

Faulkner's "Shall Not Perish"

Ryuichi YAMAGUCHI

Faculty of International Communication, Aichi University

E-mail: rpyamgch@vega.aichi-u.ac.jp

JAPANESE ABSTRACT

日本語要約

山口 隆一

第二次世界大戦を扱った短編小説“Shall Not Perish”はフォークナーの短編の中で最も評価の低いものであろう。特に日本の読書界では、程度の悪い、面白みのない、強烈なナショナリズムを誇示した、フォークナーの名を辱める作品と考えられている。フォークナー自身も単に時代を反映した駄作と見なしたが、彼の意に反して *Collected Stories* に収録され、忘れられることなく、読み続けられることとなった。

作品が *Collected Stories* に収録されたため、後世の読者はそれがフォークナーが名声を博した彼の最盛期に書かれたものと誤解し、制作された時代的コンテクストと彼の個人的状況を見下しがちである。“Shall Not Perish”は、アメリカにとって戦況が思わしくなく、またフォークナー自身経済的破産に直面しながら、人々に冷静さを保たせ、勇気づけるため、同時に商業的成功を収めることを目的として書かれたものであった。作品のトーンは極めて低調で、内容、メッセージも戦争文学としては控えめであった。民衆は戦争の栄光、戦意の高揚、勝利の保証をプロパガンダ文学に期待したが、“Shall Not Perish”には戦場の興奮はなく、故郷の町で息子たちの戦死の知らせを聞く家族たちが描かれているだけであった。フォークナーは、人間の真実を語る作家として、いくら戦争文学とは言え作り話の戦闘シーンや偽りの勝利の保証で読者を酔わせることはできなかった。彼はそもそもプロパガンダ文学そのものに納得していなかった。“Shall Not Perish”は出版の引き受け手がなく、出版業界を一年間漂流した後、フォークナーの熱烈なファン Whit Burnett が編集者を務める群小雑誌 *Story* 誌にたったの25ドルで買い取られた。

“Shall Not Perish”はフォークナーの抵抗にもかかわらず *Collected Stories* に収録された。理由はそれがフォークナーの作品であること、更に短編集の構成上、他の作品との主題上の連続

性から必要と考えられたからである。結果は、フォークナー自身が一時的と考えたものが永続的作品として位置づけられることとなった。フォークナー研究者やプロの文芸批評家たちはその存在を無視した。一般大衆は、米ソ冷戦下の朝鮮戦争時には、“Shall Not Perish”に示されたアメリカ讃歌、デモクラシー擁護の故に作品に同調し、同じくベトナム戦争時には、そこに示された過度のナショナリズム、戦死者の記述の故に作品を忌避した。このように“Shall Not Perish”はフォークナー自身が十分その意味を認識しているように、歴史の特定の短い瞬間における具体的な産物と言わなければならない。

If *Mosquitoes* is considered Faulkner's worst novel, “Shall Not Perish” is probably his least respected short story. By every measure, it is regarded by most critics as a failure, and not a splendid one. From the crude assessment of the market (twenty-five wartime dollars after four revisions and eight rejections) to the most refined aesthetic judgments, “Shall Not Perish” has been pointedly neglected and frankly despised. Few readers have even granted it the courtesy of a strong antipathy. Most discuss it, if they must, with embarrassment, resolutely nonjudgmental formalism, or lazy contempt. Faulkner's own opinion of “Shall Not Perish” was low. Voting against its inclusion in his *Collected Stories*, Faulkner pronounced it “Topical, not too good.”¹

Why, then, has this little piece not perished? Not only was it ultimately included in the *Collected Stories*, it was even adapted for television. In 1964, “Shall Not Perish” was included in an anthology of Faulkner's stories published in Japanese by Nan'undo. But the slaps in the face it delivers to a Japanese reader are equally sharp in English. The story features a nine-year-old boy shouting, “God damn them Japs! God damn them Japs!”² It recounts the kamikaze-style suicide of Major de Spain's son.³ And its two concluding sentences are guaranteed to disgust anyone but an American: “I knew them too: the men and women still powerful seventy-five years and twice that and twice that again afterward, still powerful and still dangerous and still coming, North and South and East and West, until the name of what they did and what they died for became just one single word, louder than any thunder. It was America, and it covered all the western earth” (114–15). These elements in particular confirm Faulkner's own later judgment of the story: “Shall Not Perish” is most obviously a relic of war.

1 Quote from Faulkner to Robert K. Haas, September or October 1948, *Selected Letters*, 274. On the revisions, rejections, and eventual publication of “Shall Not Perish,” see Blotner, *Faulkner*, 2:1100–01, 1150.

