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Journey from Boyhood to Manhood: 'The Guy Code' in Faulkner's *The Reivers*

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Abstract
The Reivers (1962) is a humorous Southern novel by William Faulkner (1897–1962) that follows eleven-year-old protagonist Lucius Priest on a journey to Memphis, involving a stolen car and misadventures with crime, race, and morality in the early 20th-century American South. This study aims to explore how the protagonist's journey from boyhood to manhood reflects the tensions between traditional and evolving notions of masculinity in contemporary society. Employing Michael Kimmel's concept of 'The Guy Code,' the study investigates how the adolescent male protagonist navigates and internalizes societal expectations of manhood in the novel. Faulkner's depiction of boyhood to manhood transitions serves as a vivid narrative to analyze themes of honor, loyalty, rites of passage, and the consequences of deviating from traditional norms within the sociocultural landscape of early 20th-century Southern America. Through textual analysis and thematic exploration, this research seeks to uncover the complexities of male identity formation, showing how the narrative questions or reinforces the prevailing cultural constructs of masculinity. By examining the interactions, behaviors, and emotional landscapes of the characters, this study contributes to a comprehensive understanding of gender roles and the dynamics of masculinity as portrayed in literary discourse and society.
Keywords: Boyhood, gender roles, manhood, masculinity, the Guy Code

Introduction

William Faulkner is a prominent figure in American literature, widely known for his exploration of the American southern experience, human psychology and social transformation. William Faulkner's *The Reivers* (1962) is the last novel which provides a lighter yet deeply symbolic story that reflects both personal and regional change in the early twentieth-century American South. The story is about an eleven-year-old Lucius Priest, a boy from a respectable white family in Jefferson, who goes on an unexpected trip that leads him into maturity. Lucius secretly steals his grandfather's car and journeys toward Memphis - a city that symbolizes

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temptation and experience along with Boon Hogganbeck, a family retainer, and Ned McCaslin, a black American servant.

During his journey to Memphis, Lucius experiences the realities of race, class, and morality, which he had not been aware of in his sheltered upbringing. He transforms from innocence to experience and dares to question the codes of honor, masculinity, and social hierarchy that characterize the Southern world around him. Therefore, the trip becomes symbolic as it shows the journey from boyhood to manhood, where Lucius faces dilemmas related to ethics, human weaknesses, and the complexities of identity in a changing society.

In this context, this paper explores how the protagonist Lucius' journey reflects and challenges the social expectations of manhood in the early 20th-century American South. The study applies Michael Kimmel's concept of the 'Guy Code' and examines how Faulkner presents the intricacies of masculine identity as a construct shaped by cultural norms, generational values and personal experiences. Through Lucius' navigation of the tensions between traditional masculine ideas and evolving notions of manhood in a changing Southern landscape, the research seeks to find out how Faulkner analyzes conventional ideas of toughness, control and honor and suggests a more compassionate understanding of manhood in a transforming Southern landscape.

Concepts and Definitions

Boyhood is a critical transitional stage in the life of young males. It is positioned between the innocence of childhood and the responsibilities and identity of adult masculinity. This phase is marked by a series of cultural, psychological, and existential challenges arising from the struggle to establish a stable sense of identity amid societal expectations. It is a period where young boys begin to confront not only their emerging self-hood but also the broader social constructs of gender, particularly what it means to become a man. Martin Ashley (2008) contends that boyhood represents perhaps the most difficult age for boys due to these complex pressures. He emphasizes the role of vocal expression as both a symbolic and literal vehicle through which boys negotiate their identities. Ashley (2008) states:

> It is found that the voice does contribute to existential difficulties for boys concerned as much about being 'not child' as 'not girl' but unable to attain adult masculinity. The period is one of great cultural difficulty for young males and many avoid the issues. Yet the boys who enjoyed using their voices were the less prone to melancholia. (p. 26)

This insight underscores how boyhood involves navigating a cultural liminality, a state of being caught between identities, where young males grapple with their voices as markers of both physical and social maturity. The challenges are not merely physical but deeply existential, related to how boys assert themselves as masculine subjects in a culture that simultaneously demands conformity and offers little clear guidance.

