

Physical and Verbal Violence in “Dry September”

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Kim, Mina. “Physical and Verbal Violence in “Dry September.” *Studies in English Language & Literature* 43.4 (2017): 69-85. “Dry September” is one of Faulkner’s work which deals with violence in black and white relationship. In the story, a black man is accused of raping a white lady by rumor and is killed by an angry white lynching mob. Minnie, the lady, is a spinster who fails to perform the gender roles assigned by the Southern society, and she is believed to have told a lie in order to get back attention and past glory. Although Minnie is hidden behind the physical violence by the white mob, she is unquestionably the underlying cause of the brutal death. That is, her lie ignites the white men’s hostility against the black people and leads to the tragic ending. In this paper, therefore, Minnie’s lie is treated as a verbal violence together with men’s physical violence, and why she tells a lie is considered with her situation in the South. Lastly, Faulkner is thought to use violence to remind us of the evils of violence and to tell some important truth, not for the sake of violence. (Jeonju University)

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I

William Faulkner was once decried as a writer of violence. One of his early work, *Sanctuary* is scattered with violent scenes such as a college girl’s rape by a corn stalk. “A Rose for Emily” portrays a spinster who kills her lover with arsenic and keeps his body in her bed room all the rest of her life. Many readers were

shuddered at the shocking and violent scenes and thought the writer as cruel and sadistic. However, these brutal and extreme scenes are not simply for exposure but are described as component parts of reality. When Sartre discusses *The Sound and the Fury*, he says that a novelist's aesthetic is related to his metaphysic and therefore, "the critic's task is to bring out the author's metaphysic before evaluating his technique" (226). Here we can reasonably say that a novelist's metaphysic means inner logic governing the work, and furthermore a fundamental way of recognition approaching to a thing or a situation. In this regard, violence can be treated as Faulkner's another metaphysic as well as time which Sartre mentions in his review on *The Sound and the Fury*. Looking over how violence is manifested in his work and how violence acts on his recognition of the world will help us to understand him better and the contradictory evaluation of him as "a traditional moralist" (O'Donnell 82).

Faulkner's basic framework of violence is based on the relationship between white and black as shown in *Light in August*, *Go Down Moses* and *Intruder in the Dust*. The South in those days is dominated by white supremacy, and their unequal relationship where whites are masters and oppressors, and blacks are slaves and the oppressed may well cause conflicts in the society. To make matters worse, the conflicts often boil over into physical violence like lynching by an angry white mob.

"Dry September" (1931) is another Faulkner's work which depicts violence in black and white relationship. In the story, a black man is suspected of raping a white woman and a group of white men get angry at this and they kill him by lynching. Many researchers, therefore, have mainly focused on physical violence and white men's psychology against black men for a long time. However I take notice that this murder case originated from a rumor and that Minnie, the alleged victim of raping, is the very person who started the rumor. Then who should be more blamed, the white men who lynch and kill the black man or Minnie who tells a lie and keeps silent until the rumor ends up in a catastrophe?

These days more and more people tend to use social networking sites and

communicate on-line by the benefit of information technology. With this, verbal violence is also increasing and the severity of the damage is highlighted. In this regard, I am more interested in Minnie's verbal violence hidden behind the physical violence. In this paper, first, I will look at physical violence on the surface and the racial conflict behind it. And then I will examine Minnie's verbal violence and her situation in the Southern society. Why she tells a lie and why she is silent will be considered with her situation in the South. This will help us understand the story better and ultimately how the writer perceives the reality in those days.

II

"Dry September" is usually regarded as one of Faulkner's finest stories but it has not been included in his anthology as frequently as "A Rose for Emily," "Barn Burning" or "The Bear." And though many critics generally acknowledge that the story is "a brilliant literary depiction of a small Southern town in the grip of an utterly irrational racism" (Claviez 24), it has not received enough critical attention compared to his other best stories. Hans H. Skei explains this paradoxical fact relating to its violent content. He points out that Faulkner was rejected twice before *Scribner's* bought it and he continues to surmise that the reasons are due to "the descriptions of suspected rape and lynching [that] were much too strong for the market in 1930" (1981:60).