2 Faulkner, “Shall Not Perish,” *Collected Stories*, 101. Hereafter cited with page numbers in parentheses immediately following quotes.

3 But see Harrison, *Aviation Lore*, 183, for a possible American model.

The history and reception of "Shall Not Perish" make one minor irony among many in the formation of Faulkner's reputation. At the time he wrote "Shall Not Perish," in 1942, Faulkner was at the nadir of his fortunes. *Go Down, Moses*, which has come to be regarded as his last great novel, was published in that year, but it earned Faulkner only \$1,500 in royalties. His earlier novels, except for the scandalous *Sanctuary*, were out of print. Faulkner's best hope for commercial success in publishing lay in short stories, but even they were not a reliable source of income. His biggest break during the first half of the year was the sale of "Two Soldiers" to the *Saturday Evening Post* for \$1,000. He wrote five other stories, including "Shall Not Perish," within the next six months, but could not sell them. He had become so dismal a commercial failure that when he finally secured a screenwriting contract in July, he was paid only \$300 a week.⁴

Faulkner was well aware that the mainstream and middle-brow critics of the time regarded him as a "Gothic fascist," equally and impartially sadistic to both his characters and his readers. The critics of the 1930s railed constantly and bitterly against Faulkner's rejection of simple linear narrative, his lack of a utopian vision, and his preference for portraying driven and tormented heroes rather than paragons of proletarian virtue. Mistaking his characters' views for his own, they accused him of hysterical racism and misogyny. Despite his vivid fictional depictions of the most desperate poverty, they accused him of ignoring the Depression. And they deplored his tendency to refrain from explicit preaching, moralizing, and exhortation.⁵

"Shall Not Perish" should have pleased the book-club gurus in every respect. It breaks nearly every Faulknerian habit, real or stereotyped. Its vocabulary is simple, and even the longest sentences are easy to follow. The story portrays the quiet, dignified courage of a family of yeoman farmers, the Griers. In the class contrast between the Griers and the rich and powerful Major de Spain, the Griers are shown to be morally superior. In its closing peroration, "Shall Not Perish" proclaims the ultimate triumph of hardworking common men and women. The story might almost have been made to order. Faulkner probably believed that it was: a formula and a

4 On Faulkner's career and financial situation in 1942, see especially Schwartz, *Reputation*, 20; Gray, *Life*, 273-74; Grimwood, *Heart in Conflict*, 189-90, 215-16, 260-61; and Hamblin, "Wheel," 275-78. On his Warner Brothers screenwriting contract, see Blotner, *Faulkner*, 2: 1112-13.

5 "Gothic fascist" quoted from Blotner, *Faulkner*, 2:1030. For 1930s criticism of Faulkner, see Schwartz, *Reputation*, 11-19; see also Hamblin, "Wheel," 276; Brinkmeyer, "Crisis," 72-74; and especially Atkinson, *Great Depression*, 59-66.

message to suit the commercial imperatives of the *Saturday Evening Post*, the prevailing canons of American literary taste, and the needs of the war effort (to which he sincerely desired to contribute). The failure of "Shall Not Perish" in its moment not only depressed Faulkner, it surprised him.⁶

In retrospect, Faulkner understood perfectly well that "Shall Not Perish" is flawed. His hopes for its commercial success at the time were not irrational; they only revealed the limitations of formula per se in the making of satisfactory stories. In fact, the composition and market failure of "Shall Not Perish" are symptomatic of Faulkner's mid-life vocational doubts: his consciousness of the conflicting demands of commercial success and aesthetic integrity, and beyond that, of the hazards of using fiction as a vehicle for truth. As Michael Grimwood has shown, in the middle of his career Faulkner suffered a twofold vocational crisis. Recognizing discrepancies between his own aesthetics and those of the American literary marketplace, he was ashamed of his occasional commercial successes. And perceiving the inadequacies of familiar generic conventions for rendering the complexities of his experience, he was powerfully tempted to self-parody. This is just as true of Faulkner's efforts to write propaganda as of his mid-life exercises in Southwest humor and plantation romance. He simply could not write a story that would be at once true to the tastes of a wide audience, true to the conventions of existing genres, and true to himself. When he tried, he produced "Shall Not Perish": a story he described, after two revisions, as the result of "having to write not because you want to write but because you are harassed to hell for money."⁷

With the moral and cognitive advantages of hindsight, it is tempting to denounce "Shall Not Perish" as an inexcusably cheap exercise in chauvinism. A writer of Faulkner's stature, the argument goes, should never have stooped so low under any circumstances. As a Nobel laureate, he should have known that any story as blatantly nationalistic as "Shall Not Perish" was certain to offend a global audience. Furthermore, no true artist would ever work for money, particularly when that might

6 On formula and the short-story market in the 1930s and 1940s, see Grimwood, *Heart in Conflict*, 190, and Levy, *American Short Story*, 48, 54–55.

