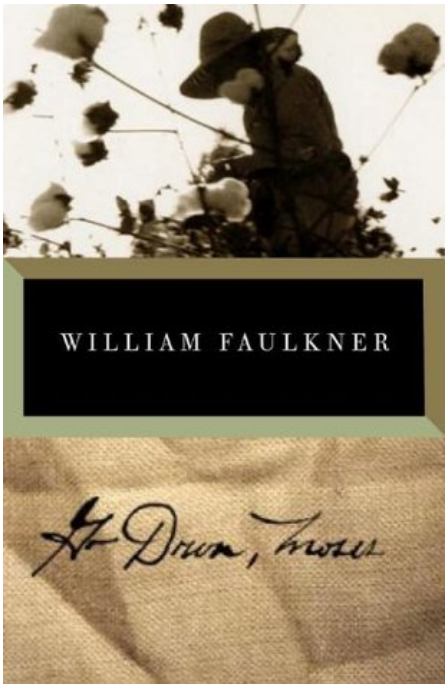

Go Down, Moses

William Faulkner

Go Down, Moses

William Faulkner

Go Down, Moses William Faulkner
“I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance.” —William Faulkner, on receiving the Nobel Prize

Go Down, Moses is composed of seven interrelated stories, all of them set in Faulkner’s mythic Yoknapatawpha County. From a variety of perspectives, Faulkner examines the complex, changing relationships between blacks and whites, between man and nature, weaving a cohesive novel rich in implication and insight.

Go Down, Moses Details

Date	:	Published January 30th 1991 by Vintage (first published 1942)
ISBN	:	9780679732174
Author	:	William Faulkner
Format	:	Paperback 365 pages
Genre	:	Fiction, Classics, Short Stories, Literature

From Reader Review Go Down, Moses for online ebook

Jamie says

“The Bear” is one of my favorite short stories and the only thing I knew going in to *Go Down, Moses* was that it would be here surrounded by six more to make a loose kind of novel. OK then. Let’s do this. But what Faulkner does is just dunk you headfirst underwater and as you paddle back up— the loose stories over your head, jumping around like waterbugs with time and characters— all of a sudden “The Bear” comes along and in one masterful lunging stroke swipes you all the way back to dry land. Panting, soaked, gutted. So it’s not exactly six more stories filling in around one of my favorites, it’s “The Bear” being the heart and soul and key and consummation of all the rest.

It isn’t perfect but I’d like it less if it was.

Richard says

Among the most beautiful of Faulkner is the Faulkner that studies the relationships that mankind forges amongst itself and with the outside world. The relationships of race, of animal, of culture. In this book, Faulkner shows such a profound level of insight into how we cope with what we must and create what we need. The mosts famous section of this book, "The Bear," is just a wonder for how well it does what Faulkner messes up in works like Intruder in the Dust. Coming of age, the politics between races, the inevitability of time--this one section alone smacks out your teeth with the aging of a boy into manhood (and all the pains therein) in his quest to fell a mythically sized bear. But how the South can maintain its flat stereotype with Faulkner's work in print is beyond me. In this book alone, we see the intricate push-and-pulls between white and black (and how the two can never be truly separate), the need that all human beings have for each other and for the flora and fauna around them and how it all contributes to our own characters. Sorry for the philosophical bend to all of this, but so much has been written about the struggle to read Faulkner and the necessity of it, and this book only reminded me of why Faulkner MUST be read, if only to understand a little bit better what we like to ignore about our own dependency on everything around us.

Sue says

This Has been a wonderful reading experience. It feels like I've been to a symphony, overwhelmed by the many component parts but the totality is just so great and, to my mind, so well done. This novel, which is a collection of tales out of the Mississippi delta, encompasses a century of life, a war that splintered the country, the racial lines that divide then cross and mingle, the ever-changing land itself, and annual male rites of passage in the hunt.

Once again I've chosen to allow Faulkner's prose to wash over me. The family lineage, the complicated begats, will be truly reconciled hopefully in my second reading. Enough comes through to allow me to have moments of "What" and "Oh!" as I read and I know that I'm absorbing much of this complex extended inter-racial family without stopping to study as I read.

There are many exceptional sections. Of course I can't choose them all.

