CHAPTER II

THE SOUND AND THE FURY

In an interview between V.S. Naipaul and Reverend Bernyce Clausell, (which was later recorded in his travel-book *A Turn in the South*) Naipaul questions Clausell regarding the "strong, religious instinct" of black people.

How did she explain the strong religious instinct black people had?

> I think it comes from slavery. And even from before slavery. From Africa. They just had a strong religious heritage. In slavery God was their deliverer. And they felt that some day God would work it out.[1]

From Rev. Clausell's answer we may understand that this "strong religious instinct" was actually a quality inherent in blacks, a quality that grew in strength as a consequence of their tragic history of slavery. Naipaul continues to question Rev. Clausell on the reason for blacks having such strong religious instinct. Was it sometimes a form of escapism?

Clausell answers :

> With some people it might be a form of escapism. I wouldn't deny it. But primarily Christianity is a way of life.[2]

Black slaves sought from the Christian God deliverance from the harsh and cruel realities of slavery as well as a mental and emotional escape from their white masters, and if the black slaves did see Christianity as "a way of life" then the black slaves must have also sought from Christianity a way to live life as best they could under slavery.

This chapter will study Dilsey Gibson in *The Sound and the Fury* . Dilsey works as a housekeeper-servant in a white household. The study will include a detailed examination of her character, her actions and her role in the household. These will be discussed in the light of Christian Humanism. I propose that Dilsey's actions are inspired by Christian Humanism. Is Dilsey a Christian Humanist, even if unconsciously so? Was Faulkner aware of this when he created the character of Dilsey? More importantly, the issue of race will be taken into account here. How does being black affect Dilsey? Is there a link between being black and possessing traits of Christian Humanism?

The Gibsons are assumed to be Christians. Can Dilsey be a Christian Humanist when she is a Christian? R.William Franklin and Joseph M. Shaw provide some revelatory explanations for this problem in their work titled *The Case for Christian Humanism.*

> "How can a Christian be a humanist?" they asked. "It is impossible to be a Christian humanist. Humanists do not believe in God."
>
> The answer to such people is to point out that many humanists do believe in God, that it is possible to be a Christian humanist and that Christians who are humanists have not added some kind of liberal twist to the Christian faith, but have listened to what the biblical message has to say about human concerns.[3]

What is Christian Humanism then? R.W. Franklin and Joseph M. Shaw explain:

> Christian Humanism is a process for the well-being of humans that has its source in the central message of Christianity, the good news that it is in Jesus Christ, God comes to befriend and fulfill the entire human race. This humanism is based on Christ and the Gospel.[4]

Hence Christian Humanism has its source in Christian religiosity, that is the Gospel. However the question of whether Dilsey consciously practised the elements of Christian Humanism has to be delved into first. There is no direct mention of Dilsey either reading or writing. Her belief in God was rooted in deep, strong faith but it was simple faith.

The first stage in this discussion concentrates on the last part of *The Sound and The Fury* wherein it is mainly through what Dilsey does and what Dilsey says that the events of the day are chronicled. Furthermore, the last section of *The Sound and The Fury* is not conveyed in the first person as are the other three sections of the book. The last section bears the dateline "April 8th 1928". At the start of the section, the time of day is morning. The day is Easter Sunday, the Day of the Risen Lord. Jesus Christ rises from the dead after suffering crucifixion. The theme of resurrection that Easter thus carries is symbolic and significant. The morning is dismal - there is nothing joyous to mark the special occasion.

> The day dawned bleak and chill, a moving wall of grey light out of the north-east which, instead of dissolving into moisture, seemed to disintegrate into minute and venemous particles, like dust that when Dilsey opened the door of the cabin and emerged ...[5]

But note the description of Dilsey,

> ... She had been a big woman once but now her skeleton rose, draped loosely in unpadded skin that tightened again upon a paunch almost dropsical....[6]

This description of Dilsey projects a somber and desolate picture. Her once big frame is now reduced to a skeletal structure and the word "dropsical" connotes a sense of

the diseased about her but ironically enough, it is not Dilsey who is suffering from any disease. Significantly this joins with the fact that in all the years of her service to the Compson household, she has experienced much in life. The toll taken by experience and, naturally, age is reflected on the reduction of her physical size. The phrase speaks instead of the degenerate and corrupting state of the Compson family which has spread like disease. It is Dilsey who withstands this diseased state of the Compsons, for it is her moral conscience and fortitude in the periods of tribulation that act as a counterbalance to the dilapidation of their humanity.