7 On Faulkner's vocational crisis, see Grimwood, *Heart in Conflict*, especially 215–216; on his self-doubt, and his uneven success in using fiction to express truth, see Gray, *Life*, 273–74, and Schwartz, *Reputation*, 43–45. See Grimwood, *Heart in Conflict*, 179–85, for elements of self-parody in *The Hamlet*, and 288–98, for self-parody in *Go Down, Moses*. The quote is from Faulkner to Harold Ober (received May 25, 1942), *Selected Letters*, 151.

involve endorsing an official war effort. And no work produced for money or on behalf of a war effort deserves examination; it should simply be condemned unread. Faulkner certainly must have known in 1942 how the war would end, because everyone knows it now. Therefore he should have refused any part in it at all.⁸

Stated in these terms, the argument against Faulkner's right to have written "Shall Not Perish" can be recognized as not only presentist and self-righteous, but also unrealistic. At that point in Faulkner's career, his dependents and creditors welcomed any serious commercial effort on his part, however mawkish. Not only was Faulkner not yet a Nobel laureate, he was poised on the very brink of commercial oblivion. As "Shall Not Perish" floundered about the marketplace, Faulkner had no way of predicting that it would ever be read even by his fellow Americans, let alone the rest of the world. And after all, this story was not addressed to the rest of the world. The crucial formative fact about "Shall Not Perish" is that it was written by an American for a specifically American audience in the spring of 1942.

On the national scene at that time, the United States was far behind in the Pacific War. After the Pearl Harbor attack, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Guam, Wake Island, Singapore, and Indonesia fell in rapid succession to the Japanese. The public mood in America was one of indignation and profound general unease. Working-class racial tensions left over from the Depression led to riots in Detroit; later, Anglo-Latino cultural clashes fueled the zoot suit riots in Los Angeles. Exaggerated popular fears of Japanese sabotage on the West Coast infected the Army's Western Defense Command, leading it to recommend the unconstitutional internment of 120,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans. In the interests of basic public order, let alone the war effort, it was necessary for the government to calm, unify, and focus popular opinion toward a common cause. Hollywood, Tin Pan Alley, and the popular magazines joined in this campaign.⁹

Of course screenwriters, songwriters, and story writers were also individual human beings with their own personal feelings about the war. Faulkner himself felt a sense of urgency about this war that was new to him. The Civil War was the stuff of his older relatives' and neighbors' romantic tales, the Spanish-American War so brief it could hardly have registered on a two-year-old boy hundreds of miles from the nearest

8 For an example of this view, see Ferguson, *Faulkner's Short Fiction*, 42.

9 For historical background on the war situation in early 1942, see Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 516-34; on the internment, see *ibid.*, 750-59, and Tuttle, *Daddy's Gone to War*, 167-69, 172; and on the riots, see Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 770, and Tuttle, *Daddy's Gone to War*, 165-66.

action. The First World War had offered Faulkner some youthful hope of martial glory, but it ended before he had finished his training in Canada. More important, it was a war fought in Europe for obscure European causes. But the world was smaller in 1942 than it had been in 1918. Japanese submarines carrying planes loaded with incendiary bombs reached the American mainland in 1942. It was not unreasonable for Americans to fear attacks on West Coast shipyards and naval bases. Even before the United States joined the war, Faulkner had been worried enough about the global spread of fascism to donate the manuscript of *Absalom, Absalom!* to the Spanish Loyalists. On the domestic scene, Faulkner was appalled and disgusted at the racial and ethnic riots. Thus his geopolitical, home-front, career, and financial anxieties conspired to drive Faulkner to the typewriter in response.¹⁰

In his first war story, "Two Soldiers," Yoknapatawpha farm boy Pete Grier decides to enlist in the army after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Pete's unnamed eight-year-old brother (the narrator) tries to enlist as well, traveling all the way to Memphis by himself in order to offer his services chopping kindling and hauling water. Only when Pete himself orders the boy back home does he give up his dreams of kitchen policing for the army. Told in rural dialect, from the point of view of a child, "Two Soldiers" has the tender humor of Faulknerian pastoral at its best. At the same time, the boy reveals the more dangerous potential of Faulkner's innocents in his single-minded determination and his refusal to recognize inconvenient realities. Like the formidable Thomas Sutpen, the younger Grier boy is indeed a soldier at heart.

