

Religiously the first step toward salvation is taken when a man becomes aware of the disorder of his own existence. Then the total depravity is no more, for such awareness is not sin itself but a turning from it. The passages above suggest her dim craving for salvation deep in her soul.

And it is this craving that connects *Sanctuary* with *Requiem for a Nun*. *Requiem for a Nun*'s religious tone takes the place of *Sanctuary*'s dark negation. The novel is dealing with Temple Drake's struggle for salvation. In *Requiem* Temple is married to Gowan in order to nullify her past and she has now two children—a four-year-old boy and an infant. She has hired as a maid Nancy Mannigoe, who will not be shocked by sordid details of Temple's past. According to Temple's confession "it wasn't the Gowan Stevens but Temple Drake who had chosen the ex-dope-fiend nigger whore for the reason that an ex-dope-fiend nigger whore was the only animal in Jefferson that spoke Temple's Drake's language—... Somebody to talk to, as we all seem to need, want, have to have, not to converse with you nor even agree with you, but just keep quiet and listen" (R 141). Temple's relationship with Gowan is far from being satisfactory, since she feels that she must be grateful to him for marrying her, and also because Gowan has come to doubt his paternity of the boy. She thus becomes an easy prey to a blackmailer, the brother of her former lover Red. When Temple prepares to elope with Red, taking her boy with her, Nancy strangles the infant so that little children shall not suffer. In the Courthouse at Jefferson, Mississippi, Nancy is sentenced to be hanged for murdering Temple's infant child. Only the defendant's lawyer, Gavin Stevens, suspects where the real guilt lies. The rest of the drama focuses on the gradual disclosure of Temple's sin.

*Sanctuary* concluded with the courtroom scene, which is echoed at the beginning of *Requiem for a Nun*. Here again Temple is legally absolved of any guilt and she once again prepares to escape by travel. Gavin Stevens tries to examine her past and appeals to her conscience. Since Temple avoids facing the truth and rushes into every shelter provided by her self-delusions, Stevens's examination is a long and troublesome one. To protect herself, she utilizes every possible trick. In *Sanctuary* Temple evades any responsibility by assuming the role of victim, and now again in *Requiem* she does the same by playing "the bereaved mother" (R 63, R 76), "the mother whose child she [Nancy] murdered" (R 108) as well as "the victim" (R 111). Stevens, however, refuses to treat Temple, who has been tearless, as such and he offers her a handkerchief, uttering decisively "It's all right. It's dry too" (R 56).

Temple cannot use her social position any more because Nancy's crime has been judged and her punishment was determined. Past has been irrevocably settled as Stevens says: "We're not concerned with death. That's nothing: any handful of pretty facts and sworn documents can cope with that. That's all finished now; we can forget it" (R 82).

Her last ineffectual but persistent defense is to describe Temple Drake from the point of view of Mrs. Gowan Stevens, hoping that such detachment will preserve her from further moral responsibility:

TEMPLE

Mrs. Gowan Stevens did [invented the coincidence].

STEVENS

Temple Drake did. Gowan Stevens is not even fighting in this class. This is Temple Drake's.

TEMPLIE

Temple Drake is dead.

Here Stevens interrupts her with "The past is never dead. It's not even past" (R 85). Though she insisted that "Nancy must be saved. So you send for me, or you and Bucky between you, or anyway here you are and here I am" (R 75), she knows from the very beginning that it is her own salvation she must be concerned with: "All right. I'm sorry. I know better. So maybe it's just my own stinking after all that I find impossible to doubt" (R 63). Thematically the emphasis in the narrative sections, "The Courthouse," "The Golden Dome" and "The