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William Faulkner's "Lizards in Jamshyd's Courtyard": a critical and textual study

Seth William Dawson

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WILLIAM FAULKNER'S "LIZARDS IN JAMSHYD'S COURTYARD":

A CRITICAL AND TEXTUAL STUDY

By

Seth William Dawson

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of
Mississippi State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts
in English
in the Department of English

Mississippi State, Mississippi

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WILLIAM FAULKNER'S "LIZARDS IN JAMSHYD'S COURTYARD":
A CRITICAL AND TEXTUAL STUDY

By

Seth William Dawson

Approved:

Noel Polk
Professor Emeritus of English
(Director of Thesis)

Donald Shaffer
Assistant Professor of English and
African American Studies
(Committee Member)

Ted Atkinson
Assistant Professor of English
(Committee Member)

Richard Patteson
Professor of English
Director of Graduate Studies in the
Department of English

Gary Myers
Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences

Name: Seth William Dawson

Date of Degree: May 1, 2010

Institution: Mississippi State University

Major Field: English

Major Professor: Dr. Noel Polk

Title of Study: WILLIAM FAULKNER'S "LIZARDS IN JAMSHYD'S
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Candidate for Degree of Master of Arts

This research represents the first complete attempt to deal solely with "Lizards in Jamshyd's Courtyard" as an autonomous text. The format is based on the chapters of Hans Skei's *Reading Faulkner's Best Short Stories*. The first part presents a detailed description of the most complete manuscript and typescript versions of "Lizards," most of which are held in the University of Mississippi's Rowan Oak Papers collection. The second part presents a critical reading of "Lizards in Jamshyd's Courtyard," based on the published version of the story, using the textual study for support. I draw on Walter Benjamin's essay "The Storyteller" to provide perspective on the function of storytelling in the modern world and Faulkner's use of storytelling as something more than a simple integration of Southwestern humor motifs, illuminating how Flem corrupts/disrupts the community's oral traditions to achieve his goals.

Key words: "Lizards in Jamshyd's Courtyard," Walter Benjamin, textual

DEDICATION

To Keri, who puts up with me “not for the virtues, but despite the faults”
(Faulkner, “Mississippi” 43).

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Special thanks also go to my undergraduate mentor in Faulkner (and Film) studies, Dr. D. Matthew Ramsey, who encouraged me to continue work in this area early on.

Jennifer Ford, head of Archives and Special Collections at the University of Mississippi, deserves appreciation for granting my request to examine the material held in the Rowan Oak Papers. Professor Ford and her staff (who I would thank by name if I had each one) made all materials readily available and created an environment conducive to scholarly research.

Permission to quote from the unpublished manuscripts and typescripts in the Rowan Oak Papers has been generously granted by Lee Caplin, Exclusive Representative of the literary estate of William Faulkner.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Faulkner's short fiction is still the most neglected area in Faulkner studies, although important basic work has been done.

– Hans H. Skei *William Faulkner: The Novelist as Short Story Writer* (9)

Hans Skei made this statement over twenty years ago and, though Faulkner's short stories have garnered a decent amount of critical attention in that time, he stood by the statement in 1999 in the preface to *Reading Faulkner's Best Short Stories*, explaining, "it was true at the time, and although much has been written on the stories since then, there is still a lot to be done" (28). In fact, Skei's works stand with only a handful by others as the most important work that addresses Faulkner's short stories. James B. Carothers's *William Faulkner's Short Stories* is one of the earliest works that attempts to address, in a comprehensive fashion, Faulkner's short fiction. Carothers, along with Theresa Towner, later produced a second, equally important volume, *Reading Faulkner: Collected Stories*. James B. Meriwether's studies, *The Literary Career of William Faulkner* and "The Short Fiction of William Faulkner: A Bibliography," are also invaluable to the study of Faulkner's short fiction.

While their scholarship laid the groundwork for further studies of Faulkner's short stories, most of their work has dealt only with now canonical, frequently read stories (with a few exceptions; Skei, for example, includes "Red Leaves" and "A Mountain

Victory” alongside perennial favorites “A Rose for Emily” and “Barn Burning” in *Reading Faulkner’s Best Short Stories*). While the reciprocity between Faulkner’s long and short fiction is worth extended examination on its own, the relationship is often a stumbling block for critics who discuss the short fiction mostly by comparing a story with its revisions into a novel and moving no further. More surprising than the fact that scholars have paid attention, mainly, to stories which Faulkner revised to become parts of novels is the fact that they have overlooked other stories from this same group.

Almost all of Faulkner’s Snopes stories (and some stories which did not, initially, involve any Snopeses, but were later included in one of the Snopes novels) receive frequent attention from scholars both in the classroom and in their writing; “Barn Burning” and “Spotted Horses” appear in many anthologies. Thus it seems very unusual that “Lizards in Jamshyd’s Courtyard” receives such scant attention. While it is easy to attribute the lack of textual study to the complexities of the extant material, the reasons for the lack of critical attention are less clear. One would think that its appearance in the *Saturday Evening Post* during the early years of Faulkner’s major period (roughly, 1929-1942)—one of only five stories accepted by the *Post*, out of thirty-two which Faulkner submitted, from 1930-1932 (Meriwether, *Literary Career* 178-79), and the fact that Faulkner later revised it to make it the concluding episode of *The Hamlet*—would make “Lizards” a prime candidate for critical attention. Yet, while many sources mention “Lizards” in passing, only three journal articles and one essay attempt to address the story itself.

Robinson Blann’s, “The Goats That Got Away: A Look at Faulkner’s Goat

Trading Episode in *The Hamlet* and Some Problems With It,” as the title suggests, mainly looks at the revised episode on the novel. Though he uses “Lizards” mostly for comparison, Blann does point out the “paired opposition” that Faulkner creates between Suratt and Flem (40). Mary Flowers Braswell’s “‘Pardners Alike’: William Faulkner’s Use of ‘The Pardoner’s Tale’” focuses on possible allusions to Chaucer’s “The Pardoner’s Tale” which Faulkner uses in “Lizards.” Her evidence is less than convincing and she too ends up comparing the story and the closing episode of the novel. John T. Matthews’s “Shortened Stories: Faulkner and the Market” devotes about two pages to “Lizards,” discussing the story as a commentary on works of art in an age of commodification. In his reading, the spectacle of Armstid’s digging is a metaphor for the spectacle of the story’s appearance in the *Saturday Evening Post*.¹ Finally, Jacques Pothier connects Faulkner’s works to the gothic tradition in “The Fall of the House of Jamshyd, or *The Hamlet* As a Gothic Novel,” using “Lizards” as one example of the gothic influence on Faulkner. Of the four, Pothier’s article is the only one that discusses any of the manuscripts related to “Lizards” and, though he too connects the story with the novel, recognizes that “Lizards” plays an important role in Faulkner’s development of the Snopes material.

The fact that such a small amount of attention has been given to the story makes the job of providing a reading of it at once easier and more difficult. In the case of “Lizards,” neither a detailed examination of the textual material relating to the story’s

1

Thanks to Ted Atkinson for pointing me towards Matthews’s essay.

production nor a critical reading of the published story appears to have been completed. Joseph Blotner provides cursory notes on the textual material in his note on the story at the end of *Uncollected Stories*, but this note is confusing and it is often hard to tell what material he is discussing or where it is located. This lack of basic work provides a unique opportunity to present new research on one of Faulkner's short stories.

This research represents the first complete attempt to deal solely with "Lizards in Jamshyd's Courtyard" as an autonomous text. The format for this project is based on the chapters of Hans Skei's *Reading Faulkner's Best Short Stories*. Chapter two presents a detailed description of the most complete manuscript and typescript versions of "Lizards," most of which are held in the University of Mississippi's Rowan Oak Papers collection. This collection houses, among many other items, eighteen folders which contain material relating to the production of "Lizards." Due to time constraints and usage restrictions, my examination covers only six of the folders, which constitute a total of four distinct versions of the story.² While several of these versions are not complete, lacking an ending, they provide the most complete available view of Faulkner's early composition of the story. The second part of this project, chapter three, presents a critical reading of "Lizards in Jamshyd's Courtyard," based on the published version of the story, using the textual study for support. To aid in my critical discussion, I draw on Walter Benjamin's essay "The Storyteller" to provide perspective on the function of storytelling in the modern world and Faulkner's use of storytelling as something more than a simple

2

Table 1 provides an overview of the materials used for the textual study and further information about the Rowan Oak Papers.

integration of Southwestern humor motifs. In “Lizards,” Faulkner presents Frenchman’s Bend as a society constructed around oral traditions, and my reading illuminates how Flem actually disrupts the oral traditions to achieve his goals in the story.

CHAPTER II

TEXTUAL INFORMATION AND PUBLICATION HISTORY

Section 1: Textual Information

Until the discovery of the Rowan Oak Papers in 1971, the only known materials related to “Lizards in Jamshyd’s Courtyard” were eleven pages of holograph manuscript held in the University of Virginia’s Faulkner Manuscript Collection (Kinney and Fowler 327). Discovered in a closet at Faulkner’s home by employees preparing for termite extermination, the Rowan Oak Papers comprise four boxes and number close to two thousand leaves. Of the seventy-five folders, which the university divided the papers into based on their content, eighteen contain one hundred seventy leaves of either manuscript or typescript related to “Lizards.” The research which follows suggests a chronological ordering of six folders, along side the eleven pages of holograph manuscript from the University of Virginia’s collection, which present the most complete early versions of “Lizards.” The version of “Lizards” published in *Uncollected Stories of William Faulkner*, is seventeen pages in length, equal to ten percent of the existing material. This percentage is likely even smaller in comparison to the amount of work that Faulkner put into the story, as research seems to show that much material is now missing or non-existent. This study reveals both the complexities of Faulkner’s composition process and the amount of work he put in on even his short fiction.

Manuscript A stands as the earliest extant material relating to the development of “Lizards.” Titled “Omar’s Eighteenth Quatrain,” it consists of eleven holograph leaves. The narrative shows Suratt, the sewing machine agent, picking up Henry Armstid and Vernon Tull on the way to the Old Frenchman place to observe a silhouette digging for treasure in the garden of the old house. They discover that the silhouette belongs to Flem Snopes, purchase the property from him, attempt to locate the treasure, and find that Flem has tricked them by burying a few small coin sacks. Numbers in the top left corner of most of the leaves could indicate that other, now non-existent, manuscript pages preceded these. The first four leaves are numbered 1-4. The fifth leaf is numbered 3, the sixth leaf is numbered 5, the seventh leaf was originally numbered 6, then re-numbered 4. Leaves eight through ten are numbered 9-11. Faulkner left the eleventh leaf unnumbered.¹ The numbering and ordering of the leaves indicate that Faulkner reordered the material. While there seems to be no relationship between leaves seven and four, both numbered 4, or between leaf three, numbered 3, and leaf seven, there do appear to be connections between several other leaves with duplicate numbering or numbering that indicates the page numbering of an earlier arrangement. Leaf five, numbered 3, contains a continuation of the conversation from leaf two. A comparison of leaf five with leaf three makes clear that though both present the same information, leaf five jumps directly to Suratt, Henry, and Vernon’s arrival at the Old Frenchman place, whereas leaf three

1

For clarification of the leaf/page numbers in this manuscript, refer to Table 3.

presents more of their conversation during their trip. It also appears that leaf six, numbered 5, originally followed leaf four, numbered 4.