In the ensuing lines Faulkner develops this idea through a simile:

> muscle and tissue had been courage and fortitude which the days or the years had consumed until only the indomitable skeleton was left rising like a ruin or a landmark above the somnolent and impervious guts...[7]

This implies that much had been drained off Dilsey; and the indeterminate phrase, "days or the years" depicts a certain quality about Dilsey - it's as if Dilsey has been looking after the Compsons with her service for an immeasurable period of time. However implausible this may sound, nevertheless the result of Dilsey's having this quality could allude to the description of Dilsey being "different" in the midst of the characters in *The Sound and The Fury*.

What is left figuratively is skeletal evidence; yet Dilsey remains indomitable, she will not be put down - thus Dilsey as a figure looms forth like a "ruin and a landmark ..." Again there exists a certain degree of contradictoriness here, for Dilsey is likened to both a

ruin and a landmark which could infer that she is above what her surroundings consist of (in the midst of the Compson household - there is degeneracy and corrosion of values). She may on the one hand represent a ruin because of what she has suffered and she may on the other hand represent a landmark because of what she positively stands for in the midst of negation.

The symbolically indomitable skeleton of Dilsey is significant, for she seems skeletal only externally - internally her spirit however is indomitable and unconquered. Her body has been subjected to age and travail but her soul remains untouched. Also, having risen above the "somnolent and impervious guts" suggests a *resurrective* sense about Dilsey and it is after all, Easter Sunday. Suffering and endurance have placed Dilsey above human weakness and decadence.

> Indeed she is used by Faulkner to exemplify, in however ironic a fashion, the aristocratic virtues of Antebellum society which the members of the family itself distort, betray, or deride. She does this in the novel in addition to upholding in her own humble, dignified way the Christian virtues of love and sacrifice and forgiveness.[8]

We can admire much in Dilsey's nature but there remains a question - does Dilsey knowingly and consciously motivate herself in pursuit of these high moral standards or is she just led on simply by faith?

> Dilsey propounds no ethical system concerning human behaviour. She merely acts in a humane way to all the people with whom she has contact.[9]

Dilsey practises a spontaneity of action and feeling and not so much of thought. She is not aware of the principles and tenets of Christian Humanism under that name. However, Dilsey is not simple minded.

> If there is any informing ethical framework governing her behaviour at all, it is the Southern black's version of Christianity with its emphasis on suffering, endurance, the wages of sin and the promised afterlife.[10]

In expressing this thought, Lee Jenkins in his work, *Faulkner and Black-White Relations, A Psychoanalytic Approach* explains Dilsey's behaviour. From these statements I conclude that Dilsey acts from the heart and not from the head .

> The humanism born of faith concentrates on quite ordinary matters: faith in God related to the day-to-day concerns of living.[11]

Dilsey attests to this for she trusts in God to see her through the daily experiences of existence in a household whose values are corroded and destroyed by the deterioration of values. Faith in God is the foundation of the Christian religion she upholds.

> "I does de bes I kin ... Lord know that...."[12]

Also, Dilsey feels that her actions are justifiable in the eyes of the Lord because whatever it is she will do the best she can and the most she can, to overcome shortcomings and obstacles that crop up. This is also suggestive that Dilsey does think about what she does and has done. She measures her own actions against the wrong and right of religion.

> ... Christian Humanism acknowledges that imperfection ... will continue to characterize life in this world.[13]

> Christian Humanism shares with other humanistic philosophies the desire to protect and enhance human existence ...[14]

In her relationship with the Compsons, Dilsey's actions are testimony to the fact that she is concerned for the welfare of others.