"Shall Not Perish" addresses the sober home-front realities of a protracted war: day-to-day work routines, suspense, and the inevitable casualty reports. It begins with the news of Pete's death in April, when the Griers can take only one day to mourn because it was "the hardest middle push of planting time" (102). Word of the next local casualty arrives in July, when the newspaper reports that Major de Spain's son "run his airplane into a Japanese battleship and blowed it up" (103), implicitly in exact retaliation for the sinking of the troop ship that had carried Pete. Mrs. Grier and the boy (who narrates this story as well) then prepare for their first condolence visit.

When they arrive at the de Spain house, they find the Major in a bitter mood, contemplating suicide. In the initial shock of his rage and grief, he casts about wildly for someone—anyone—to blame. Thus it is that the town moneylender and state political kingmaker rails against his son's death in a war waged "In the interests of

10 On the donation of the *Absalom, Absalom!* manuscript, see Blotner, *Faulkner*, 2:1030; on the submarines, see Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 742; and on Faulkner's attitude toward the riots, see Faulkner to Malcolm Franklin, July 4, 1943, *Selected Letters*, 175–76.

usury, by the folly and rapacity of politicians, for the glory and aggrandisement of organized labor!" (108). Mrs. Grier makes no attempt to refute him on political grounds. As she quietly takes away the Major's pistol, rather than urge him to trust politicians, she advises him to trust his son. She tells the Major that she understands no better than he does why young men go to war and get killed, but Pete's reasoning "must be all right, even if I couldn't understand it. Because there is nothing in him that I or his father didn't put there" (109). The Major accepts that, and offers the Griers a ride home in his car.¹¹

But the Griers have already paid their return bus fare, and they spend the afternoon waiting for the bus in the town art museum. The paintings, mostly portraits and landscapes, come from all over the United States, their common theme the daily life and sights of the places where they were painted. As the boy and his mother ride home on the bus, the boy watches the sunset, imagining it touching all the places in all the paintings simultaneously, "like a big soft fading wheel" (111).

This in turn leads him to recall the time the family took his ancient great-grandfather to town to watch a Western movie. The old man was in the habit of starting up without warning, running and shouting, "Look out! Look out! Here they come!" (112) "They" might be anyone from the Civil War, North or South, combatants or civilians, and at the movie, the sight of the galloping horses sends Grandpap racing up the aisle, warning all present to get out of the way of Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry. When they catch him and calm him down, Mrs. Grier orders her husband to get the old man a beer. When Mr. Grier protests, Mrs. Grier insists, explaining that Grandpap was not frightened and fleeing, but warning people to clear the road for the cavalry, who were, "even seventy-five years afterwards, still powerful, still dangerous, still coming!" (114) The boy then has a vision in which the sunset, centered at Frenchman's Bend, connects Forrest's cavalry with the pioneering men and women, past, present, and future, "who fought the battles and lost them and fought again because they didn't even know they had been whipped" (114).

As usual with Faulkner's fiction, "Shall Not Perish" is dense and carefully crafted. Its title is a direct quote from Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, which, in the midst of the Civil War, urged survivors and civilians "to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—... that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—... and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."¹² Faulkner's allusion to a Northern wartime speech

11 On Major de Spain's tirade, see Brinkmeyer, "Crisis," 84.

12 In Commager, ed., *The Civil War Archive*, 438.

memorized by schoolchildren all over America at the time promoted a message of national unity. Furthermore, it hinted at unity across the lines of race, as people who read the story's title would immediately think of Lincoln, the Great Emancipator. The title also announced the theme of the story: the will to continue in the great task remaining, even after it had begun to cost lives. Finally, of course, it expressed in a widely recognized national shorthand the purpose of the war effort: to defend American democracy against the threat of totalitarianism. Like the Gettysburg Address itself, "Shall Not Perish" uses the occasion of deaths in action to declare a renewed determination to prevail.¹³

Although Faulkner's revisions of "Shall Not Perish" tended to dissociate it from "Two Soldiers," the tone and style of "Shall Not Perish" form a contrast with "Two Soldiers" that actually strengthens their continuity. The dialect spelling, comic tone, and naive perspective of the earlier story give way to standard spelling, a somber tone, and the more mature perspective of a narrator who has suffered loss. The child's certainty of his own omnipotence and indestructibility is replaced by the boy's eventual stoic acceptance of circumstances beyond his own control. "Two Soldiers" issues a rallying cry; "Shall Not Perish" declares a determination to endure. If "Two Soldiers" is a song of innocence, "Shall Not Perish" is its companion song of experience.¹⁴