Michael Kimmel, a leading scholar in the study of masculinity and boyhood, has significantly shaped the understanding of male socialization in contemporary Western societies. Kimmel introduces the concept of 'The Guy Code' in his seminal work *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*. Kimmel (2008) defines the 'Guy Code' as "the collection of attitudes, values, and traits that together compose what it means to be a man" (p. 45). This code emphasizes toughness, emotional suppression, dominance, and the rejection of vulnerability as key markers of masculine identity.

Kimmel further conceptualizes a developmental phase he terms 'Guyland,' which typically spans the late teenage years through the mid-to-late twenties. This period represents a distinct stage of suspended development, a liminal space where young men exist in a social environment free from the full responsibilities and sacrifices associated with traditional adult roles such as career, committed relationships, and parenthood. Kimmel (2008) explains:

> Guyland is the world in which young men live. It is both a stage of life, a liminal undefined time span between adolescence and adult hood that can often stretch for a decade or more, and a place, or, rather, a bunch of places where guys gather to be guys with each other, unhassled by the demands of parents, girlfriends, jobs, kids, and the other nuisances of adult life. (p. 4)

This description highlights the cultural and social specificity of the transition to manhood, framing it as a prolonged and often ambiguous phase where young men prioritize leisure, camaraderie, and personal freedom. However, this freedom can come at the cost of personal growth or commitment to long-term goals, reflecting broader shifts in societal structures, economic conditions, and gender expectations.

Guyland is a flexible, culturally shaped period that does not have specific age limits, as Kimmel (2008) notes "Without fixed age boundaries, young men typically enter Guyland before they turn 16, and they begin to leave in their mid to late 20s" (p. 6). He further argues:

> This period now has a definable shape and texture, a topography that can be mapped and explored. A kind of suspended animation between boyhood and manhood, Guyland lies between the dependency and lack of autonomy of boyhood and the sacrifice and responsibility of manhood. Wherever they are living, whatever they are doing, and whomever they are hooking up with, Guyland is a dramatically new stage of development with its own rules and limitations. (p. 6)

This developmental phase, characterized by a suspension between adolescence and adulthood, varies across cultures, social contexts, and individual experiences. While Kimmel outlines a general age range, the lack of precise boundaries suggests that *Guyland* is more of a cultural condition than a biologically timed stage. It reflects a liminal space where young men delay assuming adult responsibilities such as career-building, long-term relationships, and family life. This flexibility in its onset and duration underscores that entry into and exit from *Guyland* are shaped by personal circumstances, societal expectations, and economic conditions. As such, *Guyland* can manifest differently across regions, communities, or even within the same cultural group, reinforcing the idea that transitions into adulthood are no longer universally linear or uniform.

The Guyland stage coincides with profound physical, psychological, and social transformations. Adolescents undergo puberty and strive toward autonomy, but lack clear role models or guidance on what it means to be a man in a rapidly changing world. Kimmel (2008) argues, "In an effort to prove their masculinity, with little guidance and no real understanding of what manhood is, they engage in behaviors and activities that are ill-conceived and irresponsibly carried out" (p. 19). This struggle to embody masculinity often leads young men to perform exaggerated behaviors aimed at signaling strength, independence, and maturity:

> They drink more than they know they can handle because they don't want to seem weak or immature; they sheepishly engage in locker-room talk about young women they actually

like and respect…with no adults around running the show, they turn to each other for initiation into manhood. (Kimmel, 2008, p. 19)

In the absence of clear mentorship from adult males, peer groups become the primary socializing agents, perpetuating a version of masculinity that often valorizes risk-taking, emotional repression, and competition. These behaviors reflect the pressures exerted by 'The Guy Code,' which simultaneously constrains and defines young men's identities.

