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THE DEFINITION OF INNOCENCE

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THE DEFINITION OF INNOCENCE

APPROVED BY

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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CHAPTER I

A PRELIMINARY NOTE ON THE NOVEL

> Theory, which is expectation, always determines criticism, and never more than when it is unconscious. The reputed condition of no-theory in the critic's mind is illusory, and a dangerous thing. . . . John Crowe Ransom

For a generic study to be useful, it should both potentially enrich the experience of any novel subsumed in the class, and at the same time relate coherently the class means and effects to those of other classes in terms of their common categorical properties. Indeed, on the assumption that our appreciation of a thing depends to a considerable extent upon our apprehension of what it is and how it relates to an orderly world of similar objects, we may assert that these two criteria of generic criticism are inseparable, and that the failure to observe their interdependence leads both to the proliferation of overlapping generic modes and to the construction of theoretical systems severely abstracted from the world of actual novels. Therefore, although the definition of the essential nature of the novel as a literary genre is far beyond the scope and intention of this introductory essay, it is desirable to indicate in broad terms what basic idea of the novel substantiates the idea of the particular

class of novels to be considered.

And first we must establish the source or basis for such a conception. Obvious as it seems, yet it needs to be emphasized that the only possible source for an idea of the novel is: the experience of actual novels. Notwithstanding Professor Frye's persuasive argument to the contrary (that "criticism comes out of it [direct experience] but cannot be built upon it"[1]), and however objectively real the world of literary objects may be in an ontological sense, it nevertheless remains true that all of our statements about literature stem ultimately from the experience it has produced in its audience, including us.

Although this experiential basis of our formulations introduces an increment of relativism that could prove chaotic, we are protected from the anarchy of impressionistic subjectivity by the constant correlation of our personal experience with the collective experience of others, selected and methodized, which we call literary history and criticism. Thus the process of theoretical formulation is comparative and synthetic: we experience, we analyze our experience and compare the results with the reports of others, and we arrive at theoretical amalgams that seem at once comprehensive and central.

The personal experience of reading a novel is most fruitfully contemplated, for analytical purposes, in terms of the formal constituents of that experience, especially if we assent to an idea of form such as that in Shipley's Dictionary of World Literature: "The character of an object as experienced, or the structure into which the elements of an

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[1]Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 27-28.

experience of a thing are organized."[1] Now the reading of any novel with a view to the broad outlines of its form impresses us immediately with the dual modality of that form, its appearance under two seemingly diverse aspects: form in process and form in retrospect or scheme. The typical experience of fiction consists of an initial line of action (as yet unspecified as to content) which interacts with subsequent accretions of matter presented through various techniques; meanings and feelings emerge continually both to modify the central line and to be modified by it and pushed to the periphery of consciousness. But at the end of this process, its forces and ingredients coagulate and abstract within schemes, patterns, concepts--whatever our critical vocabulary and sensitivity enable us to construct. This residual conception is form in retrospect, and it is apt to resolve gradually into an idea of substance or content, to be increasingly detached from the process which produced it.

The existence of some such formal dualism in the novel is repeatedly attested by the witness of other critics, although I would not claim that the following critics have precisely the same dualistic elements in mind. But Percy Lubbock, for example, observes that while the novel occurs to us "as a moving stream of impressions,"[2] as "rather a process, a passage of experience, than a thing of size and shape,"[3] yet "the impressions that succeed one another, as the pages of the book are

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[1]James Craig La Driere, "Form," Dictionary of World Literature, ed. Joseph T. Shipley (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953), p. 167.

[2]Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction (New York: The Viking Press, 1957), p. 14.

[3]Ibid., p. 15.

turned, are to be built into a structure"[1] by the reading critic. More methodically, Northrop Frye designates, on the level of "Ethical Criticism," these two aspects of form as mythos ("a secondary imitation of an action,"[2] form when seen "moving through the work from beginning to end"[3]) and dianoia ("a secondary imitation of thought,"[4] form when "examined as stationary"[5]), and asserts their practical equivalence: "The mythos is the dianoia in movement; the dianoia is the mythos in stasis."[6] James Craig La Driere distinguishes "style," which is associated with process, from "form," which "is a concept relevant only to objects as such, to things and not to processes,"[7] but he adds: "But what is a formal element in an object from the point of view of analysis of the constitution of that object may be an element of style from the point of view of an analysis of a process in which the object is involved."[8] C. H. Rickword goes even so far as to question the reality of the conventional categories of novelistic technique, declaring that "'character' is merely the term by which the reader alludes to the pseudo-objective image he composes of his responses to an author's verbal arrangements."[9] The real form of a novel, says Rickword, "only exists as a balance of response on the part of a reader. Hence schematic plot is a construction of the reader's that corresponds to an aspect of that response and stands in merely diagrammatic

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[1] Ibid., p. 17.