Structurally, as Edmond L. Volpe has noted, "Shall Not Perish" consists of three incidents: the report of Pete's death, the condolence visit to Major de Spain, and the Grandpap episode. Each one carries a message of unity. Pete's death in an unspecified location, with no physical remains, leaves his spirit "everywhere about the earth, one among all the fighters forever, *was* or *is* either" (104). The visit to Major de Spain not only honors a common experience across class boundaries, it also, in Mrs. Grier's speech, asserts a continuity from the first European American settlers to the Americans of the story's present. And the boy's visionary connection of the paintings with Grandpap's hallucination unites Americans across the boundaries of both time and space. The overall thematic motion of the story, then, is from the particular unity of combat death to an encompassing pan-American unity from coast to coast and from the sixteenth to the twentieth century and beyond. Throughout, it is a voluntary unity composed of autonomous individuals in particular localities, rather than a centralized

13 On the significance of the title, see Jones, *Reader's Guide*, 74; Towner and Carothers, *Reading Faulkner*, 54; and especially Hamblin, "Wheel," 283.

14 On the theme of initiation in "Shall Not Perish," see especially Paddock, *Contrapuntal in Integration*, 147-50, and Watson, "Short Stories," 222.

unity imposed from the top by a single leader.¹⁵

A more ambiguous gesture toward national unity is the story's deployment of American soldiers. Mrs. Grier's "better men..., still powerful, still dangerous, still coming" (114) are Confederate cavalry. The American soldiers killed in the story's present are southern. The better, braver, and therefore dead men are southerners rallying to a northern call to arms. The point is not to prove Major de Spain right, but to vindicate the honor of the defeated Confederate de Spains and Griers. The new generation at once rejoins the Union by participating in a national war, and upholds the honor of its Confederate ancestors by continuing their tradition of bravery in war. In the face of a common threat, they have agreed to declare an end to the Civil War.

In its war discourse, "Shall Not Perish" has much in common with Faulkner's other war stories and novels. Its treatment of southern soldiers is consistent with Faulkner's usual practice, which was meant to ease the persistent psychological pain of the South's defeat in the Civil War. In that war, which has been the defining event in the psychology of white southern men ever since, death before Lee's surrender at Appomattox was the only way to escape the shame of defeat. It was essential for white southern men, even those born long after 1865, to prove that although the South had been defeated, southerners always had been and always would be the bravest soldiers. Thus Faulkner's southern fighters in any war are, with a very few exceptions, always the bravest, the most honorable, and the dead. But the Second World War was different in one crucial respect: it was still in progress when Faulkner was writing. This was no time to make excuses for defeat. Of course the final result of the war was far from certain. Faulkner had to adapt the Lost Cause mythology of southern defeat to a new war that he hoped the United States would win. "Shall Not Perish" addresses that new war by treating its soldiers a little differently. Both of the military heroes of the story are slain, their bodies simply dematerializing, like those of the Sartoris heroes Carolina Bayard and Johnny. For the first time in Faulkner's fiction, however, one honorable southern soldier actually does some damage to the enemy in the course of getting himself killed. The Sartorises had always gone to war on holiday, and had therefore made it a point of honor never to hurt an enemy combatant. But Pete Grier and the de Spain boy go to war on business. Pointlessly glamorous practical jokes

15 On the structure and themes of "Shall Not Perish," see Hamblin, "Wheel," 278-79; Paddock, *Contrapuntal in Integration*, 151; Millgate, *Achievement*, 271-72; and Volpe, *Reader's Guide*, 261-64.

have no place in this war effort.¹⁶

As for the enemy, gone are the fat Yankee staff majors and red-faced Germans of the Sartoris wars. For American propaganda from the most discouraging months of the war, "Shall Not Perish" is remarkably restrained in its depiction of the enemy. Even in non-visual media such as radio, American war propaganda often resorted to physical stereotyping of the Japanese, while cartoons and movie serials were even worse. The wartime Batman taunted the villain "Dr. Daka," "You're as yellow as your skin!" Bugs Bunny addressed his Japanese adversaries as "Slant-Eyes." But no one on the home front of "Shall Not Perish" has ever seen a Japanese, and no one attempts to describe them. The boy curses them for killing his brother, not for being or looking like Japanese. In Faulkner's story, the Japanese are abstract. They are known only by what they do and what is done to them: in each case, normal acts of war in a war zone by declared and recognized combatants. "Shall Not Perish" does not promote war hysteria or race hatred; rather, it suggests that the Japanese are an enemy to be approached with courage and determination.¹⁷

Even the art discourse of "Shall Not Perish" has a rhetorical purpose. The description of the paintings in the town art museum summarizes Faulkner's thought about the relation between regionalism and the universal in art. When the Griers visit the art museum, the boy describes the paintings as the work of unnamed Americans "who loved what they had seen or where they had been born or lived" (110). These artists, wherever they lived and worked, "were the same people that we were even if their houses and barns were different and their fields worked different" (111). Thus, in "Shall Not Perish," Faulkner used local and regional art as both a means of unification and a metaphor for democracy. The anonymity of the artists effectively converts them into ordinary people who love their homes. In painting local people and scenery, these artists do not try to claim a unique superiority for their own places. Instead, they suggest that the love of home is a human universal. In this way, Faulkner tried to defend local and regional art against political threats from both left and right.