The study extends Kimmel's theoretical framework of 'Guyland' and 'The Guy Code' by examining the protagonist, Lucius Priest's journey from adolescence to adulthood within William Faulkner's *The Reivers*. The novel shows the protagonist's initiation into the complex social expectations of masculinity, reflecting Kimmel's ideas. Particularly, the study applies Kimmel's ideas and analyzes construction of masculinity in Faulkner's novel, focusing on the transition of the protagonist from boyhood to manhood. Set in the early 20th-century American South, the novel reveals how traditional ideals—such as emotional control, toughness, honor, and dominance—shape male identity. Through thematic analysis, the research explores how Lucius navigates these cultural expectations amid social changes. It highlights how masculinity is socially constructed and influenced by power, race, and class, complicating the path to manhood.

***The Reivers* and its Receptions**

William Faulkner's final novel, *The Reivers* (1962), has attracted considerable critical attention and has been interpreted from multiple perspectives. Bassett (1986), interpreting the novel as autobiographical, says that Faulkner "closely identifies himself with the member of that family at the center of the story" (p. 54). The protagonist, Lucius Priest, shares notable similarities with Faulkner, including growing up in the early twentieth century with siblings and a father named Maury. Additionally, Lucius, "like Faulkner in the early 1960s, shares stories of his youth as an elderly man to his grandchildren" (Bassett, 1986, p. 54). These connections suggest that Faulkner weaves elements of personal history and family reflection into the narrative, giving the novel a deeply autobiographical dimension.

Beek (2017) considers *The Reivers* a visionary novel that anticipates the decline of traditional Southern aristocratic values in light of America's evolving multicultural identity. He writes, "Faulkner's novel is prophetic, as it seems to envisage the eventual progress imminent in the social and cultural revolutions of the 1960s" and acknowledges that the aristocratic ideals Faulkner inherited "will be futile and outdated in future multicultural American society" (p. 272). Similarly, Brodsky (1987) interprets the novel as a farce, noting that *The Reivers* "would maintain a serial structure… predominantly through the use of farce, itself among the most accessible of comic techniques" (p. 60), allowing humor to shape its tone while revealing deeper truths about society and human behavior.

William Rossky (1965a, 1965b) draws compelling parallels between William Faulkner's *The Reivers* and two canonical texts—Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. In his essay "*The Reivers: Faulkner's 'Tempest'*," Rossky (1965b) observes that "if in *The Reivers* Faulkner recognizes evil, he also sees not only the need to suffer in order to live, to become human, but also the regenerative power of the very difficult of life" (p. 90). He explains that despite the novel's occasional seriousness, it ends on a hopeful note, symbolized by the birth of Everbe's baby—a moment that conveys "a tone of potential, growth, and ripeness in time" (Rossky, 1965b, p. 90). Likewise, in his article comparing Faulkner and Twain, Rossky (1965a) writes, "In both [the novels] boys serve as centers for the action and voices for the authors'

feelings about and criticism of life" (p. 374). He argues that Faulkner and Twain use their youthful protagonists—Lucius Priest and Huck Finn—not only as narrative anchors but also as "technical points of view" that allow them to offer deep social critique and emotional insight (Rossky, 1965a, p. 374). Through these comparisons, Rossky demonstrates how *The Reivers* fits into a broader literary tradition of using coming-of-age narratives to explore human complexity and cultural transformation.

Albert J. Devlin (1972) argues that *The Reivers* primarily depicts significant social change in early 20th-century Jefferson, driven largely by the introduction of the automobile, which deeply affects the characters' emotional experiences and processes of initiation. Devlin (1972) explains:

> Social change is an obvious feature of *The Reivers*, but commentators have failed to examine this change as it relates to the dynamics of initiation. In 1904-5 Jefferson begins to experience dramatic side effects of a syndrome described by cultural historians as 'Progress.' The primary focus of change is the automobile, especially its ability to inspire radical emotional commitment." (p. 328)

He highlights the connection between social transformation and initiation, emphasizing the automobile's role in fostering emotional growth and progress within the community.

Moreover, Edwin Moses (1974) argues that Faulkner explores the theme of acceptance in *The Reivers* in a realistic manner. He contends that the novel effectively addresses the complex struggles and desires present in Faulkner's earlier works. Moses (1974) says, "*The Reivers* embodies Faulkner's theme of acceptance artfully and realistically, that the novel comes fully to terms with the dark struggles and compulsions of the previous volumes, and that therefore it is indeed a worthy valediction" (p. 309). This suggests that *The Reivers* serves as a fitting conclusion to Faulkner's literary career, portraying characters who grow and change. In sum, the novel reconciles the difficult aspects of life that Faulkner frequently examined throughout his work.