[2] Frye, p. 83.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] La Driere, p. 170

[8] Ibid.

[9] "A Note on Fiction," Forms of Modern Fiction, ed. William Van O'Connor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1948), p. 295.

relation to the source. Only as precipitates from the memory are plot or character tangible, yet only in solution have either any emotive valency."[1]

Within processional form or mythos alone all is not pure movement. The essentially temporal character of novelistic form is generated by its linguistic medium; as A. A. Mendilow says, "in a novel, what is being expressed may in itself be either static and the object of description, or dynamic and the object of narration; in either case, the medium of expression--language--is a process."[2] But language itself, as it is found organized in conventional, syntactical forms, possesses a static or spatial dimension as well as its essentially temporal one. The spatial dimension of any word is its semasiological or referential aspect, while its temporal dimension is its syntactical or relational aspect. Or we can borrow again of Professor Frye, this time the distinction between the "descriptive" and "literal" phases of language:

> Whenever we read anything, we find our attention moving in two directions at once. One direction is outward or centrifugal, in which we keep going outside our reading, from the individual words to the things they mean, or, in practice, to our memory of the conventional association between them. The other direction is inward or centripetal, in which we try to develop from the words a sense of the larger pattern they make.[3]

Thus there appears a correspondence between the formal activity of the smallest unit of fictional form, the clause or sentence, and that of the novel as a whole. But of course the same correspondence would be observable in any verbal structure; the particular relevance of this

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[1]Ibid., p. 297.

[2]Time and the Novel (London: Peter Nevill, 1952), p. 23.

[3]Frye, p. 75.

concurrence to our purpose derives from its association with other formal aspects which are peculiarly the novel's. The best approach to this new consideration is through a brief survey of the subjects and historical modes of the novel.

II

First and in brief, such a survey substantiates the opinion of Mark Schorer that the perdurable subject of the novel is the relationship between the self and society:

> The novel seems to exist at a point where we can recognize the intersection of the stream of social history and the stream of the soul. This intersection gives the form its dialectical field, provides the source of those generic tensions that make it possible at all.[1]

Or as John McCormick puts it, "The first concern of novelists in the English pantheon . . . has been man in society and society in its totality, an organism. . . ."[2]

The English novel arises in the early eighteenth century out of the dissolving world of the Middle Ages. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries those religious, ideological, social, political, and economic structures which for several centuries had sustained both public and private life in Europe underwent virtually cataclysmic changes. Without pretending to compass the enormous diversity of these changes, we can perhaps agree that their most important general contribution to the novel's emergence was an increased worldliness in people's regard of life.

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[1]"Foreword: Self and Society," Society and Self in the Novel ("English Institute Essays, 1955"; New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), p. viii.

[2]Catastrophe and Imagination: An Interpretation of the Recent English and American Novel (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957), p. 3.

Especially because of new developments in the areas of science, geography, philosophy, and socio-political theory, people tended to be increasingly interested in the things of this world, an enthusiasm which was reflected in the popularity of such documentary literary forms as diaries, journals, travelogues, histories, letters, and essays. This avid secular curiosity was particularly evident in the rising middle class, wherein

> we have a curious sense of watching a very self-conscious society, reaching out for what it feels it lacks to become complete. . . . Everywhere there seems to be exhibited the desire of people who feel themselves insufficiently educated to be taught about the world.[1]

The importance of the new bourgeoisie for the creation of the novel has been widely remarked and indeed can hardly be overemphasized. For one thing, the middle class constituted a powerful new social member demanding a literature addressed to itself, with its own proper subject. The early eighteenth century was one of those periods "when there emerges a measurably large public which has not been trained to enjoy the books earlier generations delighted in, and which, if not exactly hungry for 'Literature,' is ready for some sort of reading, eager indeed to taste anything which seems specially addressed to it."[2] Such was the new middle class, and

> This business class . . . which hitherto had had the time to read no more than contentious literature on political and religious topics, was now producing leisured sons and . . . daughters, who wanted to read something which bore directly upon the life they knew and lived.[3]

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[1]Bonamy Dobree, English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century: 1700-1740. Vol. VII of The Oxford History of English Literature, ed. F. P. Wilson and Bonamy Dobree (12 vols.; New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 9-10.

[2]Ibid., p. 3.

[3]Ibid., pp. 3-4.