16 On the effects of the South's defeat on the psychology of white southern men, see Foster, *Ghosts*; Goldfield, *Still Fighting*, which traces the Lost Cause mentality up to the present; Silber, *Romance*, which pays particular attention to gender and manhood; and the pioneer, Wilson, *Baptized in Blood*, which describes Lost Cause mythology as an official southern religion. On Faulkner's fictional use of Lost Cause mythology, see Yamaguchi, *Vision*, 71-72, 86-89, 176-77, and 238-39.

17 For these examples, see Tuttle, *Daddy's Gone to War*, 155 (Batman movie serials), and 158 (Bugs Bunny).

Communists at the time denied the right of regional and representational art to exist at all, insisting that only abstract art could be truly universal. Meanwhile, fascists were trying to claim regional and representational art as their own, using it to promote tribalism by idealizing the people and scenes of their own countries. Faulkner maintained, contrary to both, that regional art (whether visual or literary) was actually one of those forms of voluntary local heroism that could unify a nation of free people. What the Grier boy sees in the paintings is not their particularity but the human commonality of home and love, work and play.¹⁸

The rhetoric of "Shall Not Perish," then, celebrates endurance, stoicism, restraint, and the constancy of home. All of these things are indeed desirable on the home front in wartime, but they are sadly lacking in drama. The propaganda climax of the story is the narrator's meditative tribute to grassroots American heroism. He chronicles this heroism by reciting a one-sided history in which countless anonymous common people tame the wilderness and thereby create America. But he undermines his message of triumph by praising the men and women who "fought the battles and lost them and fought again because they didn't even know they had been whipped" (114). The victory of these American heroes is solely a matter of their not recognizing defeat. And at the stage of the war when Faulkner wrote "Shall Not Perish," the victory of unrecognized defeat was a stale and unwelcome message. Home-front morale required unambiguous victories soon. Writing before the first American victory in the Pacific, Faulkner could offer no such thing. The result is that "Shall Not Perish" contains neither of the essential ingredients of propaganda: drama and triumph. Small wonder that the magazine editors were uninspired. The sequel to "Two Soldiers" is more a sermon than a story, and it is a sermon no one wanted to hear.¹⁹

Faulkner still might have infused "Shall Not Perish" with some emotional power if he had given his heroes lives before he killed them. But Pete and the de Spain boy are as abstract as the Japanese. It was characteristic of Faulkner to make his stories' centers of attraction vague and illusory; he had done so in *Soldiers' Pay*, *Flags in the Dust*, and, powerfully, in *The Sound and the Fury*. But Donald Mahon, Johnny Sartoris, and Caddy Compson are remembered in haunting detail by those they have

18 On the metafictional and political point of the paintings, see Brinkmeyer, "Crisis," 77-78, and Hamblin, "Wheel," 277-82.

19 On the criteria for successful American World War II propaganda, see Fyne, *Hollywood Propaganda*, 32 (for an example of ineffective propaganda) and 36 (for an example Fyne considers effective). For descriptions and examples of popularly successful propaganda, see Tuttle, *Daddy's Gone to War*, 152 (songs), 155 (movie serials), 158 (cartoons), and 160.

left behind—who then share their memories with the reader. In “Shall Not Perish,” there are no memories of Pete except for his laughter at Grandpap at the movie theater, and none of the de Spain boy at all. There is no telling just what, or how much, the Griers and the Major have lost, and no way for the reader to take those losses personally. “Shall Not Perish” exhorts its readers to grieve, resolve, and endure, but it does not show them any compelling reason they should do so.