Manuscript A opens with a description of Suratt as he exits Mrs. Littlejohn's and follows as he hitches his team and drives past Varner's store towards Henry Armstid's house. Manuscript A may be connected to Faulkner's earlier "Father Abraham" material, as it starts where the earlier work breaks off (Pothier 58). The last line of *Father Abraham*, "Suratt's buckboard stood at the hitching rail" (78), seems to directly precede Suratt's exiting the boarding house and finding the team waiting. If Faulkner either wrote Manuscript A at the same time as *Father Abraham*, Manuscript A existed as early as 1926 or 1927 (Meriwether, intro.); if not, it still seems likely that when he returned to the material later, he used *Father Abraham* as a starting point.

When Suratt reaches Armstid's, a group of "alarmed, thunder[ing]" hounds greet him. As Armstid leaves his house, Suratt gets a glimpse of the three young Armstid children, "their round heads like 3 steps of a stair . . . and behind them a woman came against the lamplight. Motionless, looking sad" (1, Faulkner, *Manuscripts 15* 124).² Suratt and Henry leave Mrs. Armstid and the children behind, and Henry wonders where Vernon is, then indicates his and Suratt's plans for the evening: "Reckon we'll git there in plenty of time to see anything they find on that place." Henry and Suratt's conversation introduces Flem Snopes into the story through cryptic references to his involvement in

2

Discussion of Manuscript A uses the facsimile version of "Omar's Eighteenth Quatrain," reproduced in the *William Faulkner Manuscripts 15, Volume 1 (The Hamlet: Miscellaneous Typescripts and Manuscripts)*. For clarity, the first number in the citation provides the leaf number and the second refers to the page number from the facsimile volume.

digging for a yet unnamed something. Vernon meets the men and climbs into the wagon. Faulkner then describes Suratt's buckboard: "to the rear of the seat was attached a sheet iron box the size and shape of a large dog kennel; the three men sat together on a single seat." The conversation between Henry, Vernon, and Suratt here also provides a description of what they hope to dig up, something "that old fellow . . . had . . . worth hidin from the Yankees . . . 50 years" ago (2, 125).

They continue to discuss the rumors of hidden treasure. Most of this section provides an extended description of Suratt and the purpose of the "sheet iron box":

Suratt [was] plausible, affably voluable, the sewing machine in its sheet iron doghouse falling a little behind them. The box was painted to resemble a house. In the four painted windows on either side of it a painted housewife simpered across a painted sewing machine, and the buckboard, the mismatched team and the agent were a familiar sight throughout 3 counties. You were liable to meet on two successive days with half the county ~~apart~~ between, finding his — shrewd, pleasant face ~~in any gallery anywhere—affable and unhurried and timeless~~, he sold sewing machines ~~about the countryside~~ in the group before any country store or at any dinner or supper table. Affable and unhurried and timeless, he sold his sewing machines about the countryside, leaving behind him the solidifying conviction that the machines were merely a sideline to what he was really doing. He knew every adult and dog within a 30 mile radius and children liked him. (3, 126)

This section also describes the men's destination, which lay

before them in the valley . . . the original owner of it may have been a Frenchman anything, but his neighbors, the poor white squatters who had gradually encroached onto his broad domain, and called him a Frenchman, after the rural southern fashion of dubbing anyone ~~who~~ a frenchman who speaks his language with a foreign flavor. Thus the settlement got its name—Frenchman's Bend. (3, 126)

This passage continues, giving the condition of the Old Frenchman place and specifically defining what the men hope to dig for: “the quiet ruin of his house and the stubborn legend of the gold he buried” (3, 126).

Halting the wagon, the men then venture into the dark overgrowth of a ditch, listen to the “hushed murmur of the shovel” and quietly watch the house as the silhouette of a man digs in the garden. Much of the dialogue shows Vernon's skeptical nature and Henry's developing obsession with finding the gold. Henry gets so worked up that he rushes out to meet Flem in the road as he leaves the Old Frenchman place. As a result, Flem sees all three men—Suratt and Henry standing in the road, Vernon sitting by the roadside.

Leaf five contains Faulkner's brief re-working of this scene; Vernon questions Suratt whether the silhouette truly belongs to Flem and Henry wants to run the silhouette off. But instead of meeting Flem in the road, Suratt drops Vernon off at the road to his house. Suratt and Henry then squat against a barn wall “talking” (5, 128), presumably formulating a plan. The next day, Suratt returns to Henry's with a “lean shriveled little

old man with a long tobacco-stained white beard,” Uncle Dick (5, 128). Henry invites Suratt and Uncle Dick into his home, where Mrs. Armstid—her “desolate, empty eyes like those of a dog”— provides the men with food, the three Armstid children silently looking on (5, 128).

Leaf six returns to the men’s encounter with Flem in the road from leaf four and includes some of the events presented on leaf five. Describing the aftermath of the encounter, Suratt berates Henry for allowing Flem to see them. After dropping Vernon off, Suratt and Henry, again, return to the Armstid place and squat against the barn wall. Suratt returns with Uncle Dick the next morning, and both men eat as the three children, along with Mrs. Armstid—her eyes still “dog’s eyes”³—watch(6, 129). The narrative then continues chronologically from this second recounting of events, with two exceptions.

Henry, Suratt, and Uncle Dick reach the road and find Vernon waiting. Henry, again showing his violent greed, tells the men that since Vernon indicated no desire to participate after their previous visit, he gets no share of the treasure. After Henry’s extensive argument, Suratt eases tensions by telling Henry that if they do not find enough treasure to suit him, Vernon will split his, Suratt’s, share. At the end of leaf seven, the narrative jumps from their arrival at the Old Frenchman place with Uncle Dick on a

3

This description of Mrs. Armstid comes from the same source as the title of Faulkner’s novel *As I Lay Dying* (1930) and reflects Faulkner’s preoccupation with Homer’s *Odyssey*. The image comes from a line in Book IX which Faulkner often recited: “As I lay dying, the woman with the dog’s eyes would not close my eyes as I descended into Hades” (*Biography*, 249).

subsequent night when the men, returning to dig, observe Elmer Vance in the house.

Faulkner provides no explanation of Uncle Dick's role in the scheme in this manuscript.

Seeing Elmer Vance, Suratt decides that the men must purchase the property from Flem. The next day, Suratt joins "the group on the porch of Varner's store" (8,131). Later, giving Flem a ride in the buckboard, Suratt attempts to negotiate the sale in his casual, countrified style. Finally, Flem proposes a sale price, three thousand dollars. Each man provides his one thousand dollar share, Vernon "good for his," Henry's taking a "second mortgage on his farm and a chattel mortgage on his stock and goods," and Suratt's taking out a "lien on a restaurant which he owned in company with his brother-in-law in Jefferson" (9, 132). The men evict Vance and commence digging for the next three nights. By the morning of the fourth day, the garden completely turned over, Suratt and Vernon stop digging and examine the few coins they have already found. Vernon's earliest coin is dated 1901, Suratt's 1894. Realizing their foolishness, and Flem's victory, they inform Henry, who responds "Git outten my hole" (9, 132).

The tenth leaf, containing only eight lines, explains the aftermath of Henry's refusal to stop digging. Suratt and Vernon bring Mrs. Armstid to talk some sense into Henry; various townspeople keep Henry company as he continues his fruitless search. Faulkner closes the story with one last image of Henry digging, comparing him to "a mechanical toy . . . too tightly wound" (10, 133).

Though the story is brought to a close on leaf ten, leaf eleven contains another scene in which Suratt, Henry, and Vernon crouch in the weeds observing Flem. It provides descriptions of both Henry and Vernon that appear in later versions, as well as

their debate whether Flem is the person they see digging and whether the buried treasure exists. Since leaf eleven is unnumbered, it provides no clue to its place in relationship with the other leaves and could be a fragment from another version.

While the discrepancies in the pagination of this manuscript and the examples of editing/re-writing indicate now lost additional material relating to this story's inception, the manuscript stands as the earliest version of "Lizards in Jamshyd's Courtyard." All of the basic features of the finished story, except the goat-trading between Suratt and Flem, appear here. These core elements continue to appear in subsequent versions, but each illuminates Faulkner's struggle to get the story right through multiple restructures.

Typescript B, twenty-one pages, is next in the evolution of "Lizards." On the first page, Faulkner marked through the story's original title, "Omar's Eighteenth Quatrain," and interlined "Lizards in Jamshyd's Court" above it in ink. This typescript refines the version of the material presented in manuscript A, though a good portion of it reproduces manuscript A very closely: the first sixteen pages match up almost exactly with manuscript A. For instance, Faulkner opens both versions in the same way: Suratt emerges from Mrs. Littlejohn's while sucking a toothpick and then the narrator gives a brief description of Frenchman's Bend during twilight. The only differences are some clarifying details, re-written dialogue, and the absence of the marked out material deleted in manuscript A, indicating it followed A. Instead of constantly calling Suratt by his surname, here Vernon refers to him as "V.K.," Flem's horse, unnamed during the confrontation in the road in manuscript A, is named "Bob" here, and, when Suratt and Uncle Dick return to the Armstid place, the description of Mrs. Armstid's "dog's eyes"

are no longer the focal point of the scene, but rather the children's "round, sober eyes" (16).

Faulkner also chose to render the conversations during the wagon rides between the Armstid place and the Old Frenchman place in this typescript through a much more stylized representation of regional dialect. The clearest example of this comes each time Suratt refers to Henry. As Suratt yells at Henry to leave the road way, in order to avoid Flem, Faulkner adds an extra syllable to Henry's name, rendering it as Suratt would pronounce it, "Henery!" (12).

Finally, typescript B provides a somewhat more complete explanation of Uncle Dick's function in the narrative. When the men reach the Frenchman place with Dick, they rush through the sand and brambles of a ditch, dragging the frail Uncle Dick along. Henry rushes off on his own, absorbed by greed, ignoring the pleas of Suratt and Vernon. Suratt, affected by Henry's contagious greed, pushes Uncle Dick to move even faster. Vernon interjects that Uncle Dick will "be so out of wind he caint do nothin when we git ther" (19). Just after this, in a long, marked-out section, Vernon states Dick's purpose, asking him to "show us what hit's at" (20). Faulkner also interjects a parenthetical note, "(Describe dick an old man etc.)," to remind himself to provide information about Uncle Dick with further characterization (21).