"At first there was nothing. There was the faint, cold,
steady rain, the gray and constant light of the late
November dawn, with the voices of the hounds converging
somewhere in it and toward them. Then Sam Fathers, standing
just behind the boy as he had been standing when the boy
shot his first running rabbit with his first gun and almost
with the first load it ever carried, touched his shoulder
and he began to shake, not with any cold. Then the buck
was there. He did not come into sight, he was just there,
looking not like a ghost but as if all of light were
condensed in him and he were the source of it, not only
moving in it but disseminating it, already running, seen
first as you always see the deer, in that split second after
he has already seen you, already slanting away in that first
soaring bound...." (p 155)

And one more from late in "The Bear",

"...he had not stopped, he had only paused, quitting the
knoll which was no abode of the dead because there was no
death, not Lion and not Sam: not held fast in earth but
free in earth and not in earth but of earth, myriad yet
undiffused of every myriad part, leaf and twig and particle,
air and sun and rain and dew and night, acorn oak and leaf
and acorn again, dark and dawn and dark and dawn again in
their immutable progression and, being myriad, one...."
(p 312)

This unity of life in death also seems to apply in many ways to the living of Faulkner's Mississippi, whether they understand or accept it or not.

5*
Highly recommended to those who don't mind some of those Run on Faulknerian sentences!

Ahmad Sharabiani says

578. Go Down, Moses, William Faulkner
Go Down, Moses is a collection of seven related pieces of short fiction by American author William Faulkner, sometimes considered a novel.
"Was = ???", "The Fire and the Hearth = ??? ? ????", "Pantaloon in Black = ???? ??????", "The Old People = ????? ???", "The Bear = ???", "Delta Autumn = ????? ????", "Go Down, Moses = ????? ?? ????"

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Carloesse says

Più mi addentro in Faulkner e più mi convinco che è lui il più grande scrittore d’America. Quello che è riuscito a creare una vera epica americana, attraverso la storia delle grandi famiglie del Sud che ruotano attorno ai suoi memorabili personaggi. Perché per creare un’epica bisogna anche saper toccare il tema del “sacro”. E anche in questo “Go Down Moses” F. ci riesce perfettamente, creando quello “Zio Ike”, personaggio centrale del racconto centrale del libro: “L’Orso”, quello che ne prende più della metà delle pagine, quello che ricostruisce la storia della famiglia a partire dal capostipite che aveva mischiato il suo sangue bianco con quello dei suoi schiavi negri anche attraverso l’incesto dando origine ai due rami distinti della stirpe, quello bianco (di cui Ike fa parte) e quello nero che Ike riconosce parimenti suo, fino ad abdicare nel possesso della terra, della casa, degli averi, a rinunciare alla moglie e con essa alla possibilità di generare un figlio, bianco o nero che sia.
Perché qui, in questa rinuncia, subentra l’aspetto sacrale, senza il quale non può esservi “epica”. Attraverso la pratica della caccia (o meglio dire alla sua "iniziazione") Il giovane Ike scopre anche il divino che pervade tutto ciò che lo circonda, la preda, il terribile cane che diventa l’antagonista, anno dopo anno il suo principale inseguitore, e contribuirà, anche nella lotta finale fino alla morte, alla sua uccisione e il bosco con tutte le sue creature, lui stesso, e gli umani che nel bene e nel male lo circondano, facendo parte della sua famiglia o del suo entourage.
Ma Dio non si cura dei singoli individui. Non li premia né li punisce, li accompagna nel loro destino perché Dio è un essere indifferente, che non distingue i bianchi dai neri, gli umani dalle bestie o dal mondo che essi abitano. I cataclismi che è capace di inviare servono ad ammonire o a salvare l’intero genere, non le persone ma tutte le sue creature (comprese quelle che erroneamente lo hanno creato a loro immagine e somiglianza) nel loro insieme. La vita (e la morte) che è insita nella terra (e nel cielo), e che appartiene a tutti nel loro insieme.
Ed è nel riconoscere questo (già intuito accanto all’ultimo superstite della famiglia di capi-tribù degli indiani cui la terra era appartenuta prima che a suo nonno, e anch’esso imparentato in qualche modo con lui, e che sarà il suo maestro di caccia) il senso profondo della successiva rinuncia di Ike al suo ruolo di patriarca della famiglia, e ad ogni sua proprietà.
Curioso: proprio negli ultimi mesi mi è capitato di leggere l’ultimo libro di Calasso (“Il Cacciatore celeste”) che indaga proprio l’aspetto divino-sacrale della caccia, che fin dalla nascita delle prime società umane