"Dry September," set in the late 1920s or early 1930s, starts with the scene of a barber shop in a small Mississippi town. It is a suffocatingly hot Saturday evening in September after sixty-two rainless days. As we see in its original title, "Drouth" (Volpe 123), the unnatural stifling hot weather evoking an inferno conveys the overall atmosphere of the story and plays an important role in the development of the plot. The weather contributes, to some extent, "to the easily fanned frustrations and tempers of the townspeople" (Amende 9), who are not likely to act and judge

normally. Actually, when the people in the barber shop are inflamed with rage and have an acrimonious argument over the rumor, someone blames the weather. How the rumor spreads quickly is also effectively explained by “a fire in dry grass,” and the bloody color of the twilight after a long drought seems to foreshadow the violence and death to come in the story.

THROUGH THE BLOODY September twilight, aftermath of sixty-two rainless days, it had gone like a fire in dry grass – the rumor, the story, whatever it was. Something about Miss Minnie Cooper and a Negro. Attacked, insulted, frightened: (CS 169)¹

According to the rumor, something bad has happened to Miss Minnie, a local spinster, at the hands of a black man. The rumor is not a fact whose context is clear as we can guess in the broken words above, “Attacked, insulted, frightened.” None of them “knew exactly what had happened” (CS 169), but the white men gathered in the barber shop, with the exception of Hawkshaw, the barber, are not ultimately interested in what really happened but they are willing to accept the rumor as true. They conclude without any evidence that the black man is a rapist and the white woman is a victim without hesitation. It is like innocent Lucas Beauchamp in *Intruder in the Dust* is wrongly accused of murdering a white man just because he is a black man and he is in a wrong place at a wrong time by chance. So it is likely that their hasty reaction in the barber shop is somehow related to the aftermath of a long drought, but I think “the real basis of the immediate reactions of the most active of the customers is obviously their racial prejudices” (1999: 86) as Skei pinpoints.

Black people were freed legally in 1863, but decades later, they were not still accepted as equal citizens. During the Civil War, Southern slaveowners justified slavery by pointing out that “African Americans were half-animal and that their

¹ *Collected Short Stories of William Faulkner* is used as the text of “Dry September” and will be marked as CS hereafter.

'ape-like' appearances were proof of their savage instincts" (Amende 13). Southern emotion based on white supremacy was stubborn and could not be changed overnight by change of system. Black people were forced to be in their inferior place, and racial prejudice and hostility were significantly enhanced. What has changed is that "the legal bondage of the former slaves was replaced by a debt peonage, and a more subtle form of slavery, sharecropping, was instituted" (Peavy 38).

In the days of slavery, the landowner with the biggest plantation and the most slaves was considered to be at the top of the Southern social and class structure. At the bottom of the social structure were the slaves, and poor whites were in the middle. The Civil War unsettled the structure and the black people were considered as competitors to poor whites. Actually, "poor whites constantly competed with Blacks for ever-shrinking sharecropping jobs" (Robertson 28) in the Lafayette County of Faulkner's childhood and youth, where 45% of the population was black people. Faulkner pointed out this relationship between poor whites and black people by describing their haggling over the same articles in his "Drouth" manuscript. He also explicitly identified the men in the barber shop who carry out the lynching as "mechanics, clerks, laborer, loafers" (Volpe 125) in the deleted manuscript. The economic threat that black people pose caused poor whites to express anger and hostility toward black people and this hostility was even more intensified with the myth about black men's physical and sexual strength. The whites' fear of black men tried to keep them in their old inferior status and passed the Jim Crow laws by which black people were segregated from whites in schools, restaurants, and other public facilities. As their fear increases, their antagonism often erupted into violence against black men and unfortunately "white leadership in local communities 'incited, encouraged, and virtually programmed' publically sanctioned lynching" (Robertson 25) to maintain social and political stability.

Lynching, in fact, was not an invention after Reconstruction period. It had existed since the foundation of the American colonies, but it was not typically directed towards the black slaves whose punishments were at the slave owner's discretion at

that time. Lynching as mob violence against the black people started to be carried out widely after the emancipation of the slaves, because the white people needed a new form of controlling the former slaves who wanted more rights and long for equality with the white people. According to James H. Madison, “from 1880 to 1930, angry mobs lynched 4,697 Americans. Of these victims 3,344 were African Americans” (qtd. in Milica 104). Specially lynching became a Southern problem in the twentieth century due to its past of slavery and 95% of the number of lynching crimes in the United States occurred in the South. And the fact that the victims were mostly black people tells us lynching was committed as a means of defending old social order and the superior position of the whites in the South.