Though this description provides more depth than the version cut short (possibly by missing material) in manuscript A, typescript B stands as incomplete. Manuscript A's end, when Suratt and Vernon examine their coins and realize that Flem has made fools of them, does not appear in typescript B. Instead, the narrative stops just after Surrat leaves

Vernon and Uncle Dick to look for Henry. Henry swings a shovel at Suratt, telling him “Git away . . . Git outen my hole.” Suratt and Vernon then start to struggle over a pick, hoping to join Henry’s fervent digging. Uncle Dick then informs the men that “Ther air anger in the air and in the yearth . . . Whar anger air, the voice of the Lord air silenced . . . Ye must make that ere an quit a brusin hit, so the Lord kin tell whar hit’s at” (21).

Listening to Dick’s warning, Suratt drops the shovel and the narrative stops as well.

Since the earlier manuscript contained one version of the story’s conclusion, the lack of an ending here may also indicate more missing material. Parts of the conclusion may also exist in the various fragments held in the Rowan Oak Papers, since twelve other folders held there contain autograph manuscript or typescript of varying length. Some of these fragments prove more challenging to collate than others. Some belong to the more complete typescripts, clearly identifiable as re-typings (either showing minor changes and, possibly, shedding light on the intricacies of Faulkner’s composition process; pages re-typed with little or no difference in content and no editorial marks, perhaps the product of a mechanical writing exercise which Faulkner used to re-immense himself into the text)⁴. Other fragments simply do not fit neatly with the other existing manuscripts. For example, folder 3-34 contains ten numbered typed leaves, the first five numbered 7-11, the second five numbered 3-7. However, the two leaves numbered 7 vary. Due to the organization of these folders (scattered throughout the four boxes in the collection, retaining the organization of the papers as they were found at Rowan Oak) and limited by

4

Thanks to Noel Polk for this suggestion, which he provided during a discussion of these pages.

the usage regulations of the archives (the library permits no photocopying of the collection or rearrangement of the contents, which would allow for a side by side comparison of each page), I cannot definitively place these two sets of pages (nor the contents of several other folders) into the larger composition of the story.

The next version, C, is a completely different version of the “Lizards” narrative; it contains the core events and introduces the goat-trading incident, numerous descriptive and editorial changes, as well as a brand-new structure. Typescript C—the most interesting version of “Lizards” available because of its expansions of the narrative—is contained in two folders in the Rowan Oak Papers. The first folder, 2-7, contains two typed pages, 1-2. The second folder, 2-9, contains twenty-three typed pages, numbered 2-A through 24. Since the collection retains the order in which the papers were found, the contents of folder 2-8 (material relating to *Absalom, Absalom!*) became lodged between the “Lizards” material at some point.⁵ Despite the interruption caused by folder 2-8, the material in folder 2-7 clearly forms the opening pages of the material in folder 2-9; the last sentence of page 2 in folder 2-7 breaks off mid-sentence and continues directly on page 2-A of folder 2-9. The page designation “2-A” also deserves brief attention as further evidence of Faulkner’s alteration of the story. It again raises the possibility of further missing manuscript—especially since, though the sentence from page 2 continues on page 2-A, the designation indicates that Faulkner inserted this page, possibly substituting it, and the rest of the contiguous pages, for now-missing material.

5

For clarification of the organization of this typescript, refer to Table 4.

Typescript C opens with a description of the Old Frenchman place, and presents the house in terms not previously used:

It - - - the house, the gaunt skeleton from whose high and weathered flanks the neighbors, that illiterate race which has inherited the dead builder's legend and the gutted shell of his splendor, have been pulling down for firewood for sixty years - - - stands upon a shaggy knoll among the ruined formal gardens and grounds, the board acres. (1)

The bleak image of the house's condition and history continues almost to the bottom of the second page, where Faulkner then introduces the townsfolk who

for almost a week, driving in or riding four and five miles upon or behind horses and mules galled with plow traces . . . gather along the fence with the decorum of a formal reception, with the rapt interest of a crowd watching a sleight-of-hand performer at a fair. (2-2-A)

watch Henry (thus far un-named). This version then launches into extended descriptions of Suratt, Varner's store, Varner, and Flem.

The description of Suratt appears largely the same as in the earlier versions, though rather than having "an affable and impenetrable volubility, a gift for anecdote and gossip"—the description that appears in the published text (and most of the other versions)—here Suratt possess an "unflagging patience and inexhaustible gift for listening and inquiry" (3). Faulkner also further develops the descriptions of Varner, Varner's store, and Flem, with details which first appear here. Uncle Billy Varner is "the only man of consequence . . . [a] farmer, veterinary, polititian [sic], also a Methodist lay-

preacher . . . [who] owned most of the adjacent farm land, including the site of the Old Frenchman's home, and he owned the store" (4).

This narrative also places Flem in direct contrast to Suratt: "he was a man with a gift for keeping his own counsel equalled only by Suratt's for conversation" (4). The narration intersperses description of Flem's silence with his physical description. Flem sat "all day long in the tilted official chair in the broad doorway . . . rising to serve the infrequent customers, sitting again among the talk but not of it, saying no word, and who had thereby acquired a reputation for smartness . . . equal to Suratt's" (4).

In explanation of the man's history of "smartness," the narration then turns to a period two years earlier and launches into the earliest appearance of the goat-trading incident. Here, Suratt acquires the goat contract from an easterner, rather than from a northerner. Curiously, Suratt already knows where to find the goats; he knows them "to be owned by three farmers in the Bend country," but still makes "his guarded inquiries" while Flem "sat in the official chair . . . saying no word and apparently not listening" (5). The next day, Suratt travels to visit each goat-owner "on his mental list," but finds that Flem has beat him to the purchase. Three days later, Suratt returns to Varner's store where Flem buys the contract for twenty-one dollars. Faulkner originally typed that Flem purchased the contract for "eight dollars," but marked through this and replaced it with the larger amount. The last major change to the goat-trading incident appears when Suratt finds out that Flem owns the Old Frenchman place. This version of events does not indicate where Suratt learns of Flem's ownership. Rather, it focuses on Suratt's comments to the group of men on the porch of the store, pointedly explaining that Suratt,

said “. . . in public, on the porch of the store, getting his sober and appreciative laugh): Well, if Flem knowed some way to make anything offen that place, he’d be too close-mouthed to tell himself about it” (6).

The scene then shifts to the three men, unnamed and identified only by the labels “second man” and “third man,” except for Suratt, as they crouch in the weeds, watching the garden of the Old Frenchman place and listening to the sound of digging. Since Faulkner left the men unnamed in the beginning, he provides extended introductory description of Henry and Mrs. Armstid. Faulkner takes the better part of a page to lay out Henry’s background, explaining that

He lived on a small, mortgaged farm which he and his wife worked like two men. During one season after he had lost one of his mules, he and the woman did the plowing, working in turn in the second trace beside the remaining mule. The land was either poor land, or they were poor managers, because it made for them less than a bare living, which the wife, a gaunt woman in a faded gingham wrapper and sunbonnet, with sparse hair drawn back from a bony skull in which the eyes were desolate and empty as those of a hound, eked out by weaving[.] . . . They had four children . . . all under six years of age. (8)

The narrative then briefly introduces the “second man,” Vernon, as “a well-to-do farmer, a bachelor,” and presents the men’s debate about the merit of digging for the gold, their chances of success, and how they should go about locating the treasure. Much of this discussion comes directly from the passages in the previous manuscripts. Suratt and

Henry appear committed to their belief in the buried gold, while Vernon doubts its existence.

This discussion then immediately jumps an unspecified amount of time to the men's return to the Old Frenchman place. Suratt and Vernon carry Uncle Dick between them, while Henry rushes off to begin digging. Just as with the men's discussion of whether or not the gold exists, much of this material comes from the previous version. The most notable difference comes when Faulkner presents a complete description of Uncle Dick and specifics about his role in the mens' scheme: he

got stiffly to his feet, a shriveled little old man with a long shapeless frock coat and a long white beard. Between sunup and sundown Suratt had driven thirty miles to fetch him from where he lived along in the mud-daubed hut in a cane swamp. He had no other name that men knew, and he antedated the memory of all that knew him. He made and sold various nostrums and charms, and they told of him and that he ate not only frogs and snakes, but bugs as well- -anything he could catch. (13)

Returning to the present, Uncle Dick requests Suratt to stop Henry's digging, since the ground must remain still for his talent to work. The narrative then launches into the explanation of Uncle Dick's role:

Uncle Dick drove them back to the ditch. From his coat he produced a forked peach branch, from the end of which, dangling on a bit of string, swung an empty brass cartridge case containing a gold-filled human tooth. He held them there for five minutes, stooping from time to time to lay his

hands flat on the ground, then with the three of them at his back he went to the corner of the garden and grasped the two prongs of the branch in his hands, the shell hanging before him, and stood for a moment, muttering to himself. . . .Eight times they traversed the garden, working slowly up . . . toward the house. (14)

Uncle Dick then requests that the men “tech [his] elbers.” The men feel “his thin arms, arms frail and dead as rotten twigs . . . jerking a little” (14). Digging where Uncle Dick indicates, the men find a buried object, presumably a sack of coins, which Henry insists on keeping. Continuing to dig, and finding two additional “small bulging canvas sacks,” the men decide that they must purchase the property from Flem.

Just after this discussion, the narrative briefly breaks off. The bottom of page 17 contains one line, “At ten oclock Suratt drove up to the store an,” apparently the start of a new paragraph. Page 18 begins with a horizontal line of typed dashes across the top of the page. The narrative then restates the sentence from the bottom of page 17 and resumes with the mens’ purchase of the Old Frenchman place.

Most of the details of the purchase come from manuscript A. Suratt travels to Varner’s store and finds Eustace Grimm on the porch talking to Flem (rather than discovering Elmer Vance living in the house). When Suratt discovers that Eustace may purchase the land from Flem, he quickly offers Flem a ride to Mrs. Littlejohn’s. Dickering for a price, Suratt pushes Flem until he offers the price of three thousand dollars. The next morning the three men pay Flem with three notes—Suratt pays his portion with a lien on “his half of a restaurant which he and his brother-in-law owned in

Jefferson,” Henry with “a second mortgage on his farm and a chattel mortgage on his stock and fixtures, including a new washing-pot and scrubbing-board which his wife had bought with the weaving money, and a mile of barbed wire fence,” and the text succinctly states, Vernon “was good for his” (21-22).