aveva proprio questa connotazione divenendo presto il perno della nascita dei miti e delle religioni. Comunque sia, attorno al racconto centrale (L'Orso) ve ne sono altri 6, altrettanto belli, a farne da pannelli laterali o a riempirne la predella, narrando altre vicende che vedono protagonisti altri appartenenti alla stirpe (bianca o nera) lungo le generazioni che la hanno attraversata per un secolo (e nel trapasso dall'800 al '900, dallo schiavismo al Ku-Kux-Klan) così da costituire nell'intera successione delle diverse storie il romanzo così come lo intese F. quando lo affidò al suo editore, imbufalendosi alquanto vedendoselo intitolato "Go Down Moses e altri racconti" nella sua prima edizione.
Solo incontrando il sacro, palese o nascosto che sia, si riesce a creare l'epico, l'eroico. Faulkner in qualche modo vi riesce sempre, e così compone i suoi immensi capolavori.

Daniel says

As usual, a journey into the Mississippi of William Faulkner is not recommended for someone looking for a light read in the dentist office. However, if you like books which challenge you - not only with subject matter, but also through their mechanics - then Faulkner proves superb.

Go Down Moses was always presented to me as a collection of short stories. There is a certain truth to this. Each chapter can exist on its own - and tehy often are: the college freshman classic The Bear, is one of these chapters. However, to simply call it a group of short stories would be to miss a greater point. Go Down Moses is a collection of short stories in the same way that Tim O'Brien's The Things They Carried is a collection. Independence of individual parts does not mean they are unconnected, nor that the reading is not enriched by their being consumed together.

Go Down Moses is, of course, about the race and the passing away of the Old South/the old, traditional ways of life. But what struck me - and surprised me - was how much ecology filtered into this work. It is truly a book worthy of Green Peace or Al Gore in its stance on the intertwinning of humanity and nature.

This one is not as accessable as other Faulkner works - As I Lay Dying, Intruder in the Dust, to name a few - so I wouldn't start here if I was unfamiliar with Faukner. However, it's not one of his tougher either, so you don't have to be a scholar to take it one. All in all, a wonderful read.

Mark Mallett says

Some books are easy and breezy; this is not. But the experience of reading it is exquisite. Faulkner's writing style is dense and perhaps convoluted. You might misinterpret, for example, the antecedent of a pronoun until some pages after you encounter it; you might not even sort out which characters are given voice until the recognition dawns some time later. Some subtle happening or remark might have great meaning (and I'm sure I missed a lot of these); different parts of the book amplify other parts, both forward and backwards - in that sense the story sort of seeps into you from all directions. I loved not just the tales and the meaning in them but the experience of reading it all.

Somehow I've managed to miss Faulkner (well, I know how - I've managed to miss most classic literature) so far be it from me to say much other than a bit about my enjoyment of this book. I look forward to others, and perhaps to coming back to this again.

Chik67 says

Uno splendido viaggio nell'anima nera dell'America del Sud. Dove "nero" si riferisce a un colore di pelle ma anche a una zona dell'anima.

Aubrey says

3.5/5

Faulkner's one of those writers who's best read incomprehensibly. What went into my love for The Sound and the Fury and Light in August was a devotional and patient waiting for moments of clarity, one that relished the rolling prose and chiaroscuro enough in the meantime for a warm reception of an end. In contrast, this work largely inherited the last section of the first, a very concise and straightforward view of the previous three sections' miasma that ultimately suffered for its lending well to a reader's making of meaning. There's a moment in the middlish-end of GDM that carries on in the Faulknerian way, but by then the patience no longer waits for a message other than what was confirmed so understandably in the first 250 pages. A disappointment, but not unforeseen.

Within my class on the English periods of Neoclassicism and Romanticism there was a supreme focus on the writer as prophet. It was easier to do that sort of thing when the world that was not invalidated through slavery and genocide was a much smaller context of place, but even today you can imprint a cohesiveness of the biblical breed on a narrative scale if you play your cards right à la Blood Meridian and such. Even personal mediation succeeds in the vein of A Breath of Life, but that is much more difficult when the scope is less grand and the thematic underbelly is far more self-reflexive. Whichever the case, both are prone to error of exotification and other symptoms of those prone to grandiose definitions of the Other, after a while rendering each and every work a balancing act of the right audience at the right time. This is of course is the usual thing with literary works, but the stakes are higher when heaven is a prophet and hell is a profiteer.