Under this social background, when most people in the barbershop get excited over the rumor, only the barber Hawkshaw, who is “a man of middle age . . . with a mild face” (CS 169), represents a rational voice. He defends the alleged rapist, Will Mayes saying that he knows him and he is a good person. He knows Minnie too, who is about forty and not married. He continues to insist not only Will did not do it but he does not believe anything happened at all on the basis that old ladies “without getting married dont have notions that a man cant--” (CS 170). Hawkshaw’s comment sounds somewhat prejudiced and simpleminded but other man in the barber shop also questions the truth of Minnie’s words saying that “This aint the first man scare she ever had, . . .” (CS 171). However, when Hawkshaw suggests that they should find out the facts first and let the sheriff deal with this, he faces a strong protest and is criticized as “you damn nigger” (CS 170). They are not interested in what really happened or the truth. What is important for them is to maintain racial purity and white supremacy. I think the reason they are so frantic about the rape rumor is well explained by Amende.

The white fear that a black man might rape a white woman is, in part, really a fear that a white woman would *consensually* have sex with a black man and give birth to a child of indeterminate racial identity. And, in consequence, the fear that a person may not be easily labeled as black underscores the idea that blacks are biologically and/or mentally

inferior to whites, which could ultimately challenge the entire belief structure upon which slavery and then segregation in the South were based. (Amende 14)

With the appearance of McLendon, an extreme white supremacist, all discussion about the rumor is put to an end. He has experience in commanding troops and received a medal for bravery. He looks masculine and aggressive when he glances over the people with a bold look with his shirt open at the throat. He instantly instigates the people saying "Happen? What the hell difference does it make? Are you going to let the black sons get away with it until one really does it?" (CS 171-172). For him, facts and truth or even justice does not matter. He tries to punish black people with violence at the slightest hint of violation of the racial order. So he leaves the barber shop with a group of people to lynch Will Mayes.

Chapter III unfolds with the images of drought, dust and lifeless air which are all related to death and foreshadow the death of an innocent man: "The day had died in a pall of dust; above the darkened square, shrouded by the spent dust Below the east was a rumor of the twice-waxed moon" (CS 175). McLendon and his party find Will who is working at the ice plant as a night watchman. And they manacle and force him into the car while cursing and striking him with random blows. Will pleads his innocence saying "I aint done nothing: I swear 'fore God" (CS 178), but no one listens to him.

When in despair Will wields his arms and accidentally hits Hawkshaw, Hawkshaw strikes back at Will. As to the barber's response, Wolfe and Daniels denounce him claiming that he is the one who introduces Will's name, and that his actions betray him and show that he too wants to see Will murdered (159). I think they overanalyze his instinctive reaction in that tense situation and misunderstand the barber in general. Rather, Howard Faulkner grasps fully Hawkshaw's character when he comments that Hawkshaw defends Will from his conviction that all the innocent deserve human rights, though he is not entirely admirable by present-day standards (48). His reaction may suggest how deeply racism is rooted in the their unconscious.

Hawkshaw realizes he cannot prevent the lynching and he suddenly wants to get out. He may be scared by his own reaction and he maybe wants to “free himself from complicity in the crime” (Howard Faulkner 48). Hawkshaw jumps out and the car bearing the killers and their victim disappears into the dust.

We cannot see the direct description of the most violent action in the story but we can guess killing is committed in the darkness. The reason Faulkner omitted the actual scene of killing may be to make our attention focus on the causes of the violence, not on the violence itself. On the other hand, Skei explains that is because “Faulkner is much more interested in the creation of atmospheric detail to portray a landscape, a climate, and a community in a season of drought and a lifeless stasis that threaten to destroy life and all life-giving impulses” (1999:91). I think this is certainly related to Faulkner’s strategy not to reveal what really happened. When we consider that the “blank spots” of the story itself engage the fantasy of the reader even more than “graphic” illustration of specific acts of violence (Claviez 24-25), the violence in “Dry September” is more vividly conveyed atmospherically through an excellent set of symbols and allusions. In this way, Faulkner not only emphasizes the irrationality and ruthless violence of the lynching mob effectively but also creates the very beauty and suggestiveness of the story.