Returning to their newly acquired property, the men again dig. Finding no more sacks, Suratt prompts Vernon to examine his previously found money. Opening their sacks by lantern light, Vernon finds his coins stamped 1901 and Suratt’s 1896. Realizing their foolishness, they attempt to tell Henry. This version ends with Henry’s now familiar cry, “Git outen my hole,” as Vernon and Suratt leave him at sunup.

Typescripts C and D provide very few clues to aid in their ordering. The decision to order folder 2-7/2-9 (Typescript C) prior to folder 4-2 (Typescript D) comes from one specific feature contained in 2-7/2-9. During an extended description of Suratt and his place in Frenchman’s Bend, the narrative states, “Everyone knew him, and in the Frenchman’s Bend neighborhood in particular he knew every man, mules, and hound - - - Starnes, Varner, Snopes, Littlejohn, and Armstid” (4). Out of this list of surnames, “Starnes” stands out because it appears only this one time in any of the manuscripts. Faulkner also used this name in his short story “Hair,” the only other place which it appears.⁶

6

According to Hans Skei, the earliest known date of existence for “Hair” comes just months before that of “Lizards.” Faulkner wrote “Hair” sometime before 20 March 1930, only two months, seven days before “Lizards” (Skei, *The Short Story Career* 37). It seems quite likely, then, that Faulkner still had that name in mind while working on “Lizards,” and, since the name only appears in this one manuscript, he removed it from future versions.

D is a thirty page typescript. The pages contain consecutive numbers for pages 1-13, the blank lower two-thirds of page thirteen marked in ink with a vertical line. Pages 14-19 contain two sets of numbers, one which indicates their current numbering and one marked out (consistently, two numbers less than the number indicating the current position), and replaced, by hand. Pages 20-22 return to typed pagination, most of page twenty-two is blank and marked out with a vertical line, like page thirteen. Pages 23-27 resume the marked-out re-numbering, though this time the original typed number is three less than the current position. Finally, pages 28-30 indicate further changes—pages 28 and 30 contain only typed page numbers, yet the numbering of page 29 indicates that it originally appeared as page 24 (marked-out and replaced in the same fashion as previous pages).⁷ The gaps present in these page re-numberings either reflect now-lost material or material possibly found in the fragments scattered throughout other folders.

It opens as Suratt travels “through the myriad summer silence of the late afternoon . . . among the low jungle growth” which surrounds the Old Frenchman place (1). Tying his team, he travels on foot to a hill top where he squats, “watching the house and road” (2). The narrative goes on to explain that

Perhaps once a year he [Suratt] would turn into the faint and fading scar of the road and drive up to the ruined house and stop here, without dismounting from the buckboard. He would sit there . . . looking at the gutted skeleton of the house somnolent in the sunlight, a little sinister. (2)

7

For clarification of the leaf/page numbering of this typescript, refer to Table 5.

This passage leads to a detailed description of the house and its builder, which, in turn, leads to an explanation of Suratt's visits. During his yearly trip, Suratt sits

contemplating the inscrutable ruin and the shaggy grounds overgrown with the cedar thickets and brier, feeling even in his shrewd and practical soul the old hopeful lust, the optimism, the effluvium of the greed and despair and secret nocturnal sweat. "It's bound to be there somewhere[.] . . .It's bound to. Folks wouldn't a kept digging for it, if it wasn't. It wouldn't be right to keep on letting them. No, sir." (3)

As in typescript C, the narrative contrasts Flem and Suratt: "the clerk~~---his name was Snopes---~~ had a gift for keeping his own counsel equal to that of Suratt for loquacity" (4). An explanation of Flem's silence continues, interspersed with a physical description. Flem sat "talking not at all . . . all day in the single chair tilted in the broad door . . . rising now and then to serve the infrequent customers, sitting again among the talk but not of it. So among the overalled men who squatted all day long against the shady wall he had a reputation for shrewdness equal to Suratt's" (4). The obvious change here comes in the term used to describe both men—earlier, in typescript C, Faulkner compared the men's "smartness," and here changes this to "shrewdness."

To explain the men's history of shrewdness, Faulkner turns to a time three years earlier and launches into the goat-trading incident. This version of the incident contains all the elements from the earlier manuscript and appears virtually the same as the incident in later manuscript and the published story, with the exception of some descriptive detail. This version presents Suratt's joking with the second owner—when asked why he wanted

the goats, Suratt responds, “Starting a dairy”—and visiting the third owner (a trip he skips in the final version). After leaving the third owner, Suratt encounters a young boy watching a goat on the roof of a barn. Inquiring whether Flem attempted to purchase this goat too, Suratt asks, “What did Flem Snopes pay you for that goat, buddy?” (6).

The rest of the manuscript contains the same material as prior manuscripts, presenting the three men watching the garden, returning with Uncle Dick (described in the same manner as in typescript C), purchasing the property from Flem, and finally, Henry’s mad, unflagging search. But here, rather than simply ending with Henry’s usual command to “git outen it,” Faulkner extends the description to include the townsfolk’s watching Henry and Mrs. Armstid’s visits.

Most of the ending also comes from material in previous versions—most comes from the opening section of typescript C; the end contains the first appearance of a conversation in which two on-lookers discuss Henry’s persistent digging as they squat “with their slow tobacco on the porch of the store, or in the halted wagons along the quiet roads or in the fields or at the cabin doors about the land.” Without providing the identity of the speakers, the exchange continues:

“Still at it, is he?”

“Sho. Still at it. Reckon he’s aiming to kill himself there.”

“Well, it wont be no loss to her. Save her a trip every day, bringing him grub.”

“Sho. It’s a fact.”

“That Flem Snopes. He’s a sight. Sho.” (30)

This conversation remains in the published story, closing the first section there, which deals with the same events.

The final manuscript, E, further showcases Faulkner's struggle to arrange "Lizards."

Though the basic elements of the story appear in all versions (with the exception of the goat trading incident in manuscript A and typescript B), none relate the events in the same form as the published version. The section of this chapter that discusses the publication history of "Lizards in Jamshyd's Courtyard" reveals that Faulkner submitted two versions of the story to the *Saturday Evening Post*. The published version of the story Faulkner sent first, followed by a revised version (probably requesting the *Post* to return the original submission; see section two for a complete discussion). Until now, no one could clearly identify whether this alternate version existed. I propose that the typescript (Folder 3-13) of manuscript E is probably the second version he sent to the *Post*; if it is, we can fill a major gap in the story's publication history.

The existence of this manuscript even helps to explain the lack of manuscript which relates the events in the same way as the published version. Folder 3-12 contains eight handwritten pages, titled "Lizards in Jamshyd's Courtyard," written on the long, unlined pages which Faulkner preferred. Roman numerals separate each section of the story, just as in the published version. In fact, comparing the sections of the published version with this manuscript reveals folder 3-12 as a chronologically ordered presentation of the narrative as in the published version. Except for minor variations, the contents match exactly. Table 2, in the appendix, shows the correspondence between the sections

of the published version and folder 3-12. Folder 3-13, a typescript of twenty-three pages, is the typescript of folder 3-12.

The handwritten version (folder 3-12) contains no less than six large paste-ins, the contents of which match the corresponding sections in the published version of the story. Thus Faulkner, upon deciding to further revise “Lizards,” almost certainly cut up the handwritten manuscript of the published story. These paste-ons form the basis of 3-12; passages on the pages they are pasted onto reflect Faulkner’s re-writing of some parts for continuity. While it may seem unusual for an author to write a story out of order, reorder it, and then return to the original non-chronological version, this arrangement makes much more sense than the alternative: that Faulkner wrote the story in order, then arranged it a-chronologically, submitting a typescript of second version first, then changing his mind, re-submitting a typescript of the first version, and finally settling on the second version. All of the manuscript versions of “Lizards” that appear here attest to Faulkner’s struggle to find the perfect structure for the story. The last simply revisits this long struggle, showing that even after all this work, Faulkner, despite having submitted one version of the story, restructured the story one last time.

Section 2: Publication History

The publication history of “Lizards” is almost as complex as the textual information. Since very little of Faulkner’s correspondence with the *Saturday Evening Post* survives, and although the available material yields a handful of specific dates to aid in establishing a chronology, exactly when Faulkner submitted the story to the *Post* and

which version(s?), aside from the final published version, Faulkner sent remain unclear. Speculation about Faulkner's alteration of the date listed on his short story sending schedule—he changed 16 May to 27 May—occurs in several studies,⁸ but no comprehensive collation of this data has been produced until now. When James B. Meriwether published the extant correspondence between Faulkner and the *Post*, yet another discrepancy appeared—the date of the letter with which Faulkner sent the accepted manuscript of “Lizards” (5 August) does not match the date he wrote, and circled, on the sending schedule (7 August). Comparing the scholarly accounts of these discrepancies with fact and reason, it seems possible to assemble a comprehensive, though still speculative, arrangement that presents the full submission and publication history of “Lizards in Jamshyd’s Courtyard.”

“Lizard’s in Jamshyd’s Courtyard” appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* on 27 February 1932. Columnated across four of the *Post*’s 13.75" x 10.75" pages (pp. 12-13, then continued on p.52 and p.57), the story features two illustrations by J. Clinton Shepherd (one of the three men—Henry Armstid, Suratt, and Vernon Tull—looking on as an elderly Uncle Dick holds his dowsing rod, the other of Henry Armstid digging as the folks line the split-rail fence, watching). Roman numerals divide the four sections of the story, beginning with II: the first section is unnumbered.

8

In “Appendix 4” of his book, *Genius of Place: William Faulkner’s Triumphant Beginnings*, Max Putzel provides an approximate order of composition for the early Snopes stories. Putzel, in “Faulkner’s Short Story Sending Schedule,” also discusses James B. Meriwether’s bibliographical work on the chronology of Faulkner’s short stories in both *The Literary Career of William Faulkner* and “The Short Fiction of William Faulkner: A Bibliography.”