Hence the taste for the didactic and the factual in literature, as well as the displacement of the "mystique of royalty" by the "mystique of commerce."[1]

But in addition to creating a demand for a new literature, the middle class and its instrument of power, money, were both symptom and cause of a profound social change that generated the "dialectical field" of the novel—the problem of the self in society. For the middle class and its concomitant forces for change contributed to a social fluidity that discomposed the traditional structure of society and hence tended to subvert the bases of personal identity. To be born a peasant's son, or a prince, in the thirteenth century was to have one's lot, however miserable or decent the prospect, laid out rather neatly before him; it was to enjoy, or suffer, a relatively fixed worldly destiny within the limits of his particular station, recognizable to all. But the admission of money and trade as respectable, or at least powerful, social forces introduced the possibilities of rising and falling socially, and even more than that, they introduced an element of uncertainty about the appearance and reality of one's identity.

Lionel Trilling has described this last result, and its relation to the rise and subject of the novel, quite clearly in his essay on "Manners, Morals, and the Novel." Money, "the great solvent of the solid fabric of the old society, the great generator of illusion," produces snobbery, or "pride in status without pride in function."[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 11.

[2] Lionel Trilling, The Liberal Imagination (New York: The Viking Press, 1950), p. 209.

> And it is an uneasy pride of status. It always asks, "Do I belong—do I really belong? And does he belong? And if I am observed talking to him, will it make me seem to belong or not to belong?" . . . The dominant emotions of snobbery are uneasiness, self-consciousness, self-defensiveness, the sense that one is not quite real but can in some way acquire reality.[1]

In a relatively fluid society characterized by a constant shifting of personnel in classes, a great emphasis is placed on appearances because one "acquires" reality very largely through appearances. "To appear to be established is one of the ways of becoming established."[2] And according to Trilling, the first novelist, Cervantes, deals with this phenomenon and so

> sets for the novel the problem of appearance and reality: the shifting and conflict of social classes becomes the field of the problem of knowledge, of how we know and of how reliable our knowledge is, which at that very moment of history is vexing the philosophers and scientists.[3]

How did the English novelist, as distinct from other writers of imaginative prose, explore these new problems and interests? Various forms of prose antedating the novel had been used with increasing popularity primarily for the portrayal and analysis of society. As early as the sixteenth century, for example, the picaresque tales and realistic pamphlets of such writers as Nash, Delony, and Greene seem to exhibit this social orientation beneath the appeal of sensational episodes. A century later the character-sketches and imaginary letters display in fictional forms the same tendency to report, portray, and analyze society, that we see in the diaries, journals, essays, histories, and biographies

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 209-10.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 210.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 209.

among non-fictional forms.[1] Thus considerably before the crucial appearance of Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding, the means for rendering what was to become the social side of the novel's thematic field were solidly established by convention.

At the risk of an oversimplification virtually inherent in such a venture, I should generalize that the novel proper appeared when these forms were subjected to the molding principles of epic and dramatic structure: the consequential succession of probable events, unified around a central character and issue, ascending through conflict and complication to a climax and thence declining to a resolution. The resultant fusion, which was entered upon and achieved unconsciously by Defoe and Richardson in practice, was fully realized and rationalized theoretically by Fielding.

> In Pamela Richardson, who had originally intended nothing more than a "letter-writer" for the middle class, stumbled into fictional form; in Joseph Andrews both the preface, which is the proclamation of a theory, and the conduct of the novel in the light of that theory, announce a new aesthetic principle.[2]

The main new ingredient of that principle and its execution is the presentation of the self, by means here of the epic structure, in significant, interactive, relationship with the "not-self," or society. And it is highly portentous for the novel's subsequent development that both Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones, while presenting the conventional, picaresque review of society, likewise conclude with the discovery of their protagonists'

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[1]Several literary historians have remarked the impulse toward social portrait in these prose forms. See, for example, Wilbur L. Cross, "Literary Forms that contributed to the Novel," The Development of the English Novel (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1930), pp. 22-25.

[2]Howard Mumford Jones, Introduction to Joseph Andrews (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), p. xvi.

real identities.[1]

The form of the novel is thus from its inception a composite structure where two lines of interest and their corresponding modes of representation converge. One subject is the individual self, both outer ("character") and inner ("soul"),[2] whose condition and development are typically represented by techniques which constitute the novel's action. These techniques would normally consist of summary narrative, narrative, and scenic presentations. The second subject is "society" in the broadest sense possible, which comes to us through what Andrew Lytle appropriately calls the "enveloping action," "that animated condition against which the action takes place, or out of which it comes."[3] The enveloping action would normally comprise such techniques as descriptive and expository presentations, as well as "flat" characterizations, narrative digressions, and other

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[1]A similar conclusion about the relationship of dramatic structure to the formation of the novel has been reached by Robert Liddell: "The danger of insisting too much on the long history of the Novel . . . is that we are thereby blinded to the important heritage which the modern novel has received—not from earlier novelists, but from the Drama. The relationship between the Novel and the Drama should be understood, as a preliminary to criticism. The history of the Drama is the pre-history of the Novel." A Treatise on the Novel (London: Jonathan Cape, 1947), p. 17.

