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# Hey, Anyone Can Confuse Cavalry With Calvary

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Usually, readers assume that a dynamic character is an important character. In his novel *Light in August*, however, Faulkner breaks this rule by greatly emphasizing the very lack of dynamism in many of his characters.

Hightower is a static character. The fact that he is static is mentioned repeatedly and insistently. He does not change much. “He had set his mind on Jefferson from the first, since he had first decided to become a minister” (61), and there he remains despite everything the town can do to kick him out, demonstrating that his conviction to stay in Jefferson is utterly static. His preaching is static: when his wife goes to Memphis, to a sanatorium, and back to Memphis, he just goes on about the horses, not a word about his wife—“it was as though the whole thing had never happened” (65, similar to 64 and 67). When he first comes to town, he talks excitedly to the elders of the congregation, but “the young minister was still excited even after six months, still talking about the Civil War and his grandfather, a cavalryman” (61)—even his excitement is static. Hightower’s unchangingness is emphasized by figurative language as well as repetition: his religious confusion seems “as though the

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seed which his grandfather had transmitted to him had been on the horse too that night and had been killed too and time had stopped there and then for the seed and nothing had happened in time since, not even him” (64).

Even after his ministry is over, he resists change intensely. He refuses to resign his ministry until he finds the doors of his church locked Sunday morning (69–70). “Then he refuse[s] to leave town” (70) when everyone expects it of him, when he is asked to by the elders of the church, and when people spread rumors about him. He does not leave when masked men scare his cook into leaving (72) and whip his new cook (72). The KKK beats him senseless and ties him to a tree, “but he refuse[s] to depart” (72). His desire to live in Jefferson lasts for at least the four years of seminary, the year or two of ministry and trouble, and the twenty years between that and the time of the story (73)—his desire is completely static.

The reader wonders, why does Hightower stay? It seems unrealistic for him to refuse to be run out of town by both the KKK and the Church, simply because of his desire to live in Jefferson. Indeed, there is another reason, given by Bunch. “A man will talk about how he’d like to escape from living folks. But it’s the dead folks that do him the damage. It’s the dead ones that lay quiet in one place and dont try to hold him, that he cant escape from” (75). The living folks of the town try to run him out, but they are just an annoyance. Hightower stays because of his grandfather and his wife—both in Jefferson. Maybe he also stays because of his ministry, which is (figuratively) dead.

The generalized phrasing (“A man” rather than “he”) of Bunch’s statement suggests

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that it may be thematic. Moving back two sentences from the earlier quote in the search for more theme evidence, we find that “A fellow is more afraid of the trouble he might have than he ever is of the trouble he’s already got. He’ll cling to trouble he’s used to before he’ll risk a change” (75). Taken together, this statement and the previous one are very strong thematic material—they fit Hightower’s behavior, but they also fit others’. Christmas, for instance, could be said to be held by McEachern—his behavior is like McEachern’s even after he is dead—and shows fear of change when he thinks of marrying Miss Burden: “Something in him flashed *Why not? It would mean ease, security, for the rest of your life. [...]* thinking ‘No. If I give in now, I will deny all the thirty years that I have lived to make me what I chose to be.’” Once the reader has caught on to this possible theme, he or she will be alert for further development. Perhaps the unchangingness of the South will turn out to be a major theme of the novel—only by reading on can the reader find out.