Indisputable fact ends here. Hans Skei provides a chart, based upon the short story sending schedule, correspondence with the *Post* and *Scribner's, Selected Letters*, Meriwether's *The Literary Career of William Faulkner*, and Blotner's *Faulkner: A Biography*, which details Faulkner's story production chronologically (Skei, *The Short Story Career* 36). The chart also indicates "the earliest date a story is known to have existed . . . the number of submissions . . . the name of the periodical that published the story and the publication date" (Skei 36). For "Lizards," the chart indicates the earliest known existence as "05 27 30," number of submissions as "2," and notes that the story appeared in the "Sat. Eve. Post" on "02 27 32" (37). The next chapter then provides more detail about each story. Skei notes that on the sending schedule "Faulkner had originally listed 16 May [1930] as the date of submission to the *Post*, and had then cancelled 16 and substituted 27" (63). Furthermore, Skei says "such corrections are always intriguing, and they may yield important information if studied carefully . . . one should be cautious not to consider this to be simply a correction of an error" (63). Skei goes on to cite the publication of the correspondence between Faulkner and the *Post*, Meriwether reveals that

In a letter dated 5 August 1930, Faulkner replies to the *Post's* letter of 1 August, in which an editor apparently has ventured the opinion that the original version of the story was superior to the revised version which Faulkner had submitted after the original. Faulkner shares this opinion, and encloses a copy of the original story. Since Faulkner, on request, sends a copy of the original, the *Post* must have returned—not

rejected—the original story which had been submitted to them. Since the *Post* then, in a letter on 18 August, accepts the story for publication in its early, unrevised form, it seems likely that they had returned the original story without considering it for publication. . . . It may also be that Faulkner, on second thoughts, submitted his revised version and only then asked to have the original version back. (63)

Finally, Skei concludes that both dates on the sending schedule—16 May and 27 May—reveal the submission of the original and revised versions. This explanation certainly appears plausible, but continues to leave Skei’s original chart of information in question, as he indicates 27 May as the earliest known date for the story and the number of submissions as two.

The correspondence between Faulkner and the *Post* provides another take on the dates Faulkner listed for submissions of “Lizards,” and also reveals the second controversy surrounding the story’s publication. In his explanatory note to the 5 August 1930 letter from Faulkner to the *Post*, Meriwether accepts the probability that Faulkner’s marking out 16 May and substituting 27 May corrects a mistake:

Presumably this letter, dated August 5, was actually sent with the story on August 7. The May 27 submission may have been the original one for this story, in which case (after an expression of interest by the *Post*) Faulkner revised and resubmitted it in time for it to be read and referred to in a letter from an editor dated August 1; or the May 27 submission may be the date when the revised version was sent, with the original version having been

sent much earlier, before Faulkner began keeping records of submissions.

(466)

Skei also notes this apparent discrepancy between the date of the letter and the date listed on Faulkner's sending schedule, though he takes the analysis one step further: "the last and final submission, on 7 August, may have been enclosed with the letter dated 5 August, or sent by separate mail a couple of days later so that the entry is accurate" (*The Short Story Career*, 64).

Taking the various interpretations into account, along with the evidence and reason, reaching at least a speculative arrangement of the publication of "Lizards" seems possible. Beginning with Skei's consideration—that Faulkner's marking out 16 May does not automatically indicate a mistake—it seems logical that both dates stand correct. If so, Faulkner first submitted "Lizards" on 16 May. Skei's assumption that "the *Post* must have returned—not rejected" the story seems correct as well. Thus, Faulkner continued his work on "Lizards" for an additional eleven days and sent the revised version to the *Post* on 27 May.

Though, as the manuscript material reveals, neither manuscript nor typescript of the published story exists, the 5 August letter clearly indicates that Faulkner submitted a second, revised version and that the *Post* wanted the original, preferred version of the story back (Faulkner refers to the *Post*'s letter of 1 August—though that letter, apparently, does not exist). Since Faulkner does not refer to the original submission as rejected, he most likely asked for the original submission back when he submitted the revised version (*The Short Story Career*, 63-64). Faulkner then wrote the 5 August letter in response to

the aforementioned 1 August letter. It thus seems quite reasonable to assume, just as with Faulkner's annotation of the submission date, that the sending schedule stands correct and that though he wrote the letter on 5 August, he did not mail it until two days later, on 7 August.

The final correspondence concerning this story is in a letter from the *Post* on 18 August, informing Faulkner that the *Post* liked "'Lizards in Jamshyd's Courtyard' in its original form and are delighted to keep it for The Post. A check will be sent you next Tuesday" (467). Despite the *Post*'s letter of 1 August's not surviving, it seems clear, from the tone which Faulkner uses in his reply of 5 August, that this final letter stands as a formality on the part of the *Post* and Faulkner took the earlier letter as an indication of official acceptance, thus circling 7 August, rather than 18 August, as the acceptance date. Constructing the publication history of "Lizards" in this manner, Skei's chart should indicate 16 May 1930 as the earliest known date of its existence and three as the total number of submissions.

CHAPTER III

READING “Lizards in Jamshyd’s Courtyard”

Section 1: The Basics

When Joseph Blotner first discusses "Lizards in Jamshyd's Courtyard" in *Faulkner: A Biography* he points out that the appearance of the story about a botched house/land purchase coincides with Faulkner's own purchase of the “old Shegog place,” the house which Faulkner named Rowan Oak, and an adjoining tract of land, Bailey Wood, on 12 April 1930, barely a month prior to the earliest known date of the story’s existence (258-59). While Faulkner had probably begun work on the story—possibly as far back as 1926 or 1927, during his work on the *Father Abraham* manuscript (192-93)—before even considering the purchase of the property, the story seems to express the real-life anxieties Faulkner faced after moving his family into the house; the house had no electricity or plumbing, forcing the occupants to rely on oil lamps, an outhouse, and a well (260-61). His stepson, Malcolm Franklin, remembered thinking that the house looked “as if it was going to collapse with the next rainstorm or high wind,” but his daughter, Jill, would later recollect that purchasing the property had been “the symbol in Pappy’s life of being somebody” and that the house was “a nice old house [that] had a certain substance and standing to it” (260-61).

The grand symbolism that Faulkner saw in his purchase carries over to his descriptions of the Old Frenchman place, and to the extravagant, unusual title of the story. For the title, Faulkner drew on “the 3rd, 4th, or 5th edition of Edward Fitzgerald's translation of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*” (Blotner n.29.3; *USWF* 733). It seems possible that one source of Faulkner’s exposure to Fitzgerald came from his association with Stark Young (46), whose *So Red the Rose* (1934), takes its title from the eighteenth quatrain of Fitzgerald’s poem and uses both the eighteenth and nineteenth quatrains as its epigraph (Garrett ix, xiv). In his notes to *Uncollected Stories*, Blotner explains that the quatrain was actually the seventeenth in Fitzgerald's first edition, but was renumbered in the subsequent editions he mentions (686).¹ The full quatrain—

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep:
And Bahram, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, and he lies fast asleep

—initially appears to have little relation to the narrative Faulkner attaches it to, but in fact frames the narrative thematically.

Edward Fitzgerald’s translation of rubái, “independent stanzas, consisting each of four lines of equal, though varied, prosody, sometimes all rhyming ” (Fitzgerald 14), attributed to Persian philosopher/poet Omar ibn Ibrahim al-Khayyam (ca. 1048-1131), was extremely popular during “the early twentieth century . . . [and] was spoken of as one

1

The first edition of Fitzgerald’s *Rubaiyat* appeared in 1859. The subsequent editions to which Faulkner had access to all appeared between 1872-1889 (Karlín lxvii-lxix).

of the two or three best-known [poems] in the English-speaking world.” (Karlin xi-xiv)². Fitzgerald assembled these self-contained verses into a “sequence of . . . quatrains—akin to telling a story in limericks,” despite the fact that in Persian culture the brief, original verse form offered poets “an alternative to the ‘lengthy and highly artificial . . . narrative poems in a single rhyme’ which were the staple of official literary culture” (Karlin xiv-xv). While Fitzgerald’s translation makes it appear that the verses were originally intended to tell a philosophical story, the narrative is Fitzgerald’s construction and not that of any single, original Persian poet. That each rubáí is self-contained makes interpreting Faulkner’s interpolation of a single quatrain into a title easier, because it avoids having to delve into any “meaning” present in Fitzgerald’s work as a whole.

Since Fitzgerald issued his first edition with a preface and notes, and the poem “was never reprinted without them” (Karlin xii), it would seem almost certain that Faulkner looked at the notes when borrowing these lines for his title. Fitzgerald’s notes for the quatrain are extremely helpful in decoding the mysterious imagery of the lines. Aside from Daniel Karlin’s scholarly edition (2009), with its introduction, appendices, and annotations to Fitzgerald’s original notes, very little modern scholarship is available which deals with specific passages of *The Rubaiyat*.

Though Fitzgerald placed the superscript for the note at the end of the second line of the quatrain (24), the note actually explains the entire verse: “The courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep” refers to the Persian city of Persepolis, “call’d also

2

See Karlin’s introduction for full details concerning the long-standing controversies surrounding Khayyam’s authorship & the history of Fitzgerald’s text.

Takht'i Jamshyd—The Throne of Jamshyd” (56). Fitzgerald then provides other details about the city: “By whomsoever built, unquestionably the Monument of a long extinguished Dynasty and Mythology” (56). More importantly, he explains that “Bahram, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass” is “Bahram Gúr—*Bahram of the Wild Ass*, from his fame in hunting it” (57). Fitzgerald also notes “the swamp in which Bahram sunk, like the Master of Ravenwood, while pursuing his Gúr” (58).

Faulkner thus might have thought of Jamshyd as a figure much like the Old Frenchman, builder of “the long extinguished Dynasty and Mythology” (56), and of the dynasty and mythology as the ruins of the Old Frenchman’s once great house. Bahram and the wild ass could suggest either Flem as the hunter-king, pursuing his prey and making the three foolish men (Armstid, Suratt, and Tull) the asses or the three men’s hunt for the buried gold—an elusive prey, especially since it is imaginary—which results in their sinking into the ground, especially Armstid, as Bahram apparently sank into the swamp while pursuing the ass.

The problem which arises from this reading alone, though, is that it does not account for Faulkner’s choosing the image of the lizard for the title of the story. Karlin’s explanatory notes, which comment on both the poem and on Fitzgerald’s original notes, shed some light on Faulkner’s choice:

The trope of the wild beasts inhabiting the ruins of a king’s palace is present in the original Persian (lion and fox), and is a recurring image of the destruction of earthly power in the prophetic books of the Bible, e.g. Isaiah 13: 19-21 on the fate of Babylon, ‘the glory of kingdoms, the beauty

of the Chaldees' excellency': 'wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures'. (152)

It's of course not certain that Faulkner made a direct connection between Fitzgerald's quatrain and this verse in Isaiah but considering his familiarity with the Bible it is possible. More problematic, especially since Faulkner could not have read original Persian, is Karlin's reference to "the original Persian (lion and fox)." No foxes appear in Fitzgerald's verse, and Karlin doesn't explain where or if they do in the original Persian. The inference of Karlin's statement is that Fitzgerald mistranslated the Persian word for 'fox' as 'lizard', which, ultimately, makes it harder to explain how the image of a lizard fits in with the rest of the quatrain. However, if Faulkner did make a connection between the quatrain and biblical imagery, assuming the lizard was one of the "wild beasts of the desert," Faulkner could have used the lizard as a symbol of reptilian coldness or sneakiness. Both Flem and the three men pursue actions easily classified as sneaky, and the damage that Flem causes to Frenchman's Bend as cold-blooded.