Theresa M. Towner (1995) interprets *The Reivers* as a commentary on racial issues in the early twentieth-century American South. She argues that "'Whiteness' in *The Reivers* correlates exactly with the code of gentlemanly behavior to which 'good' men in the book aspire" (p. 4). For Towner, the novel presents whiteness as synonymous with this code, highlighting the close connection between racial identity and social conduct. Similarly, Chad Jewett (2016) contends that the novel addresses race and the struggle of Black individuals for freedom and dignity. He observes that "*The Reivers* uses the framing device of an aged McCaslin, now Lucius, reminiscing, immediately allowing for the dissonance between the effort at pleasant memory and the reality of racial struggle" (p. 381). Jewett argues that the novel portrays the racial history and struggles of Black characters in post–Civil War American society.

Despite extensive research on Faulkner's *The Reivers*, the transition from boyhood to manhood and its challenge to traditional masculinity in a changing Southern society remains underexplored. While scholars have examined autobiography, social change, and racial issues, few focus on the protagonist's masculine identity development or the informal social norms—'The Guy Code'—shaping this journey. Critics like Bassett (1986) and Rossky (1965) discuss youthful perspectives, and others address initiation and acceptance (Devlin, 1972; Moses, 1974), but the intersection of masculinity with societal and racial themes (Towner, 1995; Jewett, 2016) needs deeper analysis. This study aims to fill that gap.

The Reivers, the Protagonist and Guyland

The protagonist of *The Reivers*, Lucius Priest, is in his boyhood—a transitional phase between childhood and adolescence where boys begin to understand themselves and the world around them while undergoing physical and emotional changes. Michael Kimmel (2008) terms this stage "Guyland," describing it as "a liminal undefined time span between adolescence and adulthood" and "a bunch of places where guys gather to be guys... unhassled by the demands of parents, girlfriends, jobs, kids" (p. 4). During this period, boys often avoid responsibility while striving to prove their masculinity without tangible evidence. Lucius's comment, "I would leave home with Father immediately after breakfast each Saturday morning, when all the other boys... were merely arming themselves with balls and bats" (Faulkner, 1962, p. 3), reflects his movement away from childhood play toward adult responsibility, signaling his developmental shift.

'Guyland' is a challenging phase where boys often take risks and act immaturely to prove their masculinity. Kimmel (2008) describes young men as "directionless and often clueless," yet they "rely increasingly on their peers to usher them into adulthood and validate their masculinity… to prove that they are real men" (p. 43). This creates pressure to show maturity without enough support. In Faulkner's *The Reivers*, Lucius Priest similarly admits his lack of readiness but still faces uncertain situations head-on. He confesses:

> My trouble was, the tools I had to use. The innocence and the ignorance: I not only didn't have strength and knowledge; I didn't even have time enough. When the fates, gods—all right, Non-virtue—give you opportunities, the least they can do is give you room. (Faulkner, 1962, p. 39)

This shows the existential struggle young boys face between society's expectations and their own limitations, as Lucius's journey reveals that becoming a man involves both external trials and inner identity conflicts.

In the opening scene, Lucius is fascinated by the pistol Boon takes from his grandfather's drawer. He sees it as a symbol of manhood, representing masculinity and adult identity (Faulkner, 1962, p. 5). Lucius Priest's experience in the novel reflects what Kimmel describes as a confusing phase for boys, where "they're left alone, confused, trying to come to terms with a world they themselves barely understand" (Kimmel, 2008, p. 7). After his family leaves for Bay St. Louis to attend his grandfather's funeral, Lucius finds himself alone in Jefferson with Boon. When Boon proposes a trip to Memphis during their absence, Lucius faces a moral dilemma and emotional turmoil. He expresses his inner conflict and helplessness: "Don't You realise I ain't but eleven years old? How do You expect me to do all this...?" (Faulkner, 1962, p. 40). This passage captures his feelings of being overwhelmed by responsibilities far beyond his age. His frustration is not only directed at the situation but also at Boon, whose impulsiveness ruins their plan. The moment reflects Lucius's transition from childhood into premature adult-like decision-making. It highlights his internal struggle between youthful innocence and the burdens of masculinity, reinforcing the theme of boys navigating complex adult expectations before they are emotionally ready.