An emphasis on hunting coupled with a fairy tale story of white supremacy made for an uncomfortable taste in the wake of Ferguson and government-hired guns killing a black person every 28 hours, an off the top of the head statistic that doesn't have ready recourse to the numbers of murdered brown and indigenous people but knows the less popularized are comparable. Take your guns and idealized female-pain and leave me the woods. I'll still be reading Absalom, Absalom!, but there's a future grappling its way out of a mythologized past and into a political hope to be reckoned with. The less comprehension of bloodbreeding tropes, the better.

Stacie says

I know this isn't going to be much of a review...people always want the whys and wherefores for why people give the rating they give...Right now, it is simply because I 'heart' Faulkner. He is one of the most magnificent story tellers ever. His way of getting deep into the heart and matter of mankind's relationship with mankind and nature is genius. I believe there is no one out there that can ever compare to his ability to tell a story...it doesn't even feel like so much a story than a history of a town. Yes. An imaginary town, but a

truthful town nonetheless.

Cosimo says

Imparare dal sangue

«Estate e autunno e la neve e la pioggia e la primavera succulenta nell'ordinata immortale sequenza, le fasi eterne e immemori della madre che se altri mai l'aveva fatto l'uomo che press'a poco era, madre e padre insieme del vecchio nato da una schiava negra e da un capo chickasaw che era stato suo padre in spirito, se altri mai, e lui l'aveva venerato e ascoltato e amato e perduto e pianto; e un giorno si sarebbe sposato e anche loro avrebbero avuto per il loro breve frattempo quella breve insostanziale gloria che in sé per sua natura non dura e di qui ecco la gloria; e avrebbero, potevano, portarne la memoria nel tempo quando la carne non parla più alla carne perché la memoria almeno dura, ma la foresta sarebbe stata per lui l'amante e la sposa”.

L'anima nera di Faulkner risuona tra le eterne foreste del Delta del Mississippi e canta la melodia della passione, la dignità della debolezza e l'etica del sopravvivere, concetti cardine che danno forma a quell'idea di *endurance* in grazia alla quale il nuovo popolo di Mosé si è affrancato dalla schiavitù e ha espiato le proprie vergogne. Isaac Ike McCaslin è un eroe della conoscenza, in questo romanzo familiare epico, ramificato in frammenti biblici come un fiume sacro e profondo, nella narrazione di una dinastia segnata dalla *miscegenation* e dalla maledizione del sangue: è tra le pieghe della sopportazione e nelle diverse forme della tolleranza che prende corpo la voce del Deep South, la tradizione dell'oralità che incatena storie ed episodi uno dentro l'altra, in un groviglio anticonvenzionale dove la trama si disegna a rovescio. Se un sentimento appare sovrano in questo testo dallo stile primordiale e mitopoietico è quello del lutto, del pianto per un passato che imprigiona nell'assenza; il passato della guerra e della cattività nelle piantagioni e quello della natura che resiste e poi arretra, si ritira, scompare e infine muore. Così, come il fratello nero, Ike scopre la violenza della nascita decifrando in un libro mastro la sua eredità; la ripudia, ne rinnega il male, rinunciando alla propria appartenenza, in modo ascetico e quasi eretico, scegliendo un'esistenza senza il possesso del mondo. Dopo la genesi attraverso la caccia, protegge un cuore irreprensibile e ascolta il proprio bisogno vergine di fuga, scegliendo di svanire nell'ambivalenza e nella fragilità, nella religiosità spirituale di una natura eterna e selvaggia, uomo senza razza che si mescola al divino in una furente e preveggente immortalità.

Allegra says

When I read this book in school I really had to get past Faulkner's indirect and colloquial writing style - it pissed me off for some reason and I just had a lot of trouble getting through it. But then, through our discussions I understood more of what was going on, and later, re-reading parts, they became clearer and clearer. Now, I have found that the images in the book pop up all the time in my life, and resonate with profound meaning for me. Once, driving through Florida, I saw a series of huge houses, all set back behind at least an acre of field, all in poor repair, with dark windows and no signs of life, but the grass had been cut, the windows were un-boarded, so someone had to be there! I was overcome with a feeling that these houses were occupied by families who'd been there for generations, living their forefather's legacies of, most likely, guilt. I have tried to describe the feeling those houses gave me to many people, but the ones who really understood were those who had also read this book.