Section 2: Store-Porches & Storytelling

As the introduction states, so much of the critical work which mentions "Lizards" deals with it only in relation to *The Hamlet*. Yet, this is more than a simple case of a major novel's overshadowing a short story. It seems that "Lizards" is also losing a constant battle with the other Snopes stories—particularly "Fool about a Horse" and "Spotted Horses"—which also appear as episodes in the novel. Due to the narration, subject matter, and tone, these stories could be classified as "porch stories." The

traditional view is that they, and their counterpart episodes in *The Hamlet*, represent Faulkner's attempts to incorporate humor, in the vein of Southwestern humor, tall tales, and regional writers like George Washington Harris, Johnson Hooper, A.B. Longstreet, and Mark Twain, into his writing. Thomas McHaney's essay, "What Faulkner Learned from the Tall Tale," discusses Faulkner's struggle to mix these traditional American forms with other literary influences, viewing *The Hamlet* as a product of

the tall tale style . . . filtered through a consciousness created by [Faulkner and] absorbing Conrad, Eliot, Freud, Frazer, Bergson, Einstein, Joyce, Jung, Anderson, Cézanne, Picasso, and Matisse . . . becoming a fine-edged tool in the modernist artist's battle against the regimentation, dull empiricism, and everydayness of modern times. (116)

While not devoting much attention to "Lizards," McHaney does mention the story as an example of Faulkner's growth in balancing his literary influences. He notes that, upon Faulkner's return from Europe, he began work on the Snopes material, *Father Abraham*, "the earliest version of Flem Snopes's machinations in Frenchman's Bend . . . the voice of [which] . . . is not what we should expect from the material, nor do the allusions seem altogether appropriate to the subject matter" (117). After citing the opening description of Flem from *Father Abraham*, McHaney turns his attention to *The Hamlet*, as a successful combination of these literary influences, but takes time to point out that "Lizards" is, basically, the "embryotic form" of the novel, "written in a more appropriate voice [than *Father Abraham*] but [still] bearing a title from that great decadent battle piece . . . Fitzgerald's *The Rubaiyat*" (118). These observations about "Lizards," along

with McHaney's general argument about Faulkner's conflation of modern and traditional literary influences, are quite important because usually the story is simply overlooked during discussion of the "porch stories" and also because, though McHaney still places it within context of *The Hamlet*, he treats it as an example of Faulkner's growth as an artist.

Most other discussions of these porch stories mention "Lizards" only in passing, preferring to limit their scope to "Fool about a Horse" and/or "Spotted Horses," or do not mention it at all. Hans Skei's "A Life Remembered: Store Porch Takes from Yoknapatawpha County" avoids it entirely, focusing solely on "Fool About a Horse" and "Spotted Horses." However, his positioning of the store porch as an important symbol of the community and powerful literary tool for Faulkner is invaluable to my reading of "Lizards." He describes Frenchman's Bend as "one of the most insistently backwoods areas in modern literature," where "characters visit Varner's crossroads store and Mrs. Littlejohn's boarding house and squat or sit on the front porch while they comment on tales of barter and trade, of limitless stupidity and fatal pride" (162). He goes on to define Faulkner's use of the porch as "a place admirably suited for old tales and talking, for the best of gossip, for the narratives by which people in an established society explain and understand themselves" (162):

The store porch anecdotes are oral narratives, as close to the classical oral storytelling situation with a teller and his or her listeners as you can get.

They are possible only within a given structure, an established society, presupposing a sense of a real world model behind the fictional one. The society in which these store porch tales have their roots and in which they

unfold and signify attains almost mythical stature. . . . [The] tales take on additional meaning because they rely on shared conventions, histories, and fantasies, even to the point where a communal rhetoric is discernible. Events, information, news, and rumors are shared through this practice. . . . Traditions matter much in this seemingly unchanging and unchangeable world. The tales carry on the traditions and mores and values of a community of men . . . [until] life itself begins to look like a life remembered, a series of store porch anecdotes lived . . . over and over again. (163)

While this analysis of the porch's function in the community of Frenchman's Bend is completely accurate, issues arise with Skei's choice of short stories to discuss.

The guiding principles for Skei's focus on "Spotted Horses" and "Fool about a Horse" appears to be that they "are probably the funniest stories Faulkner ever wrote," and that both are "told on the porch to a group of listeners" (163). While these stories are humorous, Skei's discussion becomes yet another examination of the stories only in the context of the episodes of *The Hamlet*. Admittedly, Skei is more concerned with examining exactly how we define a short story and how Faulkner's stories function once integrated into a novel, but his discussion focuses more on how the changes between short and extended fictional treatment impact readings of the novel.

McHaney's conclusion that *The Hamlet*, published at least eight years after Faulkner wrote the earliest version of "Lizards," is a modernization of the tall-tale tradition, indicates that instead of confining the discussion of storytelling to traditional

terms, one has to determine the role of storytelling in the modern world (117-120).

Walter Benjamin's essay "The Storyteller," though published four years after "Lizards," addresses the death of oral traditions and storytelling from a philosophical and practical standpoint. While it is impossible that Faulkner had any knowledge of Benjamin's work at the time he wrote "Lizards" or *The Hamlet*—the first English translation of Benjamin's work did not appear until 1968—Benjamin's understanding of storytelling's cultural role at the time that Faulkner was writing provides useful insight. The focus of this discussion of Benjamin is not his examination of the folktales of Nikolai Leskov, but rather his general perceptions of how storytelling becomes invalid in the modern world.

Benjamin proposes that storytelling, present since antiquity because of a human need to "exchange experience," is dying because the modern world devalues experience itself (83-84). While he initially blames the devaluing of experience on tactical warfare, inflation, mechanical warfare, and hegemony (84), he quickly enters into a more concrete discussion of the function of oral traditions as they are reflected in modern literature: "Experience which is passed on from mouth to mouth is the source from which all storytellers have drawn. And among those who have written down the tales, it is the great ones whose written version differs least from the speech of the many nameless storytellers" (84). These "nameless storytellers" fall into two groups, the storyteller "who has come from afar," bringing information from outside a community and "the man who stayed at home . . . who knows the local tales and traditions" (84). In order for either of these storytellers to share their information they obviously need an audience or a listener. Those who listen seek in the storyteller's tales some useful information, a "moral . . .

some practical advice . . . [or] a proverb or maxim” (86); “in every case the storyteller is a man who has counsel” for his listener or reader (86). Yet, “having counsel” requires that the listener or reader be an active participant in the storytelling process. Benjamin points out that “to seek counsel one would have to first be able to tell the story. (Quite apart from the fact that a man is receptive to counsel only to the extent that he allows his situation to speak)” (86). Thus, “the storyteller takes what he tells from experience—his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale” (87). The solitary individual, not participating in the storytelling process, disrupts the oral narrative because he “is himself uncounseled, and cannot counsel others” (87). Benjamin also states that “Death is the sanction for everything that the storyteller can tell. He has borrowed his authority from death” (94). This seems to imply that when the solitary individual disrupts the storytelling process to the point where it is no longer a valid method for relating information, the result is the death not only of oral narratives but also of the community attached to it.³ Applying these ideas about oral

3

Recent studies of the construction of Southern community, such as Scott Romine's *The Narrative Forms of Southern Community*, have attempted to uncover the unromantic, possibly detrimental, effects of community. Romine argues that, rather than being a positive construct, “a community will tend to be coercive,” producing a “simulated consensus . . . by means of which the South could establish the essentially cohesive nature of its social order” (2-3). He then provides “a new definition of community: a social group that, lacking a commonly held view of reality, coheres by means of norms, codes, and manners that produce a simulated, or at least symbolically constituted, social reality” (3). Both Benjamin and Skei, however, assume that a community is a positive construction. Benjamin opens his discussion by describing how “a generation that had gone to school on horse-drawn streetcar[s] now [stands] under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds” (84), idealizing the community of an earlier time. Skei provides a similar, though more romanticized, description of Frenchman's Bend when discussing “Fool About a Horse” and its function as an episode in *The Hamlet*. Skei states that “the hyperbolic, tall-tale humor of this story is an antidote to the impending disaster . . . in the novel's opening pages,” providing “a first glimpse into a world of fun and laughter, sympathy and goodwill” (“A Life Remembered” 168). Skei goes on to explain:

This is the world of Frenchman's Bend, Yoknapatawpha County, ruled according to the age-old laws of the ledger in the local store and the cycles of

traditions and storytelling to “Lizards in Jamshyd’s Courtyard,” makes it easier to understand what exactly happens in the story and to perceive Flem’s actions in a new light.

The published version of “Lizards” opens as the people of Frenchman’s Bend travel by wagon, horse, and mule, with “a quality not festive, since it was too profoundly undivergent, but of holiday, of escape and of immolation like that of people going to the theater to see tragedy,” to the Old Frenchman place to watch Henry’s tireless digging (*US* 135). An extended description of the old house explains its history and significance:

the gaunt and austere skeleton of a huge house lifted its broken roof and topless chimneys . . . was known as the Old Frenchman’s⁴ place, after its builder, who had straightened the river bed and reclaimed four thousand acres of jungle bottom land . . . a huge square house which the anonymous builder’s nameless and unrecorded successors had been pulling down for firewood since the Civil War, set in grounds laid out by an imported

planting and harvest seasons, and watched over by Will Varner, a kindhearted man of goodwill and a patriarch of old, believing in what he’s doing and also doing it for what he thinks is for the best of his fellow humans. (168)

While an examination of *The Hamlet* or multiple Snopes stories using Romine’s approach might prove fruitful, Benjamin’s and Skei’s descriptions of community are closer than Romine’s to the view of Frenchman’s Bend that Faulkner gives in “Lizards.” Varner appears in name only, and the brief description of him— “he was a politician, a veterinary, a Methodist lay preacher” (139)—yields nothing that leads the reader to see him in the almost Fascist role he plays in *The Hamlet* or other stories. Likewise, Faulkner seems to imply that whatever negative aspects do exist in the community are the fault of the people themselves and not that of some controlling agent. This appears most clearly when Faulkner provides details about the Armstid’s poverty: “The land was either poor or they were poor managers. It made for them less than a bare living . . .” (142). Thus in “Lizards,” while Frenchman’s Bend may be far from ideal, Faulkner seems to suggest that the community’s existence prior to Flem’s arrival was largely positive or, at the very least, preferable to the ruin Flem leaves it in.

4

Faulkner did not consistently label the house the Old Frenchman place. Here he uses makes it possessive. My quotations preserve Faulkner’s usage, even when he is inconsistent.