Lucius Priest is initially portrayed as an innocent and morally upright young boy with a simple view of right and wrong. His trip to Memphis serves as a symbolic journey into adulthood, exposing him to complex adult realities and marking his coming-of-age transformation. His naivety is evident when he questions the situation at Miss Reba's brothel: "Maybe they've all gone to an early prayer meeting," to which Boon replies, "Likely they're just resting," and Ned laughs suggestively in the back seat (Faulkner, 1962, pp. 68–69). The young boy's unawareness of adult

behaviors and euphemisms reflects his sheltered upbringing. Even when offered alcohol by Mr. Binford, Lucius adheres to his moral upbringing: "'No, sir,' I said. 'I don't drink anything. I promised my mother I wouldn't unless Father or Boss invited me'" (Faulkner, 1962, p. 76). His resistance to vice indicates a moral code grounded in familial values rather than societal expectations.

However, Lucius's journey to Memphis exposes him to deception, vice, and the pressures of conforming to "The Guy Code"—a set of societal expectations promoting toughness and emotional restraint. Guided by Boon and Ned, he begins to confront the conflict between his internal moral values and the external demands of masculinity. This journey becomes a pivotal moment in his growth, challenging his innocence and pushing him toward a deeper understanding of adulthood. By the end, Lucius has encountered moral ambiguity and performative masculinity, ultimately emerging with a more complex sense of self and a critical awareness of what it means to be a man.

Rules of Masculinity

Kimmel says that there are four fundamental rules of masculinity. The first rule is "No Sissy Stuff!" (Kimmel, 2008, p. 45), which suggests that the traditional notion of masculinity was defined by the rejection of anything perceived as weak or feminine. The protagonist often faces situations that challenge these traditional notions of masculinity, revealing deeper truths about strength, vulnerability, and integrity. The protagonist tries to act like a strong and independent human. When Priest spends the first night out of his house at Miss Ballenbaugh's, Boon says, "Say the word. We'll go back home. Not now but in the morning" (Faulkner, 1962, p. 55). However, Priest replies, "Did you wait this long to get scared?" I said (Faulkner, 1962, p. 55). It shows that the protagonist is trying to act like a man to justify his masculinity, even though he feels awkward spending the night out.

Another basic rule of masculinity is "Be a Big Wheel" (Kimmel, 2008, p.45). This rule puts success and power as the central ideals defining masculinity. As Kimmel (2008) puts it, "Masculinity is measured more by wealth, power, and status than by any particular body part" (p. 45). Winning the horse race marks a significant milestone in Lucius Priest's coming-of-age journey in the novel. The event is described as a man-sized race, indicating that it carries serious weight and is far from a childish endeavor. Lucius reflects on the moment:

> Because I had just ridden and won my first race, you see. I mean, a man-size race, with people, grown people, more people than I could remember at one time before, watching me win it and (some of them anyway) betting their money that I would. Also, I have time to notice, remark anything in his face or voice or what he said, because they were already through the rail and on the track, coming toward us: the whole moil and teem of sweated hats and tieless shirts and faces still gaped with yelling. (Faulkner, 1962, p. 207)

This victory becomes symbolic of Lucius's transition from boyhood to manhood, gaining not just recognition but also a sense of identity rooted in courage and competence. In the traditional framework of masculinity, such public achievements serve as proof of maturity, reliability, and emotional strength.