[2]Some distinction between outer self and inner self is generally accepted, I believe. The particular terms "character" and "soul," which seem appropriate to designate this distinction, I borrow from the artist Maurice Grosser, who says of the portrait as a genre of pictorial art: "The characteristic quality of a portrait is the peculiar sort of communication, almost a conversation, that the person who looks at the picture is able to hold with the person painted there. This depends on there being depicted on the canvas at the same time both the sitter's soul—or how he feels to himself—and his character—or the part he plays in the outside world." The Painter's Eye (New York: The New American Library, 1956), pp. 15-16.

[3]Andrew Nelson Lytle, "The Son of Man: He Will Prevail," Sewanee Review, LXIII (Winter, 1955), 114.

materials not bearing directly on the action.

This schematism is intended merely to suggest the general disposition of formal matters within the novel as a genre; it is clearly an excessive abstraction from the forms "in solution" of actual novels, where such complicating factors as point of view, symbolism, and style must be taken into consideration. For example, when an operative first-person point of view displaces the convention of epic omniscience, material that from the latter perspective would belong exclusively to the enveloping action, comes to participate in the action itself, insofar as such material helps to reveal and develop the situation of the first-person narrator-participant.

Such particular technical combinations, however, can be interpreted by the invocation of principles strictly corollary from the diagrammatic relationship between form and signification which I have sketched. The idea of that relationship itself approximates the Russian formalists' idea of the novel's "motivation," as their usage is interpreted by Professors Wellek and Warren:

> Composition or motivation (in the largest sense) will include narrative method: "scale," "pace,"; devices: the proportioning of scenes or drama to picture or straight narrative and of both to narrative summary or digest.[1]

And there is always an ideational significance to motivation in this technical sense:

> The term motivation might well be adopted into English as valuable precisely for its double reference to structural or narrative composition and to the inner structure of psychological, social, or philosophical theory of why men behave as they do—some theory of causation, ultimately.[2]

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[1]Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1949), pp. 225-26.

[2]Ibid., p. 225.

We have now to specify and elaborate how the one aspect of motivation, the structural composition, can imply the other aspect, "some theory of causation, ultimately."[1]

III

My opening remarks postulated a "dual modality of form" in the total effect of the novel, as well as in the syntactical structures that constitute its smallest compositional integers. It now appears, from our glance at the novel's origin, generic concerns, and typical construction, that this same dualism pervades the intermediate levels of technique. That is to say, passages of description and exposition, representing the enveloping action, tend to suspend the temporal propulsion of the action, to detach the reader's attention from the progression of story and focus it on objects which are relatively static and self-subsistent, compared with the forces of action. On the other hand, passages of close narrative and dialogue, representing the main action, create direction and flow in the reader's response and tend toward the dynamic, temporal, and causal. The objects of representation in narrative and scene (actions and speech-thought) are contingent and relational, dependent for their meaning upon temporal nexus with other objects of the same order; they involve the reader in experience characterized by absorption, engagement, expectation, and the feeling of immediacy and indeterminacy.

These experiential phenomena--distance and detachment on the one hand, immediacy and engagement on the other--suggest the terms "pictorial" and "dramatic" for their formal determinants. The terms here may recall, although they are not intended to parallel exactly, Henry James's repeated

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[1]I would stress "ultimately" to avoid any suggestion that a "theory of causation" is the immediate attraction of fiction.

emphasis upon "picture" and "drama" in the novel, especially his association of intensity with the dramatic art (prefaces to Roderick Hudson and The Ambassadors) and his opinion that the novel consists of some combination of alternating picture and drama. But I mean by "pictorial" and "dramatic" to invoke also the quality of the authentic encounter with those arts: how, in the one case, one stands at a distance and views from the outside a fixed, static, limited object, while at a dramatic performance he loses his personal identity, projects into the dramatis personae, and is caught up in the point-by-point movement of the action. The progression by means of alternating picture and drama on all levels with these concomitant psychological termini, constitutes the structural side of motivation.