> "Hush," Dilsey said, "he ain't gwine do nothin to her. I ain't gwine let him."
>
> "But on Sunday morning, in my own house," Mrs. Compson said,
>
> "When I've tried so hard to raise them Christians. Let me find the right key, Jason," she said. She put her hand on his arm. Then she began to struggle with him....
>
> "Hush," Dilsey said, "You, Jason!"
>
> "Something terrible has happened," Mrs. Compson said, wailing again, "I know it has. You, Jason," she said, grasping at him again. "He won't even let me find the key to a room in my own house!"
> "Now, now," Dilsey said, "what kin happen? I right here. I ain't gwine let him hurt her. Quentin," she said raising her voice, "don't you be skeered, honey, I'se right here."[15]

In this scene, Dilsey comfortingly assures Mrs. Compson and Quentin that she will prevent Jason from hurting Quentin if Jason does decide to take matters into his own hands. Jason (son of Mrs. Compson) at the time of this scene is the provider for the household, whereas Quentin is the daughter of Caddy - granddaughter of Mrs. Compson and niece to Jason). Earlier on, Jason had demanded that Quentin come down to breakfast and Dilsey was sent to get Quentin down. When there seemed to be no reply from Quentin in her room, this exacerbated Jason's growing unease and aroused his suspicions as to Quentin's whereabouts. Hence his urgency to break into Quentin's locked room.

Here, Dilsey determines to stand up to Jason, the master of the household, in her decision to protect Quentin. Jason, Dilsey feels, metes out too harsh a treatment in his dealings with his niece, a treatment cold and almost inhuman. In an earlier period, he refuses to grant Quentin's mother (Caddy - his sister) visitation rights - and for this Dilsey admonishes him. And when Dilsey arranges for Caddy to see her daughter Quentin, Jason takes Dilsey to task for allowing it.

> "I like to know whut's de hurt in lettin dat po chile see her own baby," Dilsey says. "If Mr. Jason (Jason's father) was still here hit ud be different."
>
> "Only Mr. Jason's not here," I says. (Jason, the son)
>
> "I know you won't pay me any mind, but I reckon you'll do what Mother says...."
>
> "You's a cold man, Jason, if man you 'is," she says. "I thank de Lawd I got mo heart dan dat, even ef hit is black."
>
> "At least I'm man enough to keep that flour barrel full," I says. "And if you do that again, you won't be eating out of it either."[16]

Dilsey judges Jason on what he lacks: humaneness and ...

> because Dilsey has moral strength, she refuses to compromise her beliefs to satisfy Jason. Her presence in the Compson house deflates Jason's verbal assessment of his stature.[17]

Thus, Dilsey questions the values of Jason ("if man you 'is") and is not afraid to reproach Jason for his lack of humaneness. She does this because Jason is committing an offense in her eyes - in denying a mother her right to visit her own child.

Dilsey empathizes with Caddy's (Quentin's mother, Jason's sister) predicament. Dilsey has brought up both Caddy and Caddy's daughter since their childhood. They may

not be blood - kin to her but she is concerned for them. Dilsey censures Jason for what he lacks, perhaps in an effort to make him aware of his shortcomings. Her action shows her concern in wanting to right a wrong.

Previously, Quentin had arrived at the Compson household amidst the surcharged emotional state of Mrs. Compson who is more concerned with the smearing of the family honour, now that her daughter Caddy is no longer married to Herbert,

> "To have my own daughter cast off by her husband".[18]

than with the question of who is to care for a helpless infant - who is in fact her own grandchild. Dilsey provides a sort of hold on the situation when she declares pointedly,

> "And whar else do she belong?" Dilsey says, "who else gwine raise her cep me? Ain't I raised ev'y one of y'all?"[19]

Dilsey notes the immediacy of the need to make a final decision, for even though Mr. Jason Compson (husband to Mrs. Compson) brought the baby Quentin home, he made no effort to take control of matters effectivley. In between Mrs. Compson's bitter lamentations, Mr. Compson's continuous drinking and young Jason's sardonic comments, there were no clear-cut decisions made as to the future welfare of Quentin, until Dilsey announces her readiness to bring up Quentin.

