck five times,” Dilsey verbally corrects it: “Eight oclock” (*Sound* 274). Unlike the Compsons, Dilsey can be viewed as being comfortable within the flow of time.

The most significant mythic experience results from Dilsey’s engagement with a faith-based ritual. The novel itself is structured around the Christian celebration of Holy Week, and the novel’s action culminates in Dilsey’s celebration of Easter Mass—the most important rite to the Christian doctrine. Though Faulkner has claimed that the choice to include such a profound Christian backdrop was unintentional (*Faulkner* 117), the rituals present during this liturgical celebration do result in a profound revelation for

Dilsey. Dilsey insists on taking Benjy with her to Mass. This service, as Hein argues, “provides a ritual occasion for communion” (562), and Benjy’s presence allows her to share this communion with a small part of the Compson family. Participating in the rituals of the Mass—receiving communion, singing, reciting prayers, and most importantly engaging with the sermon—enables Dilsey to connect with the divine (which in this case, is the Christian God).

As Dragulescu affirms, the Mass “constitutes the occasion that transports Dilsey within sacred time and generates her revelation” (206)—a revelation that again involves the concept of time itself. Dilsey says, “‘I’ve seed de first en de last... I seed de beginnin, en now I sees de endin’” (*Sound* 297). Through the sermon, during which Reverend Shegog preaches on resurrection and salvation in spite of “de darkness en de death everlastin upon de generations” (296), Dilsey experiences a twofold revelation. First, Dilsey understands the span of her natural life, taking comfort in her own mortality with the belief that she will eventually join God in heaven. Additionally, the revelation enables her to understand “the endin” of the Compson family. Dilsey recognizes the valor and courage from which their family originated, and simultaneously anticipates the current generation’s irrevocable deterioration. Indeed, this religious experience also adheres to James’s notion of “ineffability,” in that Dilsey cannot articulate the full significance of her personal realization. When Frony asks her to elaborate, Dilsey merely replies, “Never you mind” (297). The significance of this moment allows Dilsey to withstand the crumbling of the Compson family. As Faulkner succinctly yet profoundly affirms in the appendix, “They endured” (*Sound* 215, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).

Interestingly, both Hemingway and Faulkner also explore the larger, extensive ritual of pilgrimage in both *The Sun Also Rises* and *As I Lay Dying*, respectively. H. R. Stoneback has extensively discussed the religious rites in Hemingway, including what he views to be Jake's pilgrimage in *The Sun Also Rises*. Stoneback's definition of pilgrimage is twofold; a pilgrimage may refer to any faith-based trek, where devout participants of an organized religion journey to a "specific shrine or numinous place" that holds some significance to their faith, such as the relic of a saint or specific spiritual landmark (51). More than that, though, Stoneback widens this definition to include "the more generalized notion of personal quest for some end individually construed as exalted, as morally or spiritually significant" (51). By this definition, then, the ultimate goal of a pilgrimage is to achieve some sort of revelation, or to momentarily transcend the restrictions of one's current historic mode—the same goals as less elaborate rituals. Stoneback further argues that pilgrimages are predicated on "the deeply felt necessity" to embark on this journey, to travel to a specific place for "renewal or redemption" or some other spiritual, emotional, or intimately personal significance (51).<sup>7</sup>

For these reasons, pilgrimages may be considered rituals—though they are not repeated with as much frequency as other rites due to the sometimes extensive process of traveling. Moreover, though the pilgrimage journey itself acts as a ritual, smaller rites may exist and be performed within this overall journey as well. For example, in *The Sun Also Rises* Jake and Bill encounter "seven cars of [pilgrims] from Dayton, Ohio...going down to Biarritz and Lourdes" (*Sun* 91). The pilgrims are in the process of enacting a

---

<sup>7</sup> Stoneback also notes that in some instances, pilgrimage may be loosely described as "any journey of any traveler for any reason" (51). Like Stonebeck, this "trivialized notion" (51) of pilgrimage is rejected here in favor of a more spiritually-driven journey.

ritual journey to these places of worship; but when the pilgrims eat together on the train (taking up the first five meal services, much to Bill's annoyance), they also participate in the shared communion of food. In this way, pilgrimages both are and contain rituals.