Albus Eugene Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore says

[anobii, Dec, 2014]

Let My People Go

Stati Uniti d'America, Anno del Signore 1940. Faulkner dedica il libro alla sua mammy nera: *"a mammy Caroline Barr, Mississippi (1840 – 1940); che è nata in schiavitù e ha dato alla mia famiglia una fedeltà senza riserve né calcolo e alla mia infanzia una devozione e un amore incommensurabili"*. Una dedica/manifesto di … *Black* Faulkner.

Le vicende dei discendenti, Bianchi e Neri, legittimi e illegittimi, del capostipite Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin, dai primi dell'Ottocento agli anni '40. Sette racconti interconnessi e pieni di rimandi e di personaggi ricorrenti o romanzo vero e proprio? Nella sua bella prefazione, Nadia Fusini ci dice che Faulkner protesta con la casa editrice che, nella prima edizione, lo ha intitolato "Go down, Moses and other stories" e scrive: *"è un romanzo. Se lo ristampate, intitolatelo Go down, Moses e basta; è con questo titolo che ve l'ho spedito otto anni fa"*. Ma se la domanda fosse: è un libro? allora la risposta non può che essere: no, non è un libro. È un film. È un magnifico film … bianco e nero, anni '50, quello che Faulkner ti mette sotto il naso. Ma non un qualsiasi film in bianco e nero; no, un film *ammericano*, di quelli che solo loro sanno fare. Con le musiche giuste, le facce giuste, le inquadrature giuste, essenziali, commoventi, profonde … così: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0CRAa... !

Ancora Nadia Fusini: *"per Faulkner il 'nero' è un uomo che ama la vita, ne ha l'istinto, ne sente il ritmo. È un popolo che, pur soggetto ad un trattamento disumano, ha fede e continua a credere nella salvezza"*. Non è un caso forse che, sessant'anni dopo, Cormac McCarthy (è proprio un'eresia considerarlo il … nipotino di Steinbeck e Faulkner?), nel suo Sunset Limited, affidi al Nero il compito di salvare da se stesso il Bianco. E lo strumento usato dal Nero è proprio la Bibbia, il Libro per elezione degli antichi padroni del popolo nero americano.

Questo, a proposito della condizione dei neri americani, quanto scriveva Walter White, Segretario della NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) a Sturges, regista di Sullivan's Travels (1941): *"I want to congratulate and thank you for the church sequence in Sullivan's Travels. This is one of the most moving scenes I have seen in a moving picture for a long time. But I am particularly grateful to you, as are a number of my friends, both white and colored, for the dignified and decent treatment of Negroes in this scene. I was in Hollywood recently and am to return there soon for conferences with production heads, writers, directors, and actors and actresses in an effort to induce broader and more decent picturization of the Negro instead of limiting him to menial or comic roles. The sequence in Sullivan's Travels is a step in that direction and I want you to know how grateful we are"*.

Sono passati settant'anni dalla dedica a mammy Caroline ma, a ben vedere, è da credere che il vecchio Moses stia ancora litigando con il Pharaoh …

J.M. Hushour says

Especially poignant now, "Moses" is a raggedy collection of connected, nested stories centered on a family lineage that mixes both white and black, free and slave (or ex-slave) and ultimately highlights the futility of them all against an unwavering wildness that can only be dealt with by destroying it.

With the exception of Ike's sanction against the folly of thinking that one can possess anything that doesn't want to be possessed (whether land, the feral, or in love), this is a far more accessible work than, say, "The Sound and the Fury". Jumping back and forth through time we catch picture-imperfect glimpses of the

tendrils of a plantation family that finally triumphs by eviscerating the ambiguity and sublimity of nature by turning in on itself. Fascinating and often surreal, with lengthy, run-on passages bereft of punctuation, much of this reads like a poem, a paean to the futility of displacing the wild.

Morgan says

For the most part, I liked this book. This is a collection of seven interrelated "short" stories. All the stories have themes about race and wilderness. They are all set in his fictitious Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi. My favorite story was called "The Bear" and it probably the most famous one in this book. My only complaint about this collection is some of the stories seemed more like novella than short stories. However, I liked the wilderness aspect of the book that makes it a great summer/autumn read.