III

The horrible and brutal murder of an innocent man begins with the rumor: Minnie, a white lady, was attacked by a negro. No one knows what exactly happened but the angry white mob led by McLendon lynch and kill the suspected black man. Thus McLendon is reasonably criticized as a subject of murder, but Minnie, who has started the rumor, is hidden behind the lynching mob. Faulkner refuses to give the facts about what really happened with Minnie, but “the rhetoric of the story and the clearly sympathetic rendering of Hawkshaw” (Amende 12) make

us believe, like Hawkshaw, that Minnie told a lie. According to Millgate, the story started with Minnie's section followed by the barber shop scene in the original text, but Faulkner changed the order to make the story more dramatic with tense (263). I cautiously suppose that Minnie needed to be placed in the second section as a hidden agent.

"Violence is essentially wordless," to quote Thomas Merton. Then, would not a lie belong to violence? Yakeley and Meloy define violence as "a behavior that involves the body" (231) in their study on violent behavior. That means violence is a behavior that causes actual bodily or physical harm. But as the writers say, this definition was made to distinguish violence from aggression which has confusedly used in many cases. If we define violence in a broad sense as shown in the types of violence in Wikipedia, it includes non-physical too. That is, violence means "actions or words that are intended to hurt people" (Cambridge Dictionary). Verbal violence, a common variety of violence, most often also called verbal abuse, includes a relatively wide range of behaviors such as "abusive anger, accusing, blaming, undermining, threatening, ordering, trivializing, chronic forgetting, withholding, name calling and overtly criticizing" (Wikipedia). Mahatma Gandhi earlier recognized the danger of the verbal violence and divided violence into two categories saying that "Violence has two children: the physical and passive forms" (Arun Gandhi). And he believed that passive violence, that is non-physical, is a deadlier force because it takes form in oppression, prejudice and other types of emotional and mental assaultment.

In the story, Minnie tells a lie, that is, she accuses a black man of rape and then she withholds the truth until the death of the black man. Her verbal violence, though it looks passive, fuels the hostility of white men against black men and triggers physical violence. Then why does she tell a lie about the rape? We need to face the causes and forces which shape the life of Minnie.

Minnie Cooper is a "thirty-eight or thirty-nine" (CS 173) year-old, unmarried woman who lives with her invalid mother and a housekeeper aunt. As a girl Minnie

was “a little brighter and louder flame” (CS 174) than her friends and she rode “upon the crest of the town’s social life” (CS 174). But her situation has changed over the years as her peers became conscious of the class and they married and got children. She is now called “aunty” by her friends’ children, though she does not like being called that, and is away from the attention of men and the society. As a spinster who missed her opportunity to marry or find a husband at an appropriate time, Minnie’s status is reduced to that of an old black woman as revealed in the title “aunty” (Roberts 171). She even falls to a source of shame and disapproval. Wyatt-Brown explains the social recognition of spinsters in the old South like this: “In the eyes of neighbors and kin, there was nothing more pitiful among women than the spinster who was deprived of both husband and children, a double curse” (238).

Minnie is definitely a failure by the rules of Southern womanhood that require marriage and motherhood. In Southern society based on feudal patriarchy, gender roles were extremely clear. “Women should be pious and pure, domestic and submissive” (Williamson 365) and men should protect their ladies like knights of old slaying dragons. Family and marriage are considered crucial in the society, and boys and girls become adults and a member of society through a gate of marriage. In this regard, Volpe explains that especially women from middle and upper classes must be able to play two restricted roles that society assigns. Their first role is limited to their sexual function, that is, before marriage, they must be coy and attractive following the stereotypes of femininity in order to find a husband. The second role is that after their marriage, they become mothers and must devote their life to their family as the society rigidly ordains (124). Therefore, not being married, for women of course, even for men, meant a life in an incomplete state and they had to stay in the periphery of the social circle.

For a spinster alienated from society, there are no appropriate alternatives. Minnie leads a meaningless life of boredom and idleness as shown in the following description.

. . . each morning between ten and eleven she would appear on the porch in a lace-trimmed boudoir cap, to sit swinging in the porch swing until noon. After dinner she lay down for a while, until the afternoon began to cool. Then, in one of the three or four new voile dresses which she had each summer, she would go downtown to spend the afternoon in the stores with the other ladies, where they would handle the goods and haggle over the prices in cold, immediate voice, without any intention of buying. (CS 173)

When Minnie realizes that she is losing ground, she begins to look haggard "with that bafflement of furious repudiation of truth in her eyes" (CS 174). She cannot accept the reality and is still obsessed with men and marriage. She has to make herself a woman who is young and beautiful enough to arouse interest in men. Edmond Volpe explains the reason and her mentality as follows.