In *The Sun Also Rises*, Jake's personal pilgrimage begins in Paris and ends with his solitary swim at the Irati River, wherein he experiences a revelation. Journeying to Spain is significant for Jake, as it offers him an escape from Paris, a place Grimes considers "marked by its profanity—a sameness and interchangeability of events" (21). Moving "outside the regular pattern" of his day-to-day routine offers Jake the opportunity to encounter the divine (89). Moreover, Jake journeys to Spain to participate and witness the festival of San Fermin. Eliade recognizes festivals as a communal ritual, a way for a group to reestablish a connection with the divine and one another through the annual celebration of an event: "With each periodical festival, the participants find the same sacred time—the same that had been manifested in the festival of the previous year or in the festival of a century earlier" (Eliade 69). Jake himself seems to have participated in the fiesta many times, having said that he had "stopped at the Montoya [hotel] for several years" (*Sun* 136). The ritual of Jake's journey, then, is made more significant by the other rituals associated with the fiesta.

However, Jake's pilgrimage is marked by an invasion of profane Parisian rituals—all of which center around Brett. When she finally arrives in Spain, James Watson senses the shift in the fiesta. The locals surround Brett, and she, too, is "processed through the city with great ceremony in the same way as the statue of the saint" (Watson 469). Brett replaces organized religion as the center of the celebration, in this way corrupting the once sacred ritual of the fiesta into a profane one. The shift from

sacred to profane has apparent consequences. Rather than reestablish a sense of community within his group of friends—what should have occurred in a sacred ritual—Jake instead becomes separated from his group during the revelry, later stumbling back to his hotel room alone.

The bullfight, though, remains the most significant ritual of the fiesta, and arguably the most important ritual in the novel. Jake's journey to Spain is primarily motivated by his *afición* for these bullfights, an activity which embodies Spanish heritage and endures even in our contemporary time. Bullfighting, for Jake, represents grace under pressure, technique, and a willingness to risk one's life for the sake of the *corrida*, all qualities that Jake personally admires and respects. The bullfighter, Pedro Romero, embodies all of these traits. Romero, we are told, has "the old thing" (*Sun* 172). Even outside the ring, Romero demonstrates his talent and reverence for the act. When Jake and Bill first meet the young matador, Romero is "standing, straight and handsome and altogether by himself, alone in the room" (167). And inside the arena, Romero expertly kills bulls with the proper technique, even while sustaining injuries from his altercation with a jealous Cohn.

Even Brett, the embodiment of modernity, participates in the ritual of the bullfight. After some brief explanation from Jake, she too, "saw what it was all about" (*Sun* 171). Watson argues that even an "externalized, non-'spiritual' spiritual action allows deeply-flawed characters a structural access to the divine... even while they remain subjectively, experientially mired in seeming distance from God" (467). In this way, Brett and the other members in the bullfighting audience are able to participate in

and deeply connect with the “tragedy and *ritual* of the fight” (Watson 472, emphasis mine).

But Jake betrays the sanctity of even this ritual by allowing Brett to pursue a relationship with Romero. Jake loses Montoya’s respect in the process, after the latter confided in Jake his belief that Romero “shouldn't mix” with the foreigners, for fear he might become corrupted (*Sun* 176). But Jake’s pilgrimage, though, does not end with this act of betrayal; Jake continues the journey, alone, and travels back to the Irati River to fish and—significantly—to swim. Jake’s “numinous place” (Stoneback 51) is the river where he experienced peace and community with the Basque peasants and Harris earlier in his journey. His pilgrimage is completed once he enters the water, diving deep and long, fighting the waves until he swims “slowly and steadily in to shore” (*Sun* 242). Grimes affirms this near-baptismal moment as one of revelation for Jake, citing his time in the river as one of “regeneration... cleansing and rebirth” (94).

The revelation that Jake experiences at the Irati River becomes apparent in the novel’s ending lines. Before his pilgrimage, Jake was tormented by Brett’s presence, pining for a relationship rendered impossible because of his impotence. However, having experienced both sacred and profane rituals during his pilgrimage, Jake finally acknowledges the futility in this belief. Jake realizes that, were he not impotent and was able to pursue an intimate relationship with Brett, their coupling would have amounted to little more than another of Brett’s many flings; he realizes and finally admits to himself that Brett “only wanted what she couldn’t have” (*Sun* 39). This revelation endures even when Jake travels to Madrid to comfort Brett, per her request, after her breakup with Romero. When Brett laments that she and Jake “could have such a damned good time

together,” Jake merely answers, “Isn’t it pretty to think so?” (251). This answer is far different from what Jake might have said earlier in the novel, and their conversation harbors none of the longing Jake felt while staring at empty alcohol glasses. As such, this demonstrates the growth and self-awareness afforded to him through his pilgrimage and resulting religious experience.

Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*, too, documents a pilgrimage. After Addie Bundren’s death, the family embarks on a journey from their rural Yoknapatawpha County farm, corpse and coffin in tow, to honor her wishes to be buried in Jefferson. Kartiganer argues that Faulkner’s text documents the family’s desire to “fulfill a promise” (“By It” 429). Indeed, it is Anse’s vow to his wife that prompts him to haul his family through what Faulkner considered “the two greatest catastrophes which man can suffer—flood and fire” (*Faulkner* 86). But though this journey is predicated on Addie’s request, it is perpetuated by rituals; as Visser argues, the text “is an account of Addie’s death rite” (471) and encompasses “the ritual of the funeral journey” (474). In *The Sun Also Rises*, the festival of San Fermin centered on the procession of a saint’s bones; *As I Lay Dying*, similarly, centers on the procession of Addie’s bones, and the ritual associations are no less significant. Like the other rites described in this essay, engaging in burial rituals provides one with the opportunity to experience a revelation in the face of loss.

As part of Addie’s burial rites, Cash carefully engages in one of the most significant rituals by constructing her coffin. Cash does not merely view this request as a rote carpentry job, but rather as a sacred task. As Visser argues, “death rites and their ceremonies typically demand prescribed social responses” (470), and obtaining a coffin for the body is one such necessity. Cash spares nothing to meticulously build it “with

every joint and seam beveled and scrubbed with the plane, tight as a drum and neat as a sewing basket” (*Dying* 76). Cash’s production of the coffin is particular, structured, and precise—so precise, in fact, that while he is in the process of making it, even his thoughts are numerically and efficiently organized: “12. So I made it on the bevel. 13. It makes a neater job” (71). Cash, then, deeply engages in this customary burial ritual. He is painstaking in his handiwork, taking every measure to ensure that the coffin would balance properly and survive the trip (though, in spite of all this, it does not). Cash’s participation in this ritual prepares the family for the pilgrimage to Jefferson and their eventual farewell to Addie.

The ultimate goal for this pilgrimage, though, not only consists of Addie’s physical burial, but also involves obtaining a revelation, a new concept of personal meaning after Addie, the figurehead of the Bundren family, is gone. Using the pictogram of Addie’s box as a metaphor, Barry R. McCann views Addie as “fill[ing] the coffin” (272), acting as the central figure of the family and the person around whom the rest of the Bundrens identify themselves. Darl identifies Jewel, for example, as the result of Addie’s affair with the minister, and Dewey Dell identifies herself as the opposite of Addie, seeking to abort her early pregnancy and avoid Addie’s mothering role. Addie’s death, though, renders these personal identifications less significant. Because of this, each family member (with the exception of Darl, perhaps), embarks on this pilgrimage not only due to the obligation of prescribed funeral rituals, but also by their own inward desires to move “away from Addie toward Jefferson and the continuation of life” (“By It” 437).

But the Bundrens are not the exclusive participants in Addie's burial rites. Rather, funerals and their ritual acts are participatory, and the community engages in the family's pilgrimage to varying degrees. Historically, Visser affirms, the "community's prescribed public responses to a funeral rite are respect and social support" (472), as the grieving family requires assistance and suitable "guidance through their period of bereavement" (470). Tull, for example, does attempt to provide assistance and advice to the family. Tull offers his team and wagon to Anse after the latter's suffered a broken wheel. Anse refuses, saying, "We'll wait for ourn" (*Dying* 80). The family waits three days, in fact, before Darl and Jewel return with a replacement wheel; not only does this prolong Addie's stay above ground, but the delay has allowed the river to rise, making its crossing near-catastrophic for the family. Addie's coffin is almost swept away, and Cash rebreaks his leg attempting to save it. Tull attempted to dissuade the Bundrens from crossing, but Anse again ignores his advice. Even when the community members' internal monologues betray their true feelings—ranging anywhere from pity to confusion to disgust the closer the family gets to Jefferson—nearly all of the onlookers outwardly provide this "fraught and increasingly absurd journey" all of the "prescribed public respect that is due to a funeral rite" (Visser 472).

Throughout the journey, the Bundrens must endure an "accumulation of loss and suffering" ("By It" 438). Though they eventually succeed in arriving at Jefferson and do finally bury Addie's battered corpse, the family does not necessarily conduct the funeral rites in accordance with prescribed tradition. Jewel, for example, initially disrupts the outward unity of their family by opting to ride on his own horse, rather than sit inside the wagon with his father and siblings. Anse scolds him, invoking Addie and her memory.