> Christian Humanism shares with other humanistic philosophies.... the desire to protect and enhance human existence.[20]

"... the desire to protect and enhance human existence", is clearly portrayed in Dilsey's decisive action to care for the helpless baby. It may well be argued that since she is the servant/housekeeper of that household Dilsey's duty is to perform that act of caring for the

baby but, what should be taken into consideration here is her willingness and her motivation behind the decision to raise the infant.

Seventeen years later, when Jason threatens to beat up an adolescent Quentin as punishment for her playing truant at school and for forging her grandmother's name on her school report cards, Dilsey acts as a buffer. She intervenes on Quentin's behalf against the ruthless Jason.

> "What are you going to do?" she says. (Quentin)
>
> "You wait until I get this belt out and I'll show you," I says pulling my belt out. (Jason) Then Dilsey grabbed my arm.
>
> "Jason," she says, "You, Jason! Ain't you ashamed of yourself."
>
> "Dilsey," Quentin says, "Dilsey."
>
> "I ain't gwine let him," Dilsey says, "Don't you worry, honey." She held to my arm. (Dilsey) Then the belt came out and I (Jason) jerked loose and flung her away. She stumbled into the table. She was so old she couldn't do any more than move hardly.... She came hobbling between us, trying to hold me again. "Hit me, den," she says (Dilsey) "ef nothin else but hittin somebody won't do you. Hit me," she says.
>
> "You think I won't?" I says.
>
> "I don't put no devilment beyond you," she says.
>
> "Dilsey," she says, "Dilsey, I want my mother." (Quentin)
>
> Dilsey went to her. "Now, now," she says, "He ain't gwine so much as lay his hand on you while Ise here."
>
> "Now, now," Dilsey says, I ain't gwine let him tech you." She put her hand on Quentin. She knocked it down.
>
> "You damn old nigger," she says. (Quentin)[21]

In this scene, an older Dilsey challenges Jason to hit her instead of Quentin. She offers Quentin reassurance and comfort in the face of Jason's pitiless and sadistic threats. Ironically what Dilsey receives in return is a rude and unfeeling rebuff from Quentin and on the next day, Dilsey, in trying to administer some comfort to Mrs. Compson - for Quentin appears to have left the house - again receives a rude dismissal.

> ... Dilsey followed her into the room and touched her. "You come on and lay down, now," she said. "I find her in ten minutes." Mrs. Compson shook her off ...[22]

As women, perhaps Dilsey, Quentin, Mrs. Compson could measure each other's actions on a common ground - the ability to care genuinely and to feel concerned for others regardless of creed or colour. Depicted in their respective physical and verbal responses to Dilsey's proffer of assistance, Quentin and Mrs. Compson are unwilling to come into direct physical contact with a black woman - their reaction is one of recoil. Dilsey in her action of proffering comfort and reassurance does so because she sees a need for it in situations where both Quentin and Mrs. Compson are distressed. And Dilsey sees both Mrs. Compson and Quentin as simply people, who need assistance in trying times. Hers is not a complex view that has to consider racial differences.

The word "humanism" connotes a sense of possessing the quality of being human - or the character of being human. Being human entails not only the ability to feel for others but knowing why one should be concerned over the welfare of others when the need arises. Surely, Dilsey in her connection with the Compsons has proved that she is a fair and just possessor of this quality of being human. In her daily meetings with the respective Compsons through the years, her treatment and her responsive help to whichever Compson in need of consolation has always been readily rendered - but not as

always readily acknowledged. Is Dilsey consciously aware of this? Faulkner does not empower her to be so.

> However forcefully Dilsey may stand as a symbolic embodiment of humanity, one still notes her acquiescence to her subservient position. She accepts being a "nigger". Social decorum remains intact : she is treated with traditional condescension, and she accepts the role of the self-sacrificing Mammy as her natural function.[23]

Lee Jenkins' comment on Dilsey's "acquiescence to her subservient position" and her acceptance of "... being a nigger ..." offers matter for debate. Firstly, Dilsey does not act out the "self-sacrificing Mammy as her natural function" but she is required and assumed to do just that in her place as the black housekeeper of a white household. She does not ask to be more than the housekeeper and does not once conceive the idea of being her own mistress. This could be viewed as evidence of her "acquiescence to her subservient position" . But Dilsey does intervene in matters of white folks, as seen in the case of Quentin. She has raised both uncle and niece and she defies Jason's authoritative commands. She will see to it that uncle shall not harm niece, whatever it may cost her. She rebukes Jason openly for what he is and for what he lacks. In this, she stands up to injustice and arbitrates on behalf of whites.