The "inner structure" of motivation, the implied "theory of why men behave as they do," is much more hazardous to conjecture, especially without the specification of material. The apparently universal interest in "story" of all kinds probably stems from some deep-seated psychical need to reveal or create a human order from the flux of time, but the novel's particular interest is the more closely defined field of causation in human behavior, and specifically the enigmatic problems of free will and determinism. The extent of man's self-determination and of his determination by forces beyond his willful control is the plane of human existence measured by the novel's combination of enveloping action and action, or "man's plight and his effort to do something about it."[1]

The pictorial elements of form, which tend to set the reader at a distance and to establish fixed, static frames and backgrounds for the

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[1]Lytle, p. 128.

action, correspond in general to a deterministic or fatalistic view of the world, in which man appears the creature of powers beyond his ordering. The dramatic elements of form, on the other hand, absorb the reader in the action and produce effects of contingency and indeterminacy which would support a voluntaristic conception of man. These competing views of man's nature, and their dependence on one's perspective, have been well described by Professor Henry Myers in a slightly different but still applicable context:

> The true difference between literature and other kinds of writing is indicated by the simple, but often forgotten, fact that there are two fundamentally different views of life, two ways of looking at man and the universe, one from within, the other from the outside.
>
> The first view is personal and insighted. This view is more than anthropocentric; it places each individual at the center of the universe and makes it possible for him to say, as Schopenhauer said: "The world is my idea."[1]

This internal view produces a world of values, of good and bad actions, of success and failure, victory and defeat. In contrast,

> The second view is impersonal and external: it had its beginnings in the invention of the weights, measures, scales, clocks, thermometers, and calendars which make impersonal and external description possible.[2]

And, Professor Myers concludes,

> When man sees himself from within and the world as his world, he is the measure of all things; when he insists upon viewing himself from the outside only, he discovers he is no longer the measure of anything.[3]

Man as "the measure of all things" seems free, but man "no longer the measure of anything" seems a creature and victim of his environment.

Thus we have arrived at yet another level of significance in our

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[1] "Literature, Science, and Democracy," The Province of Prose, ed. William R. Keast and Robert E. Streeter (New York: Harper and Bros., 1956), p. 684.

[2] Ibid. [3] Ibid.

unfolding correspondences. We now have the equation: drama--action--engagement--intericrity--voluntarism against the counter-equation: picture--enveloping action--detachment--exteriority--determinism. Now these correspondences, while generally valid, are by no means absolute, nor uniform, nor distinctly separable in practice, where they are subject to so many variables that there is no danger of a theoretical rigidity destructive of aesthetic experience. Yet we have discovered experiential, substantive, and technical parallels, on all levels of novelistic form, that cannot be ignored and can in fact be used for an idea of the novel and thence for generic criticism. From the smallest compositional unit, with its substantive-predicative pattern, through the intermediate levels of technique, with their alternations of picture and drama, to the completed form, with its dual aspects of rhythm and "emergent constructs," we have found some linguistic constructions that tend to be associated with relatively static and spatial conditions, objects, and ideas, and some that are associated with temporality and action. We have found, furthermore, experiential and ideational analogues to these formal ingredients: first, effects of distance and disengagement which, taken with the represented matter, result in a reductive, deterministic view of man; then effects of immediacy, absorption, and contingency which correspond with the represented action to produce a magnific, voluntaristic view of man.

We might therefore imagine the novel as constituting something like a quadrant of literary form bounded on the one side by drama and then lyric poetry, with their respectively "purer" expressions of personal freedom and value, and on the other side by such non-imaginative forms as history and sociology, with their public, external, and largely deterministic representations of society. Formally, the coordinate axis

on the side of drama would be the strictly scenic technique, with its equivalence of represented-presented time and its total concentration on the presentness of individual action, while the other coordinate would be the panoramic, descriptive, expository complex of techniques, with their abstraction from the temporal process and their assertion of more or less timeless patterns of fate governing individual lives. Substantively, the first coordinate stands for self and the second for society or milieu. Theoretically, the form of a novel could be plotted by the use of these coordinate axes, and its theme determined by the shape and location of the resulting curve, which would represent graphically the novel's motivation.

So far the word "novel" has been used in its usual sense, as signifying that magnitude of the "ultimate" genres (drama, poetry, fiction) with which we are concerned. Other writers, however, have quite often used "novel" rather to designate one species of prose fiction which contrasts with "romance," the two together—and perhaps other forms as well—comprising the whole genre of fiction. Such analysis usually invokes a canon of verisimilitude, or fidelity to the realities of daily life in society, on the basis of which the novel and romance are typically distinguished as in the following excerpt from Clara Reeve's "The Progress of Romance" (1785):

> The Novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it is written. The Romance, in lofty and elevated language, describes what never happened nor is likely to happen. The Novel gives a familiar relation of such things as pass every day before our eyes . . . and the perfection of it is to represent every scene in so easy and natural a manner and to make them appear so probable as to deceive us into a persuasion . . . that all is real. . . .[1]

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[1]Cited by Cross, pp. xiv-xv.