English architect a hundred years ago . . . the broad acres parceled now into small shiftless farms among his shiftless and illiterate heirs at large. . . . All that was left of him was the old mark of the river bed, and the road, and the skeleton of the house, and the legend of the gold which his slaves buried somewhere when Grant passed through . . . so that for sixty years three generations of sons and grandsons, lurking into the place at night and on foot, had turned under the original surface time and again, hunting for the gold and the silver, the money and the plate. (135-136)

Here, as in all of the earlier manuscripts and typescripts, the Old Frenchman place is the center of the community's identity. This description of the original builder lacks typescript B's added details that

The original owner of it may have been anything, but his neighbors, the poor white squatters who had gradually croached onto his domain, called him the old Frenchman, after the southern rural fashion of dubbing anyone a frenchman who has anything outlandish in his manners or speech.

(Typescript B, 8)

and the explicit statement that “from his name the settlement got its name—Frenchman's Bend” (8), present in both manuscript A and typescript B. The implication of the description in the published version clearly implies the same idea. The community is named after the label applied to the man himself and the mark of the old river bend, which his slaves straightened out of the river.

This is, as Skei pointed out, a prime example of how storytelling reveals a communal rhetoric. Despite the fact that sixty years of “nameless and unrecorded successors” have pulled the facade apart for firewood, the legend of the builder and his gold remains as both an integral part of the community’s identity and of their storytelling tradition. Since the story opens with the conclusion of a series of yet unrevealed events, the reader cannot at first determine the full significance of the Old Frenchman place or of Henry’s digging. Faulkner provides some indication that the rest of the story is not necessarily a happy one through his description of the townspeople’s coming to watch as if it were immolation or tragedy (135). His choice of the word “immolation” seems particularly important, as it introduces the idea of destruction. Not only is the house being torn down and Henry digging his own grave but the people coming to watch Henry dig are gawking at the spectacle rather than being productive and doing the necessary work of subsistence on their “shiftless farms.”

The end of this opening section also introduces Varner’s porch and the storytelling which will follow, depicting the nameless men who occupy important communal spaces where they carry on the community’s oral traditions. The men, “squatting . . . on the porch of Varner’s store two miles away or in halted wagons . . . or in the field or at the cabin doors . . . talked about” Henry at the Old Frenchman place (137). They not only point out the destruction implicit in the scene highlighted—“Reckon he’s aiming to kill himself there in that garden” (138)—they also indicate who is responsible for the destruction. The dialogue is presented without indicating the speaker, or even noting how many voices are speaking, but one of the men says, “That Flem

Snopes. I'll declare," and others agree: "He's a sight, sho. Yes, sir. Wouldn't no other man but him done it" and "Couldn't no other man done it. Anybody might a-fooled Henry Armstid. But couldn't nobody but Flem a-fooled Suratt" (138). Since Faulkner presents the end result first, we can see that while we do not have an identified central storyteller yet, whatever "authority" has been borrowed and sanctioned in this community's oral traditions has now been rescinded, as evidenced by the destruction of Henry and the community. In Benjamin's terms, storytelling has thus become corrupted: most of the community appears focused on Henry rather than on doing the work required for their own survival, the continuing rumors of buried gold, which were at the heart of the community's oral narrative, and attached directly to the community's identity, have been proven false. While the onlookers, along with the explanations of the house and rumor of buried gold, appear as early as typescript B, the voices of the nameless storytellers are not present until typescript D, where they appear at the end, which is told linearly, with the exception of the flashback to the goat-trading.

The next section of the published version introduces Suratt, the "sewing-machine agent," who "traveled the country in a buckboard, to the rear of which was attached a sheet-iron dog kennel painted to resemble a house" (138). After a detailed description of the sheet-iron box—the same description repeated many times through all versions of the story—the narration continues, describing Suratt's pattern of travel:

On successive days and two counties apart, the buckboard and the sturdy mismatched team might be seen tethered in the nearest shade, and Suratt's affable, ready face . . . one of the squatting group on the porch of a

crossroads store. Or—still squatting—among the women surrounded by laden clotheslines . . . , or decorous in a splint chair in cabin dooryards, talking and listening. He never forgot names and he knew everyone, man, mule and dog, in fifty miles. . . . His itinerary brought him to Varner's store every six weeks. (138)

While we now have a clear picture and name to go along with one of the parties the nameless voices were discussing earlier, this description of Suratt allows us to see him as covering both of the categories of storytellers Benjamin defines. Suratt is at once the teller “who has come from afar”—traveling around the countryside in his buckboard—and “the man who has stayed home . . . and who knows the local tales and traditions”—even though Suratt may not be from Frenchman's Bend, its inhabitants seems to treat him as one of their own.

After revealing that Suratt has a regularly scheduled stop at Varner's store, the narration immediately points out a specific time when Suratt “arrived two weeks ahead of schedule,” and describes the goat-trading incident. Since its first appearance, in typescript C, these events remained relatively unchanged. Faulkner delayed the frequency of Suratt's visits to Varner's store—“once every two weeks” (5) in C to six weeks in the published version—and described the unscheduled visit in a way that made it less peculiar; in C Faulkner points out that this unscheduled stop was “for a purpose beyond that of his bi-weekly routine visit,” and in the published version simply states Suratt's intentions without the additional commentary. Suratt arrives with a contract from a Northerner, which he purchased for twenty dollars, to acquire one hundred goats for the

Northerner's goat ranch. He stopped at Varner's store and "made his guarded inquiries" of "the four or five men squatting along the porch" (139). Finding out where to acquire the goats, Suratt goes the next morning to visit the current owners. Reaching the first owner on his list, he finds out that Flem Snopes has beaten him to the goats and purchased them the night before.

Faulkner portrays Flem as almost the exact opposite of Suratt. While he too is involved in business, running Varner's store, Flem sits "all day, between the infrequent customers, in a tilted chair in the door, chewing and whittling and saying no word . . . all that was known about him was known on hearsay, and that not his own" (139). Faulkner tells us that "he had been sitting in his usual chair . . . while Suratt was getting his information about the goats" (139). While Suratt is talkative and mobile, Flem is silent and stationary. Whereas Suratt seems to know, and be known to, everyone in Frenchman's Bend and the surrounding country, Flem is an enigma, known only by unreliable rumors, since he provides no information himself. Flem fits almost exactly into Benjamin's description of the solitary individual who is the antithesis of the storyteller; "himself uncounseled" and unable to "counsel others" (87). Faulkner's earliest description of Flem, coinciding with the earliest appearance of the goat-trading incident in typescript C, places Flem in direct opposition to Suratt, and, uses the phrase "keeping his own counsel"—Flem "was a man with a gift for keeping his own counsel equaled only by Suratt's for conversation"—before continuing to provide almost the same description of Flem sitting on the store porch, silently (4). This solitary individual, in Benjamin's mind, ultimately disrupts the storytelling process to the point that it can no

longer function, and results in the destruction such as Faulkner has already presented in the opening section of "Lizards." It's clear that, since Flem does not participate in this, or any other, discussion on the store porch, Suratt and the other men do not see Flem's silence as relevant. Thus the community considers only those who were active participants in the storytelling as having any effect on the conversation, either because they never considered that someone not participating could affect their oral traditions or because they had never encountered someone who did not participate. With the storyteller and the solitary individual defined and the outcome already revealed, we may better see how the solitary individual disrupts the storytelling, beyond not participating in the process, and for what purpose.

Suratt continues his search for the goats, finding, without much surprise, that Flem has beaten him to all of the owners. Three days later, Flem purchases the contract from Suratt for twenty-one dollars, netting Suratt a one dollar profit. Taking his money, Suratt pockets twenty dollars and keeps his single dollar of profit in hand. Walking outside, Suratt tells the men on the porch, "Well, at least I ain't skunked," to which the men reply with guffaws. He then gives the dollar to two children, a boy and girl, telling them, "Here, chillens. . . . Here's something Mr. Snopes sent you" (*USWF* 140). So while Suratt technically beats Flem in this deal, Flem has still usurped all of Suratt's action by purchasing the goats and will almost certainly make more profit off of the contract, just as Suratt had likely planned to.

The goat-trading incident, told through a flashback, comes after the descriptions of Flem and Suratt, in order to present Suratt's interest in the Old Frenchman place as an

act of revenge on Flem for limiting his profit to only a dollar. In the published version, Faulkner describes Suratt and Flem at the same time that he presents the goat-trading, the story then jumping forward three years to a time when Suratt finds out that Flem had “bought the Old Frenchman place from Varner” (140). The narration also reveals that Suratt knew the Old Frenchman place “better than anyone suspected” because “once a year he drove three or four miles out of his way to pass the place, entering from the back. . . . Why he took this precaution he could not have said; he probably would have believed it was not to be seen doing something by which he had no expectation of gaining anything” (140). During these visits, Suratt sits “in the buckboard to contemplate the austere skeleton . . . thinking of the generations of men who had dug for gold there, contemplating . . . the spent and secret nocturnal sweat left upon the place by men as quiet now as the man who had unwittingly left behind him a monument more enduring than any obituary either carved or cast,” and thinking to himself, “It’s bound to be there, somewhere[.] . . . It’s bound to[.] . . . Folks wouldn’t keep on digging for it if it wasn’t there somewhere. It wouldn’t be right to keep on letting them” (140-41).

Rather than being on the store porch when he finds out that Flem has purchased the Old Frenchman place, Suratt is “eating dinner in Jefferson in the restaurant which he and his brother-in-law owned” (141). His immediate thought is, “If Flem Snopes bought that place, he knows something about it that Will Varner never knowed. Flem Snopes wouldn’t buy a nickel mousetrap withouten he knowed beforehand it would make him back a dime” (141). He goes to Frenchman’s Bend that afternoon. Whether Flem actually knew Suratt visited the Old Frenchman place at least once a year is not exactly

clear. It seems likely that even if he didn't know he assumed he could bait someone into purchasing it from him and, at the very least, he now possesses the most visible symbol of the community. However, Suratt's actions once he reaches Varner's store remove the need for too much speculation on Flem's initial motives, as Suratt's inquiries into Flem's purchase alone give Flem ample motive to target Suratt, even if he hadn't already done so.

Suratt arrives at Varner's store and sees Flem, as usual, sitting in his chair. Suratt tells himself "That he can set still and know what I got to work so hard to find out. That I got to work fast to learn it and ain't got time to work fast because I don't know if I got time to make a mistake by working fast. And him just setting still" (141). He obviously realizes that Flem does not participate in the communal storytelling as others do, but that his silence is also a powerful force. This, however, does not dissuade Suratt from attempting to engage Flem by the same methods that he has used before; after all, he did, technically beat Flem in the goat-trade, just not by a wide margin. Suratt mounts the porch, greets the squatting men gathered there, and announces, "Well boys, I hear Flem has done bought himself a farm. You fixing to start a goat ranch of your own, Flem? Or maybe it's just a home for the folks you trims trading. . . . Well, if Flem knowed any way to make anything offen that old place, he'd be too durn close-mouthed to tell himself about it" (141). As usual, Flem does not respond to this talk and remains seated, whittling on a stick and chewing.