Writing “Shall Not Perish” ensnared Faulkner in a familiar double bind. By fair means or foul, a good propaganda story should leave its audience elated, invigorated, or at least determined. These effects are best achieved by dramatizing victory, arousing hatred of the enemy, or (as Faulkner tried to do) making martyrs of the dead and resolving to win for their sake. But the first approach was still out of the question, the second not to Faulkner’s taste, and the third limited by his unfamiliarity with the characters. Like the Griers, Faulkner’s audience had nothing much to do but work and wait for some encouraging news from the front. If it were to ring true, a war story from the home front in early 1942 would have to be low-key, calling on its readers to be calm and patient. No promises could be made. Dramatic details could only be fabrications; meaningful victories mere wishful thinking. Faulkner’s trouble was that once again, as with the plantation romances that comprised *The Unvanquished*, he was working in a genre that felt false to him. He did what he could to make it true within the boundaries of the genre, but that very effort doomed the story on the market. He had tried to substitute a craftsman’s intelligence and skill for the passion that characterized his best work, and without that passion, he could not move his readers. Until the very end, “Shall Not Perish” is a professional, workmanlike story with a sensible message. The ending itself attempts a crescendo in the most sonorous Faulknerian style, a self-parodic bribe to the market, in order to conceal or at least decorate the author’s fundamental sense of falsehood. In “Shall Not Perish,” Faulkner was trying to write something he felt was impossible: truthful, temperate, responsible propaganda.

While “Shall Not Perish” drifted about the marketplace, Faulkner’s financial situation continued to deteriorate. His monetary woes gave tangible confirmation to doubts about his future and even the worth of his life’s work. He confided to Whit Burnett of *Story* magazine in June 1942 that “I have become so damned frantic trying to make a living...that nothing I or anybody else ever wrote seems worth anything to me anymore.”²⁰ Shortly afterwards, he wrote to his agent, “I know where the trouble

20 Faulkner to Whit Burnett, [mid-June 1942], *Selected Letters*, 152. Ellipsis added.

lies in what I write now. I have been buried here for three years now for lack of money and I am stale."²¹ As he completed another story, he wrote to his agent again: "I am sending another story soon. That will be 7 in 6 months, one sale. If a man with my experience and reputation has reached that point, there is something wrong and something had better be done."²² Faulkner had already given up hope of book sales, and he could no longer afford to gamble on short stories in a market he neither respected nor fully understood. "Shall Not Perish" was his most deliberate, and forced, effort to reach that market, and it failed. Trying to publish had become a dead end. Faulkner's only way out was a seven-year indenture to Warner Brothers at less than half his Depression screenwriting salary, writing propaganda scripts, most of which were never produced. (Two notable exceptions were *Air Force* and *To Have and Have Not*. To the former, Faulkner contributed a deathbed scene that, according to connoisseur Robert Fyne, "has virtually no propaganda equal." The latter, however, is described by Fyne as having the same flaws as "Shall Not Perish": it is too slow and ambiguous to serve as effective propaganda.) But "Shall Not Perish" was finally sold, after more than a year on the market, to *Story* magazine, where Burnett was happy to publish any Faulkner at a bargain. Whether in Oxford or in Hollywood, writing original stories or assigned screenplays, Faulkner had only spotty success at writing propaganda for money. He had reached the limits of his early self-caricature as "a liar by profession."²³

"Shall Not Perish" enjoyed a modest revival during the Cold War, when it was included (over Faulkner's initial objections) in the *Collected Stories*. In its new setting, the story was effectively canonized. Flanked by "Two Soldiers" and "A Rose for Emily," and grouped with "Barn Burning," "Shall Not Perish" seemed to be offered as a full equal to the more distinguished stories. Readers, at any rate, have assumed without question that Faulkner included "Shall Not Perish" because he considered it an excellent story with a timeless message to a universal audience. The history of the *Collected Stories*, however, suggests otherwise.

From the first, Faulkner had wanted the *Collected Stories* to have "an integrated

21 Faulkner to Harold Ober, received June 22, 1942, *ibid.*, 153.

22 Faulkner to Harold Ober, [June 28, 1942], *ibid.*, 156.

23 Quote from Faulkner, *Mosquitoes*, 145. On *Air Force*, see Fyne, *Hollywood Propaganda*, 165–66 (quote from 166), and Faulkner to William F. Fielden [April 27, 1943], *Selected Letters*, 173. On *To Have and Have Not*, see Fyne, *Hollywood Propaganda*, 215, and Blotner, *Faulkner*, 2: 1156–58.