He says that Jewel should not have brought his horse “out of respect for his dead ma,” adding that “it wouldn’t look right, him prancing along on a durn circus animal and her wanting us all to be in the wagon with her that sprung from her flesh and blood” (*Dying* 91). More drastic deviations obviously occur as well. Most notably, Vardaman bores holes into Addie’s coffin and face; the coffin is nearly lost in the river and again nearly incinerated in the barn fire set by Darl. Detours and disasters prolong the family’s journey by several days, so that Addie’s corpse is well decayed by the time she is finally buried.

Even the burial itself lacks the traditional amount of ritual and respect. Anse again scolds Jewel for his perceived insolence, saying that “[it] ain’t respectful” to call Addie’s grave “a damn hole in the ground” (*Dying* 202). Moreover, the interment seems to be conducted quickly, and with the omission of many of its rites. As Visser notes, “no ceremonial words are spoken” over Addie’s grave (474), and the family seems more focused on achieving their own ulterior motives in Jefferson. Anse needs to purchase a new set of teeth; Dewey Dell needs to find abortive medicine; Vardaman needs a toy train. The family’s other desires reduce Addie’s actual burial ritual to little more than an afterthought; Cash describes almost offhandedly how the family “got [the grave] filled and covered and drove out the gate” (*Dying* 210). Indeed, Cash’s recollection of his mother’s burial quickly shifts to Darl’s forced detainment due to his insanity. As Visser argues, “The narrative of the funeral rite thus abruptly changes to the scene of the violent attack on Darl” (474). Addie herself is rendered almost irrelevant. Technically, Addie’s pilgrimage and burial ritual have been completed; the family has reached Jefferson and successfully “[got] her underground” (*Dying* 209). However, each of the family

member's personal desires prevent them from engaging in her burial rite with any degree of seriousness or sincerity.

Despite the priority placed on these ulterior motives, even these desires prove unfulfilled. With the exception of Anse—who ends the journey not only with his long-wished-for teeth but with a new Mrs. Bundren on his arm—each of the family members are left with a more diminished sense of personal significance than when they began. Though Cash does assume a new role amongst his kin, “taking Darl’s place in the family as main narrator and observer” (Visser 475), he does so at the cost of a badly rebroken leg, leaving his future career as a carpenter in question. The doctor, Peabody, makes the severity of his injury painfully clear: “And don’t tell me it ain’t going to bother you to have to limp around on one short leg for the balance of your life—if you walk at all again” (*Dying* 214).

Other members of the family do not fare much better. Darl is forcibly taken to an asylum; Jewel loses his horse; Vardaman, toyless, must confront the newfound concept of his family’s poverty. Dewey Dell, too, fails to abort her pregnancy and suffers a sexual assault at the hands of a shopkeeper posing as a physician. Even Addie, the initial catalyst for the pilgrimage, suffers. The significance of her former role in the family eliminated by Anse’s quick acquisition of her replacement, suggesting that “‘Mrs. Bundren’ is for Anse a less specific woman than a title, a position to be filled by anyone ready to take the job” (“By It” 438). If, as Visser argues, “funeral rites help to reintegrate [a] society” that has been fractured by death (470), the Bundrens certainly do not succeed. Their miniature society, their family unit, remains split and fractured at their journey’s end. Ultimately,

Kartiganer may be correct when he describes the pilgrimage as “a quest emptied of any goal other than its secret emptiness” (“By It” 437).

But despite their many miraculous failures, the Bundrens still attempt the journey, and attempt to quell the uneasiness brought about by Addie’s death. Through this cursory glance at some of the rituals present in Hemingway’s and Faulkner’s fiction, it is apparent that the emptiness permeating so many modernist texts is not easily exorcised. In every instance, though, characters try. About *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner has said that his goal was to convey “that man will prevail, will endure because he is capable of compassion and honor and pride and endurance” (*Faulkner* 5). Engaging in rituals and pilgrimages—even profane rites, though these ultimately fail—demonstrates the capability of the human spirit to persevere in spite of an overwhelming sense of meaninglessness.

Even in our contemporary times, rituals endure. Children will continue to set off fireworks in celebration of Guy Fawkes Day. Foreigners will continue to travel to Spain and celebrate the festival of San Fermin. Christians will continue to attend Easter services. As Eliade and James remind us, secular and sacred rites have the possibility to spark a new understanding of the surrounding world and our place within it. It may be that Jake says it best: “Perhaps as you went along you did learn something... All I wanted to know was how to live in it. Maybe if you found out how to live in it you learned from that what it was all about” (*Sun* 152).