A similar association of the novel with commonplace reality is apparent in Hazlitt's assertion that "we find there [in the novel] a close imitation of man and manners; we see the very web and texture of society as it really exists, and as we meet it when we come into the world."[1]

American writers were the first to observe that, however fantastic its characters and events, the romance conveys its own type of reality, "the truth of the human heart," in Hawthorne's familiar phrase, against the novel's "very minute fidelity . . . to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience."[2] Likewise William Gilmore Simms contrasts the novel, and its "felicitous narration of common and daily occurring events, and the grouping and delineation of characters in the ordinary conditions of society,"[3] with the romance, which "invests individuals with an absorbing interest," "hurries them rapidly through crowding and exacting events, in a narrow space of time," and "seeks for its adventures among the wild and wonderful."[4] Bolder even than Hawthorne, Simms dares to imply the superiority of romance to novel: "The Romance is of loftier origin than the Novel. It approximates the poem. It may be described as an amalgam of the two. The standards of Romance . . . are very much those of the epic."[5]

Later commentators have seen in American romance the literary consequence of peculiarly American social conditions, and in romance at large

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[1]Cited by Walter Allen, The English Novel (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1958), p. xvi.

[2]Preface to The House of the Seven Gables in The Complete Novels and Selected Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne, ed. Norman Holmes Pearson (New York: The Modern Library, 1937), p. 243.

[3]Preface to The Yemassee: A Romance of Carolina, ed. C. Hugh Holman (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961), p. 5.

[4]Ibid., p. 6.

[5]Ibid., p. 5.

the enactment of universal psychical impulses. In his "broken circuit" thesis Richard Chase claims that American romance, in such representative figures as Cooper, Hawthorne, and Melville, springs from the absence in America of an organic society mediating between the individual and the ultimate powers of nature, state, and God. The literary imagination conditioned by this and such related historical factors as the frontier and the "Manichaean quality of New England Puritanism" tends to interpret life as an irreducible dilemma, a matter of conflict between irreconcilable contrarieties. The literary result is romance, which exhibits the following among its traits:

> Character itself becomes . . . somewhat abstract and ideal. . . . The plot we may expect to be highly colored. Astonishing events may occur, and these are likely to have a symbolic or ideological, rather than a realistic, plausibility. Being less committed to the immediate rendition of reality than the novel, the romance will more freely veer toward mythic, allegorical, and symbolistic forms.[1]

And Northrop Frye has similarly remarked the tendency toward ideality of generic romance:

> The essential difference between novel and romance lies in the conception of characterization. The romancer does not attempt to create "real people" so much as stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes. It is in the romance that we find Jung's libido, anima, and shadow reflected in the hero, heroine, and villain respectively. That is why the romance so often radiates a glow of subjective intensity that the novel lacks, and why a suggestion of allegory is constantly creeping in around its fringes. . . . The novelist deals with personality, with characters wearing their <u>personae</u> or social masks. He needs the framework of a stable society. . . . The romancer deals with individuality, with characters <u>in vacuo</u> idealized by revery. . . .[2]

The relationship between novel and romance is an intricate question, far too intricate for development here; still I should like to

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[1]Richard Chase, <u>The American Novel and Its Tradition</u> (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1957), p. 13.

[2]Frye, pp. 304-305.

relate some of these suggested characteristics of the two species to the preceding discussion of novelistic form. And first, from the reader's, or affective, side of any work in question, it seems that classification as novel or romance will depend far more upon formal than upon material considerations, insofar as these can be separated. Specifically, it appears that the closer a work approximates the dramatic axis of our imaginary quadrant, the more inclined we will be to call it a novel, and that the more it approaches the pictorial axis, the better the name "romance" will suit it.

The novelistic qualities mentioned by Clara Reeve and the other observers ensue from a high proportion of dramatic representation for several reasons. First, the dramatic technique, epitomized in the closely rendered scene, not only implies *per se* the presence of human society and of social intercourse, but gives a more vivid sense of this background than is available through the pictorial techniques. Second, the dramatic technique gives the impression of "real people" because it exhibits directly that purposeful striving of human will, and hence of wills in conflict, an impression of which embodies one kind of probability and hence produces the sense of "realistic plausibility" found by Chase in the novel. The dramatic technique also simultaneously displays the "*personae* or social masks" of characters and suggests, by indirection at least, their inner selves or souls, thus creating an impression of character complexity, or "realism" of characterization.

Still another attribute of the novel--its impression of "real life and manners," of "the very web and texture of society as it really exists," of "the ordinary conditions of society"--is likewise a result of

the preponderance of dramatic over pictorial techniques, but this result involves certain relationships among author, material, and audience which underlie the dramatic form and, as it were, permit it.