"Be a Sturdy Oak" (Kimmel, 2008, p. 45) directive captures the cultural demand that men appear unwavering and emotionally impermeable. He argues that male reliability is praised "not that he is able to respond fully and appropriately to the situation at hand, but rather that he

resembles an inanimate object … a rock, a pillar, a species of tree" (Kimmel, 2008, p. 45). William Faulkner dramatizes this ideal when Lucius Priest addresses his grandfather:

> "Boss," I said.
> "What did you do to your hand?" he said.
> "Yes sir," I said. "Boss."
> "You're busy now," he said. "So am I." It was quite kind, quite cold. No: it wasn't anything. (Faulkner, 1962, p. 208)

Lucius's respectful use of "Boss" affirms the elder's authority while displaying stoic self-control; he deflects concern for his injured hand, refusing the vulnerability that might invite sympathy. The terse exchange enacts the "sturdy oak" script: both men remain terse, composed, and focused on their tasks, reinforcing masculinity as the capacity to suppress pain and maintain an unshaken public front. In doing so, Faulkner aligns personal restraint with the social expectation that men must prioritize resilience over emotional disclosure.

In Memphis, Lucius Priest's moral code collides with Otis's crude profiteering. Otis proudly describes a "peephole … with a tin slide over it" through which paying customers watch Miss Corrie undress, adding that smaller boys "would have to stand on a box" and that he "charge[s] a nickel" for the view (Faulkner, 1962, p. 117). The revelation triggers an eruption of righteous anger in Lucius:

> I was hitting him, so much to his surprise (mine too) that I had had to stop and take hold of him and jerk him up within reach. I knew nothing about boxing and not too much about fighting. But I knew exactly what I wanted to do: not just hurt him but destroy him … I was hitting, clawing, kicking … (not only) the demon child who debased her privacy and the witch who debauched her innocence …but all who had participated in her debasement: not only the two panders, but the insensitive blackguard children and the brutal and shameless men who paid their pennies to watch her defenseless and undefended and unavenged degradation. (Faulkner, 1962, p. 117)

This violent response exemplifies Michael Kimmel's (2008) "Give 'em Hell" injunction, encouraging boys to embrace aggression, take risks, and ignore others' opinions to prove masculinity (p. 45). By attacking Otis, Lucius channels his anger into defending Corrie's dignity and asserting his emerging manhood. This connects Faulkner's early 20th-century Southern context with Kimmel's modern view of masculinity valuing fearlessness and punitive force as male honor markers.

Homo-social Masculinity and Gender Police

Kimmel (2008) believes that American masculinity has been predominantly homo-social for a long time. For him, American men want to be a "man among men" and not "ladies' man." (p. 47). In other words, masculinity in America is homosocial as it is shown to be directed to men and judged by other men rather than women. In the novel, the behaviors and motivations are driven by the desire to be positively evaluated by other men. After coming back to his Jefferson from the adventure, Lucius reflects:

> It was the four days between that Saturday night at Miss Ballenbaugh's when Boon would have gone back home tomorrow if I had said so, and the moment when I looked down from Lightning Wednesday and saw Grandfather and passed to him, during which Ned had carried the load alone, held back the flood, shored up the crumbling levee with whatever tools he could reach—including me." (Faulkner, 1962, pp. 130-131)

These lines justify the theme of masculinity within a homo-social context, as seen in Lucius Priest's reflections on the men around him, especially Boon and Ned. Lucius observes Ned's physical and symbolic efforts to protect and support, embodying traditional masculine ideals of strength and resilience. He also feels a strong obligation to these men, particularly Boon, who would have returned home if Lucius had expressed the desire to do so. His determination to continue the journey suggests even though "I (He) was only eleven: I(he) didn't know how" (Faulkner, 1962, p. 231), he wants to prove to Boon and Ned that he is a man. Furthermore, the expression of the Priest that "a gentleman always sticks to his word whether he told it or not" (Faulkner, 1962, p. 231) proves he is determined to show his elder male counterparts that he is as competent as they are in masculine manners. The novel thus explores the complexities of American masculinity in homosocial settings, emphasizing themes of loyalty, honor, and the pursuit of validation from male peers, which shape Lucius's behavior and self-perception as he moves toward adulthood.