Minnie's image of herself has been arrested at the premarital stage. She must continue to see herself as flirtatious and sexually attractive, capable of winning the attention of males. Her new voile dresses and the sheer underthings she wears on her daily trips to the village center symbolize her arrest at a sexual stage that the passing years make more and more unreal and ludicrous. (124)

As she gets more desperate with time, she starts to date driving with a bank cashier, who is a widower of about forty, and then the townspeople give a scornful look to her and begin to say, "Poor Minnie" (CS 174). This reminds us of another Faulkner's female character, Emily Grierson in "A Rose for Emily." Both Minnie and Emily are spinsters and they live an empty life isolated from the society, though their details are not identical. They do not have much choice but they are not allowed to go out with a man beneath their status. The town pity and ridicule them as a spinster, but at the same time the town condemn them as if they commit adultery.

In spite of her continual denial of her situation, "Minnie's bright dresses, her idle and empty days, had a quality of furious unreality" (CS 175). The more she tries to avoid the reality even through alcohol, the more she makes her situation grotesque.

Minnie cannot help acknowledging the harsh reality that no man shows interest in her on the streets anymore. She needs something to happen to get attention and her lost status back. But “nothing happens to change her situation, [and] she is compelled to do something herself” (Skei 1999:89). In the end, Minnie “invents, misunderstands or imagines” (Paparoni 429) the story of being raped by a black man. The fact she tells a lie means her unbearable state of mind finally resorts to violence, which is somewhat different from the opinion of Paparoni. She thinks Minnie’s alienation and desperation produce “a self-destructive conflict in her,” on the other hand, McLendon’s desperation produces “a destructive attitude towards the external world” (425). But I think both of their desperation produce destructive violence against external targets, though the kind is different. Her lie allows her to win the attention she desires thanks to White Goddess concept.

When Hawkshaw says he does not believe the rumor, or what Minnie said, a bulky youth retorts fiercely: “Wont you take a white woman’s word before a nigger’s?” (CS 169). “Lady” in the South, specially combined with racial issues, was a symbol of purity and honor and was glorified as “the South’s Palladium” (Cash 86)². After the Civil War, when the white could not control the free black men, their myths of black male sexuality increased the fear that white women might be sexually attracted to black men, and therefore the fear of miscegenation too. This was something inconceivable for them and they deified white women like a goddess. By doing so, they thought they could block black men’s approaches to white women. For them, “white women would never willingly engage in sexual relations with a black man and only rape provide lustful black men with sexual access to white women” (qtd. in Milica 107).

So, as we see in the response, White Goddess concept denies the possibility that

² Cash describes how the worship of women(gyneolatry) in the South was as follows: She was the South’s Palladium, this southern woman - the shield bearing Athena gleaming whitely in the clouds, the standard for its rallying, the mystic symbol of its nationality in the face of foe. She was the lily-pure maid of Astolat and the hunting goddess of the Boeotian hill (86).

a woman, particularly a white Southern woman can lie. They are essentially held up on a high pedestal like a sacred statue and everything they say is to be believed, without any need for proof. Even the mention of the possibility that they can tell a lie faces furious rage: "Do you accuse a white woman of lying?" (CS 170). How contradictory it is! Minnie is by no means a lady or has not been treated as a lady considering her current image and situation. They have ignored her as a middle-aged woman with no husband and prospect and they even have laughed at her behind her back. Now they regard her as a lady and they do not care about the truth of the rumor. The alleged rape, therefore, is only a pretext for the white men to threaten the black people and insist their power. They accomplish their purpose and "There's not a Negro on the square" (CS 181) on that Saturday evening.

Now I turn to Minnie again and wonder if she could expect the horrible result of her lie. The development of the story, where a white woman makes false allegations against a black man and the black man dies as a result, is not surprising at all because of its grounding in historical fact. There are many similar real stories in the early 20th century in the South and "'Dry September' follows the pattern of the historical account of Rosewood³" (Amende 9). Besides this, the story of Emmett Till, a black child, who was killed in a small Mississippi town in 1955 just because he whistled at a white woman, makes us predict the violent retaliation of white people. Minnie also could certainly predict what her lie would bring in the town. Nevertheless, the reason why she was forced to use the violence of lying can be found in the nature of violence.