Taka says

In love with Faulkner (4.5)—

I didn't get him. When I read his *As I Lay Dying*, *The Sound and the Fury*, and *Absalom! Absalom!* a few years ago. I liked *Light in August*, but I couldn't appreciate his style. And I guess for everything there is a season. Then I came back, and it happened to be in the right season, when my preoccupation was not storytelling but style and sentence rhythm. It has to do with my progress as a writer as I'm able to appreciate fiction for other than their plot.

I relished, no reveled in, Faulkner's meandering sentences. I loved his themes of blood and curse, race and history. After reading this excellent collection of interrelated stories, I'm tempted to go back and reread his classics, especially *Absalom! Absalom!* since I don't think I was *there* yet.

The stories included here are very accessible, though you probably need to look for the McCaslin family tree online and reference it (I copied into the book, and it helped tremendously).

Overall, unique prose with great cadence, and gripping stories. (it gets 4.5 only because the collection wasn't as novelistic as I hoped, and the climax was felt rather flat).

Bruce says

This is a book of seven interrelated stories, the first of which, “Was,” is only thirty pages long. It is the tale of nine-year-old Cass and his uncles, Buck and Buddy, as they chase the escaped slave, Tomey’s Turl, who regularly runs away to a neighboring farm to visit his sweetheart. The subplot is that the mistress of the neighboring house, Miss Sophonsiba, has her eye set on catching one of the two confirmed bachelors. The story is gentle and amusing, lacking any hint of obvious cruelty, and ending with humor. Faulkner’s language is, of course, complex, and his descriptions of place and character are precise and striking. Mostly, the little story gives a glimpse into a time and culture typical of rural Mississippi, a setting that seems in a sense timeless. To what extent this picture can be generalized can be questioned, but Faulkner has set a tone for the subsequent stories in the book, be they similar or deeply contrasting.

How can tenderness have so much bite? And how can an author intuit and convey such subtlety of relationship, such nuance and complexity of feeling as Faulkner does in the second story, “The Fire and the Hearth”? A couple of generations have passed since the first story. Two men, Lucas Beauchamp and Roth Edmonds, one black and one white, both descendents of the same man, interact in an almost courtly minuet of custom and similar background, legal obligation, mutual respect and awkwardness in a South that has long passed the time of slavery and yet is governed by implicit rules of conduct and habit. Out of a long established routine a crisis arises, attempts at resolution occur, and a satisfactory outcome eventuates. This simple outline fails to convey the unspoken assumptions, the issues of pride and independence, and the deeply hidden but equally deeply felt emotions and conflicted loyalties that underlie surface events. I am used to reading a Faulkner with more bitterness, with more anguish than this story contains, and the rich depth of this narrative moved me.

“Pantaloon in Black” is very short. Short and violent and tragic, a tale of loss and grief and derangement. What a stark contrast to the two previous stories. Are black and white two different species altogether? Sometimes it seems like it, and the only possible response is sadness. A black laborer’s young wife unexpectedly dies and he goes off the rails, with consequences as wrenching as they are foreseeable.

Almost as short is “The Old People.” Many of the same characters appear here who were in the previous stories, some directly and some by allusion, the multiple generations coming together and fleshing out the narrative. There are new people, too, whom we have not met before, peopling the history and the present. Always, as in so much of Faulkner and in so much of this society and era, there is the perpetual obsession with blood – black blood, white blood, Indian blood – blood that determines status and fate, even personal character. There is something primal about this society and its habits, its customs, something inescapable about the trajectory of lives. The story features the young boy Ike McCaslin, eager to grow up, eager to shoot his first deer, and the old Sam Fathers, mostly Chickasaw with traces of black and white, old Sam who patiently teaches Ike, shepherding him through years of learning and waiting, finally guiding him through his initiation into manhood. Faulkner powerfully evokes not only woods and wilderness but psychological yearnings and growing realizations in this haunting tale of growing up.