Young men often face peer pressure to conform to traditional masculinity through strict gender policing. Kimmel (2008) discusses the concept of "gender police," referring to the social pressures that compel young men to conform to traditional definitions of masculinity (p. 47). These pressures regulate aspects of behavior such as "what we wear, how we talk, how we walk, [and] what we eat" (p. 48). Boys who fail to meet these expectations often face derogatory labels like "wimp, faggot, dork, pussy, loser, wuss, nerd, queer, homo, girl, gay, skirt, Mama's boy, [and] pussy-whipped" (p. 48). These labels are typically enforced by peers who act as "gender police," policing one another's masculinity to ensure conformity. The notion of gender policing upholds what Kimmel terms "The Guy Code," a set of unwritten rules requiring boys to prove their heterosexuality and manliness, frequently through risky and harmful behaviors.

At the core of these customs lies men's feelings of being lost, yet needing to prove themselves to their peers (Rapp, 2010, p. 946). In other words, masculinity is not biologically fixed but socially constructed and maintained through peer enforcement. In the novel, Boon exemplifies this role when he admonishes Lucius: "Now you can quit. We're almost home; you'll have just time to wash your face at the trough before we go in the house. You don't want womenfolks to see it like that" (Faulkner, 1962, p. 187). Boon's words reinforce the societal expectation that men maintain a certain appearance, especially in front of women, thereby upholding standards of respectability and masculinity.

Priest always falls into a dilemma about his decision to travel to Memphis when his parents are away. He says, "In fact, at this moment, I wished I had never heard of Memphis or Boon or automobiles either" (Faulkner, 1962, p. 40). His expressions in the novel suggest that it is because of the indirect pressure from Boon that he has taken this journey. He seems to be regretting, at times, crossing familial boundaries and roles. Boon encourages Priest to go to Memphis, telling him that he is already big. He says, "You're big enough. Besides, you already know how. Have you ever thought about that?" (Faulkner, 1962, p. 35). Therefore, decisions often come not out of his free will but because of pressure from other male characters.

Three Cultures of Guyland

Kimmel (2008) describes a "culture of entitlement" (p. 59) among young boys, which is crucial for understanding their transition into adulthood and Guyland. This culture stems from strict adherence to "The Guy Code," requiring suppression of empathy and compassion to demonstrate masculinity. Boys believe they deserve power and control as a reward for following these norms, even when they face powerlessness in life, contrasting with women who typically do

not share this sense of entitlement (p. 59). Additionally, Kimmel highlights a pervasive "culture of silence" during boys' journey to manhood, enforced by "The Guy Code" (p. 61). Boys are expected to witness and endure violence, sexism, and bullying to avoid being outcast or marginalized. This silence perpetuates a toxic environment where boys "learn to be silent in the face of other men's violence" (p. 61). According to Kimmel, "Silence is one of the ways boys become men" (p. 61). This enforced silence not only normalizes harmful behavior but also shapes boys' understanding of masculinity.

In the novel, Priest comes to know about the real identity of Miss Corrie Otis. He understands that Miss Corrie's actual name is Everbe Corinthia, and she is actually a prostitute from Kiblett. In spite of knowing this, he remains silent about her identity so that Miss Corrie is safe and lives in dignity, as the lines state:

> "Yes," I said; whereupon I realised that that was completely false: she hadn't told me; she didn't even know I knew it, that I had been calling her Everbe ever since Sunday night. But it was too late now. "But you've got to promise," I said. "Not promise her: promise me. Never to say it out loud until she tells it first." (Faulkner, 1962, p. 161)

It shows an understanding that being a man involves protecting and honoring the choices and privacy of others. Here, Priest wants to keep the secret safe until she decides to share it herself. By doing this, he is protecting her and taking care of her interests. This kind of protection is often seen as part of being a man, where being a man means looking after and caring for others, especially those who trust you or might need help.