## Works Cited

- The Bible*. Authorized King James Version, 2019, <https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/>
- Brown, May Cameron. "The Language of Chaos: Quentin Compson in *The Sound and the Fury*." *American Literature*, vol. 51, no. 4, January 1980, pp. 544-553. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2924957>.
- Chinitz, David E. and Gail McDonald. "Introduction." *A Companion to Modernist Poetry*, edited by David E. Chinitz and Gail McDonald, Wiley Blackwell, 2014, pp. 1-3.
- Dragulescu, Luminita M. "Time Sacred vs. Time Profane: Reading Memory and History in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*." *Crossroads: A Southern Culture Annual*, 2006, pp. 195-207. *EBSCOhost*, [jcu.ohionet.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=2008381267&site=eds-live](http://jcu.ohionet.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=2008381267&site=eds-live).
- Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Translated by Willard R. Trask, Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1987.
- Eliot, T. S. "The Hollow Men." *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, edited by Stephen Greenblatt, tenth edition, W. W. Norton & Company, 2018, pp. 673-676.
- Faulkner in the University*. Edited by Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner, The University Press of Virginia, 1995.
- Faulkner, William. *As I Lay Dying*. Vintage International, 1990.
- . *The Sound and the Fury: The Corrected Text* [without appendix]. Vintage International, 1990.
- . *The Sound and the Fury* [with appendix]. Edited by David Minter, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1994, pp. 3-215.

- Graff, Gerald. "Literary Modernism: The Ambiguous Legacy of Progress." *Social Research*, vol. 41, no. 1, 1974, pp. 104-135. *EBSCOhost*, [search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.40970171&site=eds-live](http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.40970171&site=eds-live).
- Grimes, Larry E. *The Religious Design of Hemingway's Early Fiction*. UMI Research Press, 1974.
- Hein, David. "The Reverend Mr. Shegog's Easter Sermon: Preaching as Communion in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*." *Mississippi Quarterly*, vol. 58, no. 3, Summer 2005, pp. 559-580. *EBSCOhost*, [jcu.ohionet.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=f5h&AN=24095707&site=eds-live](http://jcu.ohionet.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=f5h&AN=24095707&site=eds-live).
- Hemingway, Ernest. "Big Two Hearted River: Part One," pp. 209-218, "Big Two Hearted River: Part Two," pp. 221-232. *The Short Stories, Scribner Paperback Fiction, 2003*.
- . *The Sun Also Rises*. Scribner Paperback Fiction, 2000.
- James, William. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. Urbana, Illinois: Project Gutenberg, 2014, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/621>
- Kartiganer, Donald M. "By It I Would Stand or Fall: Life and Death in *As I Lay Dying*." *A Companion to William Faulkner*, edited by Richard C. Moreland, Oxford, 2007 pp. 429-444.
- . "'So I, Who Had Never Had a War...': William Faulkner, War, and the Modern Imagination." *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 44, no. 3, 1998, pp. 619-645. *EBSCOhost*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26286041>
- Kroupi, Agori. "The Religious Implications Of Fishing And Bullfighting In

- Hemingway's Work." *Hemingway Review*, vol. 28, no. 1, Fall 2008, pp. 107–121. *EBSCOhost*, [jcu.ohionet.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=hft&AN=509869632&site=eds-live](http://jcu.ohionet.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=hft&AN=509869632&site=eds-live)
- McCann, Barry R. "Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*: The Coffin Pictogram and the Function of Form." *University of Mississippi Studies in English*, vol. 11–12, 1993, pp. 272–81. *EBSCOhost*, [jcu.ohionet.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=1996065103&site=eds-live](http://jcu.ohionet.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=1996065103&site=eds-live).
- Stoneback, H. R. "Pilgrimage Variations: Hemingway's Sacred Landscapes." *Religion & Literature*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2003, pp. 49-65. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40059914>
- Visser, Irene. "Getting Ready to Stay Dead: Rites of Passage in William Faulkner's Novels." *English Studies*, vol. 93, no. 4, pp. 469–487. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1080/0013838X.2012.668313.
- Watkins, Floyd C. *The Flesh and the Word: Eliot, Hemingway, Faulkner*. Vanderbilt University Press, 1971.
- Watson, James. "'You'll lose it if you talk about it': Brett as Relic, Pedro Romero as Peter of Rome, and the Bullfight as Carnavalesque Mass in *The Sun Also Rises*." *Christianity and Literature*, vol. 66, no. 3, 2017, pp. 463–481. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1177/0148333117708264.