However, Dilsey is not depicted as being consciously indignant of the mistreatment of blacks by the whites. For Dilsey, like many of her race, accepted the traditional belief that suffering and endurance were synonymous with being black. These were also religious prerequisites to a glorious life after death. Hence it was their lot in life and for them acceptance of this - be it resignedly or stoically - was acceptance of being black. Dilsey may be self-sacrificing in her relations to the whites but only when she deems them in need of consolation and comfort and even protection. She becomes self-sacrificing

in her effort to help and she is self-sacrificing because of the quality of humaneness in her and not because she is passively subservient in her role as the black housekeeper in the household, a role that makes her unable to be anything but a meek nigger. If help is needed, she will offer it to those who need it. It's simply a case of caring and being concerned for the well-being of others. Dilsey affirms these qualities naturally, by practice and belief ; for they are an innate part of herself.

An important section of the novel sees Dilsey attending the Easter Sunday sermon with Frony, (her daughter) Luster (her grandson) and Benjy the retarded child of the Compson family. It is morning, they are on their way to church and Frony wears a new garment. Dilsey chides her for wearing something new, for if it rains it will be spoilt.

> "You got six weeks' work right dar on yo back," Dilsey said.
>
> "Whut you gwine do ef hit rain?"
>
> "Git wet, I reckon," Frony said. "I ain't never stopped no rain yit."[24]

> Frony here ... accepts the natural course of things but does not relinquish her individual will.[25]

If it rains then she'll be wet but that will not deter her from wearing a new dress.

> Representing opposition to the sterility and decay evidenced by the white family, (Compsons) the Gibsons (Dilsey's family) project a vital creativity, an inventiveness in looking at life and a spiritedness in confronting it all.[26]

Dilsey, although she does not share her daughter's matter-of-fact refusal to change, she herself accepts "the natural course of things ..." and like her daughter, Dilsey

"does not relinquish her individual will". She may not be able to curb Jason's growing deterioration of character but she will stand up to him if whatever Jason does necessitates challenge. Dilsey does exhibit a "reverence for human life which is the essence of all humanism". This is poignantly shown in her defence of Benjy. Bringing Ben the white retarded son of Mr. and Mrs. Compson to a black church distresses Frony.

> "I wish you wouldn't keep on bringing him to church mammy," Frony said. "Folks talking."
>
> "What folks?" Dilsey said.
>
> "I hears em," Frony said.
>
> "And I know what kind of folks," Dilsey said, "Trash white folks. Dat's who it is. Thinks he ain't good enough fer white church, but nigger church ain't good enough fer him."
>
> "Dey talks, jes de same," Frony said.
>
> "Den you send um to me," Dilsey said. "Tell um de good Lawd don't keer whether he smart or not. Don't nobody but white trash keer dat."[27]

Benjy's retardation does not make him any less a human in Dilsey' s eyes and Dilsey knows that God views Benjy similarly - "de good Lawd don't keer whether he smart or not." Here Dilsey shows that she knows the impartiality of God and she has made a link between Benjy and God.

Mrs. Compson's statement that she has "... tried so hard to raise them (her children) Christians ..." is a mockery and a travesty of what Christianity, the religion actually means. For Mrs. Compson's son, Jason, especially mocks the Christian image of love and forgiveness. Dilsey Gibson on the other hand stands in contrast to the decadent Compsons and perhaps through Dilsey's actions and words, Dilsey portrays a definition of what Christianity means for her and coupled with this religious belief is her humanistic trait

widow and Dilsey gave to the best of their ability. Dilsey also knows what it means to be human. Black people captured and enforced into slavery in America, certainly would have had ideas about being human, for they all came from traditional societies . In being treated as mere chattels, slaveowners and overseers often tried to extinguish their humanity.

> In the humanism created by the gospel of Christ, men and women and children discover a God who affirms their full humanity in the midst of weakness and suffering...[30]

This is rendered in Reverend Shegog's sermon, albeit somewhat colloquially and in an authentically black fashion.