What is meant by "the very web and texture of society" is substantially what Lionel Trilling means when he defines "manners" as "a culture's hum and buzz of implication,"

> . . . the whole evanescent context in which its explicit statements are made. It is that part of a culture which is made up of half-uttered or unuttered or unutterable expressions of value. They are hinted at by small actions, sometimes by the arts of dress or decoration, sometimes by tone, gesture, emphasis, or rhythm, sometimes by the words that are used with a special frequency or a special meaning. They are the things that for good or bad draw the people of a culture together and that separate them from the people of another culture.[1]

Now any society or culture almost by definition possesses manners in this sense, which simply means conventions about the meaning and value of things. Still it is true that a long-standing and relatively stable society, where such conventions have accumulated and universally disseminated, possesses them in a much more definite and accessible form.

The novelist in such a society finds himself in the same situation as the dramatist; either may use the terms of his background material in a synecdochic fashion with the confidence that their implications will be understood. The dramatist, who flourishes only in a relatively homogeneous society or before a restricted class of audience in a pluralist society, is able to invoke whole orders of meaning and value by a minimum of physical representation: a crown or sceptre invokes both the idea of and current attitude toward monarchy; a swastika, in our time, the memory and hatred of Nazism, and so on. A dramatist in a society characterized

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[1]Trilling, pp. 206-207.

by ambiguous or competing conventions must specify his intentions very precisely, by thorough stage directions, expansive settings, exhaustive exposition, caricature, and other devices. In short, the dramatist is extraordinarily dependent upon the cultural conventions of his own society, though we as readers of drama are seldom aware of the extent of that dependence until we encounter a play from a culture with whose conventions we ourselves are not familiar.

The fictionist is not nearly so inhibited as the dramatist by his surrounding culture. Lacking a society of settled conventions, he may turn, like Fenimore Cooper, Hawthorne, and Melville, to some form of romance, as may indeed the romancer by preference, such as Scott or Emily Bronte, who possesses the requisite material and audience. But the writer who lives in a society with identifiable manners is enabled by this fact to use his materials in a dramatic fashion, that is to say without extensive expository mediation by him between his material and his audience. Jane Austen illustrates the practice of the novelist in this as in other respects, while Sir Walter Scott can stand for the romancer, who must create or establish within the work itself the conventions operative upon the characters.

On the affective side of the created product, the reader of romance encounters large portions of descriptive and expository material which, although necessary as preparation for action, tend cumulatively to overshadow or overpower the action, producing in general those effects associated with the pictorial method. In romance the material pictorially rendered creates in the reader's mind patterns of meaning, or lines of expectation, which seem to dominate the forces of action, and that is

at least one reason why the characters of romance tend to be "stylized figures," "somewhat abstract and ideal," rather than "real people," and also why the events have a "symbolic or ideological, rather than a realistic, plausibility."

Besides the considerations previously mentioned, the realistic plausibility of the novel ensues because the details of enveloping action—including background material of physical setting, manners, minor characters, and so on—become visible only as they enter the action. They are not rendered completely but synecdochically, with the result that they become assimilated to the action, rather than the reverse. Probably the "realism" of this effect is due to the fact that in actual life we are more or less indifferent to our surroundings except as they enter our lives in direct support of, or opposition to, our willed endeavors. At any rate the idea of fictional realism suggested here is that responsible for (though it is not limited to) Henry James's practice of securing the "direct impression of life" by tracing the deepening apprehension of a "fine central intelligence."

The dramatization of static materials—or in our present terms, the conversion of romantic into novelistic modes—is the principal formal development of modern fiction, according to Allen Tate and Caroline Gordon, who call the development "symbolic naturalism" and contrast its kind of fiction with "the naturalistic school as represented originally by Zola, and later in the United States by Dreiser, Lewis, and Dos Passos."

> The other branch of naturalism . . . comes down from Flaubert through Chekhov, James, and Joyce—four great masters who perfected the art of dramatizing the Enveloping Action without offering it to the reader in large chunks: the art of making the inert detail move. The "social background" remains inert unless it can be brought into the story

through the immediate situations of the leading characters.[1] "Naturalism" as a label may recollect too much of the philosophical impetus behind Zolaesque practice to be genuinely useful here; nevertheless the method described by Tate and Gordon—the dramatization of enveloping action with the resultant intense participation required of the reader—clearly establishes the connection between the dramatic method and the novelistic effect, and shows that this major wing of modern fiction has veered rather to the novel than to romance. And strange as it at first may seem, the modern tradition established by Zola, celebrated for its "social realism" because of its extensive documentation, turns out to be generally romantic in motivation.