form of its own, like [*Go Down, Moses*].”²⁴ There were other considerations as well. The stories to be included had to be previously published but not as separate chapters or sections of Faulkner’s novels. (Faulkner initially ruled out “Barn Burning” on those grounds, mistakenly remembering it as the opening section of *The Hamlet*.) The stories were classified into six groups, all with spatial titles: “The Country,” “The Village,” “The Wilderness,” “The Wasteland,” “The Middle Ground,” and “Beyond.” In setting, they move outward from the Yoknapatawpha countryside to the world. In time, they range from the earliest contact between Europeans and native Mississippians (in the “Wilderness” section) to the 1940s. The stories together chart the course of human lives from innocence and initiation, through disillusionment, to maturity, old age, and death. As the volume took shape, the individual stories were placed in such a way as to give structural symmetry to each section, as well as thematic movement and continuity from one section to the next. Thus the opening section, “The Country,” required a concluding story to complement “Barn Burning” with a recent setting, a boy protagonist, a theme of initiation, and a vision reaching far beyond Frenchman’s Bend. Apart from any considerations of its artistic merit, “Shall Not Perish” was the only story that qualified for that position in this very deliberately organized volume. It is in the *Collected Stories* by default. And there it remains, to the embarrassment of American Faulknerians and the disgust of sensitive readers abroad.²⁵

But in 1950, the American fiction market was ready for a rhetorical flag-waver. In fact, in one review of the *Collected Stories*, critic Horace Gregory singled out “Shall Not Perish” for special praise. Gregory (who unaccountably mistook “Shall Not Perish” for a story of the First World War) found in the closing peroration “an air of particular timeliness today.”²⁶ The words that had fought the fascists would serve equally well to fight the communists while the United States was at war in Korea. The measured, steadying tone that bored and frustrated an impatient World War II audience would be soothing to Atomic Age readers pondering the recent news of the Soviets’ development of a bomb. And the grandiose patriotic ending was a certain Cold War crowd-pleaser. No doubt these features—as well as the story’s conventional treatment of gender and its silence on race—contributed to CBS’s and Lux’s decision to ask

24 Faulkner to Robert K. Haas [September 18, 1948], *Selected Letters*, 273.

25 On the construction of the *Collected Stories*, see Millgate, *Achievement*, 271–72; Paddock, *Contrapuntal in Integration*, 147–51; Jones, *Reader’s Guide*, 77; Towner and Carothers, *Reading Faulkner*, x–xi; and Watson, “Short Stories,” 222.

26 Gregory, “Faulkner’s Imagination,” Inge, ed., *Contemporary Reviews*, 302.

Faulkner to adapt "Shall Not Perish" for television. The teleplay was aired on February 11, 1954, with the imposing Raymond Burr (star of the Perry Mason television series) as Major de Spain. This time, it failed to impress the critics, but Faulkner was paid as much for the adaptation as he had earned in royalties on the entire first edition of *Go Down, Moses*. "Shall Not Perish" had finally found an American market, precisely because it was topical. With the Vietnam War, the American audience for "Shall Not Perish" died out, and even neo-conservative politics have failed to revive it.²⁷

Outside the United States, the story has had a mixed career. Those who do study "Shall Not Perish" tend to disregard its intended function as patriotic wartime propaganda in favor of the themes of the continuity of the land, the strength and dignity of the common people, the maturation of the boy narrator, and the story's thematic movement toward human unity.²⁸ Still, it is safe to say that "Shall Not Perish" would be utterly forgotten now, like the vast majority of World War II propaganda, had it been written by a less distinguished author and never exhumed from the pages of *Story* magazine.

As it is, "Shall Not Perish" contains in microcosm every problem of Faulkner's career. It represents a radical departure from his usual practice by telling the reader what to think. Its appeal to the reader's emotions is solely rhetorical, rather than impressionistic as in Faulkner's best fiction. It is utterly lacking in the passion and drama that attract readers of Faulkner's more characteristic work. The only human heart in conflict in "Shall Not Perish" is Faulkner's own, torn between his conscience and his creditors. Having attempted to give the critics (and thereby the market) what they said they wanted, Faulkner betrayed himself and still failed to satisfy them. Ironically, that failure drove him to Hollywood precisely when the market for books was on the verge of a huge soldier-driven boom.²⁹ Later, this dull, obscure, un-Faulknerian story was used by critics to support Faulkner's position as the American literary sage of the Cold War—a position in which he was not entirely comfortable. Like most of Faulkner's later, more rhetorical fiction, "Shall Not Perish" found its market among readers who do not like Faulkner. And it found that market only when

27 On the television adaptation and production of "Shall Not Perish," see Jones, *Reader's Guide*, 73.

28 For examples, see Skei, *Faulkner*, 269–71 (the land, and the common people); Millgate, *Achievement*, 271–72 (the Grier boy's maturation); Gray, *Life*, 19 (the land); and Stoneback, "Faulkner in China," 242–43 (the heroism of the common people).

29 On the GI book market, see Sickels, *The 1940s*, 112, 131.

Faulkner no longer needed it: in the year he received the Nobel Prize. Conceived in poverty and dedicated to the proposition that sober propaganda would sell, "Shall Not Perish" failed its author aesthetically, politically, and financially.

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