> "Brethren and sisteren," it said again ... and he began to walk back and forth before the desk, his hands clasped behind him, a meagre figure, hunched over upon itself like that of one long immured in striving with the implacable earth...
> "I got the recollection and the blood of the Lamb!"[31]

The congregation is transfixed with these initial words of Reverend Shegog.

> Dilsey sat bolt upright, her hand on Ben's knee. Two tears slid down her fallen cheeks, in and out of the myriad coruscations of immolation and abnegation and time.
>
> "Brethren en sistuhn!"
>
> "I got de ricklickshun en de blood of de Lamb! ... when de long, cold - Oh I tells you breddren, when de long, cold - I see de light en I sees de word, po sinner! Dey passed away in Eygpt, de swingin chariots; de generations passed away. Wus a rich man: whar he now, o breddren? Wus a poor man: whar he now, o sistuhn? Oh I tells you, ef you ain't got de milk en de dew of de old salvation when de long, cold years roll away!"
>
> "... I sees de darkness en de death everlastin upon de generations. Den, lo! Breddren! Yes, breddren! Whut I see? Whut I see, o sinner? I sees de resurrection en de light; sees de meek Jesus sayin Dey kilt me dat yet shall live again; I died dat dem whut sees en believes shall never die.

> Breddren, O breddren! I sees de doom crack en de golden horns shoutin down de glory, en de arisen dead whut got de blood en de ricklickshun of de Lamb!"
>
> Dilsey sat bolt upright beside, crying rigidly and quietly in the annealment and the blood of the remembered Lamb.[32]

> Christian humanism rests on God taking human form, the doctrine of the Incarnation, and God's son being rejected and killed, the doctrine of the Atonement.[33]

Dilsey is visibly moved by the sermon especially with the powerful emphasis on the Atonement of the Lord. Dilsey identifies emotionally with the sermon.

> In church, she reveals that she possesses the faith only implied previously; there she assumes an attitude of prayer which has been persistently used in narrative to reveal thought and character with unquestionable validity.[34]

Dilsey sits bolt upright and before the sermon begins she tells Ben to,

> "Hush now, ... Dey fixin to sing again in a minute".[35]

She requires her undivided attention in following the sermon. She feels the need to "whut got de blood en de ricklickshun of de Lamb". With this, there is hope for salvation - "de resurrection en de light" in an otherwise bleak and desolate life - from the viewpoint of the blacks.

> The entire range of human experience, they find, is illumined by the cross and the resurrection of Christ.[36]

Dilsey continues crying silently after the service is over and this makes Frony uncomfortable.

> "Whyn't you quit dat, mammy?" Frony said. "Wid all dese people lookin. We be passin white folks soon."
>
> "I've seed de first en de last," Dilsey said, "never you mind me."
>
> "First en last whut?" Frony said.
>
> "Never you mind," Dilsey said. "I seed de beginnin, en now I sees de endin."[37]

Dilsey's apocalyptic-sounding statement comes as a consequential effect of the powerfully charged sermon. What she sees remains intensely private, for she shares it with no one, not even with Frony, her daughter. Despite Dilsey's privacy of thought there is an ominous note to her words. Dilsey does not comment on the sermon but she reacts to it physically and emotionally - the sermon has touched her. And Dilsey's apocalyptic statement brings to mind John's revelation of Jesus Christ, in Revelation 1:8,

> "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord ....[38]

and this link makes Dilsey's words revelatory."I've seed de begining en de last" - Dilsey in saying this could also have meant that her religious convictions based on her faith have helped her to understand her problems, live life purposefully in the midst of trials. Hence, she has seen the beginning and the end.

Even without any signs of verbal acknowledgement as to how the sermon has moved her, Dilsey does project a sense of religious comprehension about her, during and after the sermon. Her crying depicts an understanding of what "de Lawd" has suffered to save man - the "annealment of de Lawd" is truly a thing of honour and magnitude.

For man, the need to have "... de blood en de ricklickshun of de Lamb" is certain and perennial.