Kimmel (2008) describes the "culture of protection" in Guyland, where young men shield peers who commit violence or other transgressions by maintaining collective silence (pp. 62–63). This silence tacitly supports offenders, ensuring no whistleblowers or witnesses come forward, as "nobody knows anything, nobody saw anything, nobody remembers anything" (p. 62). Such silence enables the perpetuation of harmful behaviors within male peer groups. In the novel, Priest observes Mr Butch sexually harassing Miss Corrie. Mr Butch manipulates her physically, "holding Everbe's elbow" and tilting her "until she was almost off balance" (Faulkner, 1962, p. 129). To protect herself, Miss Corrie positions Priest between herself and Butch, gripping his arm "trembling a little" (Faulkner, 1962, p. 130). Seeking safety, she urges Priest, "Come on, Lucius. Show us the way" (Faulkner, 1962, p. 130). As a vulnerable prostitute, Corrie becomes a victim of sexual harassment in front of many, illustrating the novel's portrayal of how victims suffer amid the silence and protection culture described by Kimmel.

The young protagonist, Priest, observes Butch, a figure of authority, harassing Everbe and feels a mix of fear and shame. According to him, in that situation, he was "not afraid, that wasn't the word; not afraid, because we—Boon alone—would have taken the pistol away from him and then whipped him" (Faulkner, 1962, p. 130). Instead of protecting Miss Corrie, he starts hating himself and feels like he is a part of the misbehavior himself as he states, "I was … hating all of us for being the poor frail victims of being alive, having to be alive—hating Everbe for being the vulnerable, helpless lodestar victim; and Boon for being the vulnerable and helpless victimized" (Faulkner, 1962, p. 130). He says that he hates Everbe for being a vulnerable victim of sexual exploitation, as he says:

> I had hated Otis for telling me about Everbe in Arkansas and hated Everbe for being that helpless lodestar for human debasement which he had told me about and hated myself for listening, having to hear about it, learn about it, know about it; hating that such not only

> was, but must be, had to be if living was to continue and mankind be a part of it. (Faulkner, 1962, p. 130)

It shows Lucius's reflections on his growing understanding of the adult world's moral ambiguities and his internal struggle with these newfound realizations. He understands that being a man means pretending that nothing wrong has happened and that we have seen nothing.

As the journey progresses, Lucius becomes increasingly aware of the harsh realities of life, especially the racial and social dynamics at play. He feels a deep sense of homesickness and a longing to undo the events that have transpired. This longing symbolizes his desire to return to a state of innocence and ignorance, to a time before he was exposed to the injustices and complexities of the adult world. Lucius's reflections reveal his growing understanding of the adult world's moral ambiguities and his internal struggle with these newfound realizations.

Finally, Lucius realizes that he cannot simply turn back time or undo what has happened. He acknowledges that his innocence is lost and that he must confront the realities before him. This moment marks a significant turning point in his journey towards manhood. Therefore, the novel highlights Lucius's transition from childhood to a more mature, albeit painful, awareness of the world around him, embodying the themes of loss of innocence and the burdens of growing up.

Conclusion

Faulkner's *The Reivers* intricately examines the journey of Lucius Priest as he navigates the complex transition from adolescence to adulthood. Faulkner's narrative clearly depicts the societal pressures young men face to conform to traditional notions of masculinity, as portrayed in Michael Kimmel's concept of 'Guyland.' Lucius's experiences, marked by external challenges and internal conflicts, illustrate the pervasive influence of 'The Guy Code,' which prescribes certain codes of behaviors, appearances, and actions in alignment with societal expectations of manhood. Other male characters like Boon and Ned function as 'gender police,' reinforcing these norms and enforcing Lucius to adhere to established masculine standards. This dynamic reflects idea of 'situational maturity,' wherein boys oscillate between the desire for independence in adulthood and the protection of childhood.

Furthermore, Faulkner's novel highlights the negative aspects of 'Guyland' culture, such as the 'culture of entitlement,' 'culture of silence,' and 'culture of protection.' These practices encourage harmful behaviors and silence in the face of wrongdoing, challenging Lucius's moral compass and his understanding of masculinity. As Lucius journeys with the loss of innocence and the complexities of growing up, his changing attitudes and perspectives show the profound impact of societal expectations on young men. Apart from presenting the personal struggles of its protagonist, the novel also criticizes the broader societal norms that define manhood and masculinity. Finally, the novel suggests that we need a clearer understanding of manhood that includes vulnerability, empathy, and personal growth, thereby offering a deep exploration of the boyhood-to-manhood journey in the context of 'The Guy Code.'

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