As with the goat-trade, it is not until typescript C that these events appear in the early versions. In manuscript A and typescript B, Suratt finds out that Flem is digging at

the Old Frenchman place by observing him at night. In typescript C, Suratt finds out that Flem owns the “forty acres which included the Old Frenchman’s home-site” and “in public, on the porch of the store, getting his sober and appreciative laugh” says, “Well, if Flem knowed some way to make anything offen that place, he’d be too close-mouthed to tell himself about it” (6). Instead of wondering why Flem purchased the land, Suratt rushes off immediately, seeming to have a plan already in mind to find out what Flem is up to. One of the men on the porch asks Suratt, as he descends the porch, “Where you rushing to? Thought you was to be here two or three days,” to which Suratt replies, “Got to get on. . . . Never taken me but one trip here to find out that in a place no bigger than the Bend, it aint no room for but one man, if that man’s Flem Snopes” (6-7). In typescript D, Suratt immediately assumes that Flem has “done found where that money’s buried at” (6-7). He then goes to Varner’s store and has an encounter similar to those already described, baiting Flem with his comments.

The result of Suratt’s actions in all three versions remains the same. Suratt, Vernon Tull, and Henry Armstid end up in the weed-filled ditch at night, attempting to catch Flem digging. The men’s actions have changed little throughout any of the early versions, with the exceptions noted in chapter two of Uncle Dick’s growing presence in the narrative. After deciding that they will need help in locating the buried treasure, Suratt retrieves Uncle Dick from his “mud-daubed hut in a cane swamp” thirty miles away. Uncle Dick’s description comes almost directly from typescript D, with only the slightest of changes: rather than wearing a “shapeless frock coat” (15), in the published version Uncle Dick wears a “filthy frock coat” (144). The men’s initial digging, in the

third section of the published version, is of little importance to this reading, and its evolution in the early materials receives extensive attention in chapter two. What is important, though, is Henry's role in these events.

Henry Armstid gives an identity to the nameless inhabitants of Frenchman's Bend. He represents the squatting men who gather to talk. Henry "lived on a small mortgaged farm, which he and his wife worked like two men. During one season, having lost one of his mules, he and his wife did the plowing, working day about in the second trace beside the other mule" (142). The description continues, "The land was either poor or they were poor managers. It made for them less than a bare living[.] . . . They had four children, all under six years of age, the youngest an infant in arms" (142). In contrast to Suratt, who gets by on his trading skills and, at least partially, on his meager sewing-machine sales, and Veron Tull, "a well-to-do bachelor" (142), Henry has the most to gain or lose if he invests in the legend of buried gold. The legend not only provides the possibility of monetary gain for Henry but is also tied directly to his station in life and his identity. Since the Old Frenchman place provides the community with a unique sense of identity and a connection to some grand history, real or not, Henry, as a part of that community, is also part of that history. For Henry the legend of the buried gold must be true in order for his world to make sense.

Thus Henry's investment, along with Suratt's and Vernon's, to purchase the Old Frenchman place puts far more on the line than monetary loss. Suratt approaches Flem about purchasing the land, and finds that Eustace Grimm is also interested in it. While on the porch, one of the unnamed men says,

Be durn if you don't look like you ain't been to bed in a week, Suratt.

What are you up to now? Lon Quick said his boy seen your team hid out in the bottom below Armstid's two mornings ago, but I told him I didn't reckon them horses had done nothing to hide from. I wasn't so sho about you, I told him. (147).

Suratt replies, "I reckon not. I reckon I'm still smart enough to not be caught by nobody around here except Flem Snopes. 'Course I take a back seat to Flem" (147). Suratt, regardless of his prior experience, still does not realize that Flem is aware of the men's actions despite his silence. If the nameless man on the porch has heard that Suratt's hidden team was spotted, it's likely that Flem is already aware of this as well—and, since it was likely Flem whom Suratt and Vernon heard galloping away on horseback after Uncle Dick senses a fourth presence lusting after money, he probably knew how many men Suratt had involved and who they were. After more casual banter about Flem and goat-trading, Suratt chases Eustace off by telling him that Mrs. Littlejohn doesn't like to be kept waiting to serve lunch. As Eustace is leaving, Flem finally speaks, telling Eustace to "Tell her [Mrs. Littlejohn] I'll be there in ten minutes" (148). Suratt then offers Flem a ride in the buckboard, giving him an opportunity to privately barter with Flem about purchasing the Old Frenchman place. Though Flem finally speaks here, it's significant that, with the exception of his instructions to Eustace, he has successfully severed the discussion and trading from the porch. When Suratt inquires what price Flem is asking Eustace for the land, Flem replies, "Ain't asked him nothing yet. Just listened to him" (149). Suratt then asks Flem what price he is asking him for, to which Flem responds,

“Three thousand” (149). This price might also further indicate Flem’s awareness of the number of men involved before he fled on horseback the previous night.

Flem’s silence, which he holds until the final section of the story, has already succeeded in creating an atmosphere of secrecy around his ownership of the Old Frenchman place. This secrecy is enough to pique the interest of Suratt and the two other men, and to keep them from speaking for fear that someone might beat them to the buried gold. Thus, even prior to the men’s finding the planted sacks of coins, Flem had already disrupted the normal process of discussion and trading in the community. Flem’s knowledge that there was never any buried gold and planting the coin sacks in the ground, when the men thought he was actually searching for the money, literally reverses the natural order of the legend and immediately destroys one of the community’s long-held myths. Flem’s final move, severing the actual bartering over a deal from the store porch, signals his ultimate disruption of storytelling in Frenchman’s Bend.

Even before the closing scene, where Suratt and Vernon, inside the house, where they had hidden their sacks, discover that their coins were minted in 1896 and 1901, respectively, they have already been beaten. Henry, outside and continuing to dig, does not hear this discussion, but refuses to examine his coins when Suratt asks him to.

“Henry [does] not falter” and reacts violently when Suratt touches his shoulder (151). For Henry, his stake in the Old Frenchman place is about more than just beating Flem Snopes in a trade or monetary gain. If Henry falters, he will have to acknowledge his place as the lowliest of the low, his tie to the community’s grand history a sham. Even though Henry’s digging of his own grave will eventually kill him, and Flem has already

disrupted the community's oral traditions beyond repair, he continues. This conclusion brings the story back around to where we find Henry in the opening section of the story, the townspeople come to watch him rather than doing the work they require for life; the legend of the buried gold has been officially proven false, and they know that their best trader and consummate storyteller has been beaten. While some storytelling still seems to take place, as evidenced by the nameless men who first introduce Flem's name, it seems unlikely that things will ever be the same again in the Bend.

Flem is successful here not because of his business acumen in Varner's store or his trading skills, but rather because of his silence. This silence disrupts the normal function of storytelling and trading in Frenchman's Bend and causes the symbolic destruction of the community. Flem invalidates the community's prior experience in the same way that Benjamin suggests, through silence and solitude. He takes on the representative storyteller of the community, effectively cutting him off from his listeners. Surely, after such a defeat, Suratt can no longer provide valuable counsel to listeners and the listeners themselves now have to doubt everything they think they know about their community, making any remaining storytelling suspect at best.

Section 3: Conclusion

While it is impossible that Faulkner had any knowledge of Benjamin's ideas about storytelling in the modern world, this reading clearly shows that Faulkner's use of storytelling has a function, in "Lizards in Jamshyd's Courtyard" at least, beyond its being a simple incorporation of Southwestern humor motifs. "Lizards" lacks the overt humor

of “Fool About a Horse” or “Spotted Horses”—the tall-tale exaggeration a key component linking both those stories to discussions of Faulkner’s use of storytelling. As McHaney suggested, “Lizards” represents a conflation of modern literary influence and more traditional narrative techniques (116). Faulkner inserts Flem as a destructive modernizing force who disrupts the traditional function of oral narratives, exposing the inability of these traditional forms to convey meaning and experience in the modern world.

Viewing “Lizards” in this way allows for reevaluation of the other porch stories, which may contain further elements to indicate Faulkner used this simplistic narrative and thematic form for a more complex purpose. The obvious differences between this traditional narrative approach and the complexities of those Faulkner used in other works of this time, most obviously in *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*, indicate an artist choosing the most appropriate form for the subject matter at hand. Faulkner’s struggle to perfect this blend of modern and traditional forms is reflected in the textual study as well which, with further examination, may yield more information on Faulkner’s view of oral traditions and their function in the modern community. The traditional oral narrative of the storyteller finds no audience in the modern world and, as Faulkner illustrates in “Lizards,” this leads to the death of more than just a quaint way of life.

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APPENDIX

DESCRIPTIVE TABLES FOR TEXTUAL STUDY

Table 1 organizes the manuscripts and typescripts chronologically, simplifying the various systems used by collections which hold them. The left column provides the designation provided by the collection. The column to the right provides a suggested chronological order, using an alphabetic label, determined through the course of my research. With the exception of the manuscript labeled “Omar’s Eighteenth Quatrain,” which is held at University of Virginia in the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, and also appears as facsimile in the *William Faulkner Manuscripts 15 Vol. 1*, all materials come from the Rowan Oak Papers held by the University of Mississippi’s Department of Archives and Special Collections in the J.D. Williams Library. The folder numbers correspond to their organizational system, available online either by title listing, which organizes all related folders by the work which they relate to, or inventory, which retains the order of the papers as found and reflects the overall numbering system employed (Rowan Oak Papers). The University of Mississippi provides personal document files (.pdf) of both the title list and inventory through their website. The first section of chapter two discusses these items in detail.

Table 1

Suggested Chronological Ordering of
Manuscripts and Typescripts

Folder Number or Label	Chronological Designation
“Omar’s Eighteenth Quatrain”	A
3-29	B
2-7/2-9	C
4-2	D
3-12/3-13	E

Table 2

Comparison of Numbered Sections from Folder 3-12
(Manuscript E) and Published Version

Pub. Version of “Lizards”	Folder 3-12
II	I
III	II
IV	III
I	IV

Table 3

Manuscript A: "Omar's Eighteenth Quatrain"

Leaf #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Pg. #	1	2	3	4	3	5	6 4	9	10	11	[11A]

Table 4

Typescript C: Folders 2-7/2-9

Leaf #	1-2	3	4-25
Pg. #	1-2	2-A	3-24

Table 5

Typescript D: Folder 4-2

Leaf #	1-13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20-22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Pg. #	1-13	12 14	13 15	14 16	15 17	16 18	17 19	20- 22	20 23	21 24	22 25	23 26	24 27	28	24 29	30