> At the heart of Christian Humanism ... the fullest realization of what it means to be human can be known through personal communion with Jesus Christ, the Word of God who entered the arena of human life to bring wholeness and freedom to every human being.[39]

With "de blood en de ricklickshun of de Lamb" Dilsey has entered into a "personal communion with Jesus Christ". She provides nothing definitive as to whether she has come to the "realization of what it means to be human" but when she utters those strangely prophetic words amidst her crying (which is described as silent and rigid) we feel that Dilsey's crying for whomever, or whatever it is she is seeing "de first en de last" of, results from a silent conviction that she has witnessed the growth of human decadence and is now witnessing the eventual end of human dignity and worth in the emotional, moral and spiritual dilapidation that engulfs the Compson family.

> To be fully human, according to Christian teaching, involves coming to terms with oneself in relation to God and at the same time expressing one's humanity in relation to other human beings.[40]

Dilsey bears full testimony to this. In her relations to the Compsons, Dilsey is seen as the moral guide against which the actions and values of the Compsons are measured against. Dilsey is the foil to what the Compsons lack and she does express her "humanity in relation to other human beings".

She is kind when kindness is needed, strong where strength is asked of her, caring when care is required and most of all she is all of these not only because she feels it her duty to be so but because she is simply, naturally and unaffectedly all of these.

These descriptions become a definition of Dilsey, of the person Dilsey is. However, it may be argued that it would be difficult to view Dilsey as a sufficiently realistic character.

Thadious M. Davis in her work entitled, *Faulkner's Negro, Art and the Southern Context* states that,

> Dilsey cannot emerge as a character having great psychological depth, which is the main charge in labeling her a stereotype.[41]

In the novel, Dilsey's inner thoughts and inner feelings are not given voice. The workings of her mind and her emotions remain shrouded and private. Dilsey is always seen in relation to others.

> Yet if Dilsey ultimately becomes a positive, cohesive force in the novel, she accomplishes this feat as much by means of what her presence encourages the reader to feel, as by the activities she performs.[42]

Her thoughts are not revealed, but that only heightens the significance of her actions. Her actions in the absence of expressed inner thoughts speak all the more loudly of her character. One may contend that Dilsey still is the traditional black mammy and she fits snugly into that stereotyped role. This need not be so.

Did Faulkner consciously create the character of Dilsey as that of a Christian Humanist? I think not. Dilsey, Faulkner himself owned, was modelled after his own "mammy" Caroline Barr, who was with the Faulkner family for a long period. It was in a way a recapturing of the past - the preservation of Mammy Caroline Barr in the character of Dilsey Gibson.

Even if Faulkner did not set out purposely to make Dilsey a Christian Humanist, I still believe that Dilsey has in herself and she shows with clarity - some elements of Christian Humanistic traits.

If Dilsey is not herself conscious of being a Christian Humanist, is the claim that Dilsey showing Christian Humanistic traits in her behaviour then rendered less valid ?

I feel the answer to this is firstly, Faulkner himself, the inventor of Dilsey did not consciously create Dilsey in the mould of a Christian Humanist. Hence, there is no initial claim on the author's part that Dilsey is a Christian Humanist.

My claim that Dilsey exhibits Christian Humanistic traits in her behaviour, is not made less valid by this silence of Faulkner's. She is not portrayed as being aware of Christian Humanism but the reader may judge from her actions and her words and derive the kind of motivation from which these actions and words are impelled forward. The notable fact remains that Dilsey does after all demonstrate that these behavioural aspects of Christian Humanism are present in her character.

How does being black affect Dilsey in this aspect? Is there a link between being black and possessing traits of Christian Humanism?

In this respect, Dilsey's being black would bear most significantly in the religious sphere. For most blacks the traditional view on religion is one that

> ... serves a utilitarian function which stresses redemption and deemphasizes the vengeful, remote God of white Protestant theology and puritan morality.[43]

> Because the lives of its participants are difficult and precarious, this religion, according to Benjamin Mays, rests upon a God "able to help ... bridge the chasm existing between the actual and the ideal."[44]

Religion became a necessity, a part of life that proved to be an outlet of salvationary hope in an otherwise hopeless situation.