The sixth story, “Bear,” is the longest in the collection. It is really a novella, and it is a continuation of the previous story. The Bear is ancient, mammoth in size and almost immortal, terrorizing a large area of wilderness and its few inhabitants for many years. The story of the bear and the struggle to kill it has become mythic, not unlike Hemingway’s Old Man and the Sea. A hound has been bred for this very purpose, a hound called Lion. Again, as in the previous story, the tale is told by “the boy,” Ike McCaslin, whose skill in hunting and woodcraft has increased year by year under the tutelage of Sam Fathers. The narrative is riveting, plumbing the boy’s psyche and the primitive wilderness that seems at times malevolent, at times impersonal, always the testing place of mankind, the visible symbol of the inner self. The pitting of self against seemingly overwhelming forces and odds becomes a metaphor for the fulfilled life, a testing that is necessary for one’s actualization. All of this forms the context in which Ike becomes the man he does become, forms the foundation for the crucial decisions he makes years later. Such a life and such experiences blend with received religion to provide Ike’s understandings of what he should do, who he should be. Faulkner’s descriptions and his ability to heighten and maintain tension are masterful and unforgettable.

The final portion of this novella explores, through the thoughts of primary characters, the whole anguished history of the culture and racial dynamics of the South from pre-Civil Wars times through Reconstruction and the early 20th century, the travail caused by a society and culture both romantic and elemental attempting to deal with whites, blacks, and Indians and every combination of the three. And as time passes, the old South, the wilderness and old ways gradually and inexorably disappear, old heritages and histories and psychological genealogies never entirely vanishing but persisting almost completely hidden, like

subterranean rivers that are ever present. Each character attempts to deal with these dislocations in his own way, each sacrificing aspects of himself to preserve other parts, the past never able to be entirely preserved and never entirely overcome.

In “Delta Autumn,” Ike McCaslin, nearly eighty years old now, returns as always for two weeks in November to the wilderness to hunt, now with sons and grandsons of his old friends. The wilderness is much diminished in extent, much more barren of game, but for Ike it is the place where he is most truly at home. His is the voice of wisdom and experience, a voice often not easily heard by those who are younger. And, along with the increasing limitations of age, he also experiences a peace that compensates. Yet all is not as peaceful as it seems. The ravishment of the land is paralleled by ravishment of people, too, and racial rigidities are in tension with efforts to love, leading to irresolvable dilemmas that leave Ike shaken and anguished.

The final story, one of the shortest, is the title story of the book, “Go Down, Moses.” Herein Faulkner brings the collection full cycle, returning characters from earlier stories and introducing Gavin Stevens from others of his novels. This narrative, perhaps the briefest in the book, highlights an instance of inter-racial sensitivity and caring that is poignant and uplifting, suggesting a future of understanding and harmony that seemed often lacking in the frequently fraught stories earlier in the book. While never sugarcoating the history and culture of the region, never minimizing the difficult racial heritage and continuing agony, the book ends on a note of hope that is particularized in a simple action.

This is a book not to be missed by lovers of Faulkner’s writing. His prose is deep and rich, never simple to read, always haunting in its insights. One cannot forget these stories and characters as they become a part of the reader’s own history and experience.

Diane Barnes says

I find it difficult to review this novel, so I will leave that to others more proficient at doing so. Some adjectives just off the top of my head: powerful, amazing, unbearably sad, jubilantly comic. All these things in one short novel is incredible enough, but Faulkner manages all these things sometimes in one (long) sentence. Relationships and kinships between the black and white races, man vs. nature, old vs. young, are some recurring themes that are part of the magic that binds you to this world and time.

Iman says

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Gail says

When I'm away from Faulkner's works, I always think of them as "hard", "confusing", "over-the-top". You know, that sort of thing that only intellectuals read and pretend to understand and enjoy. But when I start to read them...

The first chapter is mysterious and deliberately obtuse. The reader is picked up in the middle of some strange goings-on and must try to decipher the characters and the allusive plotline.

But keep reading. No matter how much you feel like you're drowning, or lost in some maze, or hurtling down the hill aquiring more and more mass like that mythical snowball from your youth, just keep on reading. The prose, which seems at first glance to be so complex and without identifiable form as to be impenentrable, will soon charm you, draw you into its web, and you'll forget all about grammar constructs as you tumble over ideas, people, and events.

This is a sad, sad story of men's pride, women's degradation, the corrupting abuse of power and the corrupting influence of having no power when one man can be considered to "own" another. A moving exposition of the American South. Worth reading either to better understand both black and white culture, or to simply be carried off into another world by some astounding prose.