According to Menninger, one of the earliest psychoanalysts, violence is "a defense against psychotic breakdown and unbearable states of mind" (Yakeley and Meloy 231). This understanding of violence is later developed by Glasser and divided into two distinct modes of violence, 'self-preservative violence' and 'sado-masochistic

³ On New Year's Day in 1923, a white woman in Sumner, Florida, accused a black man of assaulting her. A mob of white men searched the nearby black town of Rosewood to find the accused black man. During a weeklong violence, the town was razed and many of its residents killed.

violence' (Yakeley and Meloy 232). Of the two, 'self-preservative violence' which is triggered by any threat to the physical or psychological self can be applied to Minnie's condition. As such threats can include attacks on a person's self-esteem, frustration, or humiliation, the social stigma and alienation as a failure are threatening enough for her to respond violently. Minnie is frustrated, humiliated and wounded in her self-esteem for not being able to fulfil society's expectation. Her object of violence is not the persecutor though: the giant society which assigns her strict gender roles. Instead she exercises violence of lying against a black man who is in the lower position than her.

Minnie is now at the center of attention at the expense of Will's life. On the evening of the lynching, when she enters the square with her friends, "even the young men lounging in the doorway tipped their hats and followed with their eyes the motion of her hips and legs when she passed" (*CS* 181). On the surface, her strategy seems to be successful, but in fact, Minnie, who is wearing a sheer dress, is like the naked king in the story of Hans Christian Andersen. She lies and everyone in town knows she lies but they act in her presence as if she is telling the truth and even kill the black man to protect that lie.

In the movie theater which has been an escape from the reality, however, Minnie realizes keenly her shabby truths. She is sitting alone among "the young men and girls coming in two and two" and they look delicate and slim from behind and she feels they are "divinely young" (*CS* 181). Young people around her are all in pairs but she is still alone and their fresh youth only affirms that she is aging. She has told a lie and committed murder to be attractive, to be a successful Southern woman but her shameless attempts have proved pointless. Realizing this, She cannot hold back her laugh any more. She begins to laugh and it grows louder out of control. Amende argues that her laughter shows how absurd the situation is and how hypocritical the townspeople are (18). I think all her suppressed feelings, including guilt, explode through her hysterical laughter. Minnie finally shatters as her laughter turns into screams.

IV

In this story, Faulkner depicts a compelling portrait of how racism and false image of a Southern lady in combination cause the brutal death of an innocent black man. The death starts with verbal violence, a lie of being raped, and ends with physical violence of lynching. Minnie Cooper, who once stood out among all her schoolmates, is a spinster of almost forty. She is a failure by the strict gender roles in the society and she tells a lie to get back her lost position. The public accusation against a black man, though the truth is not revealed until the end, ignites the persistent hostility of the white toward black people. Minnie is unquestionably the underlying cause of the death hidden behind the white lynching mob.

Faulkner once observed that “If there’s a villain in this story[*As I Lay Dying*], it is the convention in which people have to live” (Gwynn and Blotner 112). This could mean that we have to blame the social conventions that oppress people and cause distress in their lives, not an individual person who has to comply with them. Then, considering her bitter situation, can Minnie be sympathized as a socially isolated and sexually repressed woman? Can her act of violence be understood as a measure to preserve herself against the threat to her self-esteem?

Diane Roberts gives a different opinion that “No one imprisons Minnie in a locked room or dark house, but she is trapped in her fantasies and obsessed with class” (170) and evades the reality relying on alcohol and cinema. In case of McLendon, he justifies his murder as a defender of white women. But we feel betrayed when he treats his wife violently in the last section, which makes us think both Minnie and McLendon are more likely to be individual deviations. It is partly right. Before putting an end to that conclusion, however, we should remember each of us is a social being and is under the influence of the values and conventions of the society. Considering the ideal of Southern lady and white supremacy are both inexplicably fictitious and superficial, it may well give the birth of a monster like them in the South. Lastly, I want to conclude this article with Faulkner’s own words

about horror and evil, which, I believe, will be the answer to the misunderstanding that he is a writer of violence.

Yes—never to use the evil for the sake of the evil—you must use the evil to try to tell some truth which you think is important. There are times when man needs to be reminded of evil, to correct it, to change it. (Thompson 176)

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