I been buked and I been scorned
Lord, I been buked and I been
scorned,
Lord, I been buked and I been
scorned,
I been talked about sho's you
borned.

But I ain't gwine a-lay my religion
down
Lord, I ain't gwine a-lay my
religion down
I ain't gwine a-lay my religion
down, Lord
Untell I wears a heavenly crown.[45]

As conveyed in the song above, religion to the blacks is an invaluable asset - it is a part of their life - it becomes in a meaningful way, the only means of an emancipation of the soul for the slaves, especially.

Being already endowed with this religious characteristic, Dilsey becomes more aware of the need to endure the daily travails of life, because for most blacks of that epoch, there was no alternative. However acceptance need not be passive and mute. In the face of acceptance, Dilsey does not lose her own, individualistic will.

There exists too, a quality in Dilsey that values human life. Being black does not necessarily make Dilsey more of a Christian Humanist than a white person would have been. However, because of the social, emotional and spiritual disparaties between whites and blacks, Dilsey's being black does put her spiritual faith to a more demanding test. The need to endure is more prominent, too. Furthermore, in Dilsey's situation and taking into account the rich, religious heritage of the black folks, being black does enhance Dilsey's projection of Christian Humanism in her actions and in her communication with others - in short in her relation to other human beings. This is so because firstly Dilsey acts as a moral and Christian counterpoint to the ruinous and degenerative value system of the white Compsons. Amidst such surroundings, Dilsey's lone actions and pity stand as a marked contrast. And she is black. So in this sense, there is a link between Dilsey's being black and the claim that she portrays elements of Christian Humanism in her relation to others. The link conveys a sense of heightening Dilsey's Christian Humanistic traits.

Endnotes

1. V.S. Naipaul, *A Turn in the South* , New York : Vintage International, 1990, 124.

2. Ibid., 124.

3. William Franklin and Joseph Shaw, *The Case for Christian Humanism,* Michigan : William Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991, 5.

4. Ibid., 254, x.

5. William Faulkner , *The Sound and The Fury,* London : Picador Classics, 1989, 229.

6. Ibid., 230.

7. Ibid.

8. Lee Jenkins, *Faulkner and Black-White Relations, A Psychoanalytic Approach,* New York : Columbia University Press, 1981, 162.

9. Ibid., 169.

10. Ibid.

11. William Franklin and Joseph Shaw, xi.

12. William Faulkner, 275.

13. William Franklin and Joseph Shaw, 5.

14. Ibid.

15. William Faulkner, 243,244.

16. Ibid.,179.

17. Lee Jenkins, *Faulkner and Black-White Relations, A Psychoanalytic Approach*, 89.

18. William Faulkner, 171.

19. Ibid., 171.

20. William Franklin and Joseph Shaw, 5.

21. William Faulkner, 159, 160.

22. Ibid., 244.

23. Lee Jenkins, 161,162.

24. William Faulkner, 251.

25. Thadious Davis, *Faulkner's 'Negro', Art and the Southern Context* , (rev. ed.). Baton Rouge and London : Louisiana State University Press, 1983, 70.

26. Ibid.

27. William Faulkner, 251.

28. Luke 21 : 30-37, The Holy Bible, New King James Version , Nashville : Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982, 699.

29. Luke 21 : 1-3, The Holy Bible, New King James Version , Nashville : Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982, 709.

30. William Franklin and Joseph Shaw, 4.

31. William Faulkner, 255.

32. Ibid, 255, 256, 257.

33. William Franklin and Joseph Shaw, 4.

34. Thadious Davis , 109.

35. William Faulkner , 254.

36. William Franklin and Joseph Shaw, 32.

37. William Faulkner, 258.

38. Revelation 1 : 8 , The Holy Bible, New King James Version , Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982, 823.

39. William Franklin and Joseph Shaw, 44.

40. Ibid., 39.

41. Thadious Davis, 107.

42. Ibid., 107.

43. Ibid., 112.

44. Benjamin Mays , " The Negro's God as Reflected in His Literature, " Thadious Davis , *Faulkner's 'Negro', Art and the Southern Context* , 112.

45. Margaret Walker , *Jubilee* , USA : Bantam Books, 1967, 60.