In concluding these observations, we should stress the fact that romantic and novelistic methods and effects are always intermingled in particular works of fiction, which now by definition is a mixture of the two formal modes. As Northrop Frye says,

> "Pure" examples of either form are never found; there is hardly any modern romance that could not be made out to be a novel, and vice versa. The forms of prose fiction are mixed, like racial strains in human beings, not separable like the sexes.[2]

Still we can ascertain, by general impression as well as by close analysis, the overall tenor of a given work, and thus arrive at a more accurate and coherent estimate of its intention, form, and worth.

For generic criticism, too, the concepts of romantic and of novelistic motivation are highly useful in helping to discern real affinities and differences beneath the superficies of novels. Generic criticism

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[1]The House of Fiction (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), p. 631.

[2]Frye, p. 305.

has erred too often in the direction of broad substantive classifications (for example, the sociological novel, the historical novel, the political novel, The American City Novel,[1] The Novel of Violence in America[2]), which group works together according to apparent subjects without sufficient regard for the differential executions of those subjects. On the other hand, if we agree with Wellek and Warren that "our conception of genre should lean to the formalistic side,"[3] we should require that the concept of form be broader and less normative than that found in such a study as Lubbock's The Craft of Fiction.

The idea of motivation, based on the proportion and incidence of pictorial and dramatic techniques, with their appropriate affective corollaries, provides a reasonably objective formalistic gauge and at the same time establishes a connection between form and ideational content wanting in other approaches. It comprehends formal elements operating analogously within a particular work at several levels of magnitude, from style to structure and characterization, and also defines a nature common, I believe, to all long fictional works in prose. Using this conceptual instrument, we could assort works broadly according to their primarily novelistic or romantic impulses; sub-classification could then proceed by the specification of types of enveloping action and action, while individual authors and works could be characterized by their special emphases and interests within the limits of their class. The description of a

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[1]Blanche Housman Gelfant, The American City Novel (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954).

[2]W. M. Frohock, The Novel of Violence in America: 1920-1950 (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1950).

[3]Theory of Literature, p. 243.

class should probably indicate the operative factors, which is roughly a substantive consideration, the mode of their operation, which is more specifically formal, and the relationship between the two, which is thematic.

I think that the idea and its methodical application will prove fruitful in the study of novels if we bear in mind its tentative, flexible nature as well as the goal of generic criticism, which shares with all criticism the intention, in Eliot's words, "to promote the understanding and enjoyment of literature."[1] The validity of the theory and method depends upon the degree to which they illuminate and enhance the enjoyment of the novels subjected to them. Or as E. K. Brown put it in his study of the novel's various rhythms,

> Isolating a single element or group of elements in the novel, and considering it in unreal separation from all the other elements with which it actually fuses, is artificial, but so is all criticism. The artificiality is justified if when one returns from the criticism to the novels these appear more intelligible and more delightful. That is the test.[2]

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[1]T. S. Eliot, "The Frontiers of Criticism," Sewanee Review, LXIV (Autumn, 1956), 540.

[2]Rhythm in the Novel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950), p. 7.

CHAPTER II

THE REGIONAL NOVEL: CULTURAL AND LITERARY REGIONALISM

A regional novel is a long fiction whose enveloping action is a dramatized regional culture. The dramatization of enveloping action distinguishes the regional novel from the regional romance, which portrays a similar culture but renders it in a typically romantic or pictorial fashion. Because of this dramatization, the reader of the regional novel is drawn into intimate, immediate contact with materials which, by the nature of regions, are initially unfamiliar to him; but by progressive exposure to the strange materials in a direct manner analogous to the experience of the novel's "native" characters, the reader undergoes, as it were, an initiation into the regional culture of the novel. This response of the reader has been described most aptly by Joseph Frank in connection with Ulysses:

> Joyce intended . . . to build up in the reader's mind a sense of Dublin as a totality. . . . As the reader progresses through the novel . . . this sense was to be imperceptibly acquired; and, at the conclusion of the novel, it might almost be said that Joyce literally wanted the reader to become a Dubliner. For this is what Joyce demands: that the reader have at hand the same instinctive knowledge of Dublin life, the same sense of Dublin as a huge, surrounding organism, which the Dubliner possesses as a birthright.[1]

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[1] "Spatial Form in the Modern Novel," Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction: 1920-1951, ed. John W. Aldridge (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1952), p. 46.

Several questions of critical methodology and stance demand immediate attention before we proceed to the refinements of definition, and Professor Frank's passage introduces one of these: the question of intention. Does the regional novelist intend the described effect, and is the regional culture even his true subject? The answer is probably "no" to both questions. As for subject, most regional novelists would disclaim and sometimes have disclaimed the intention to write primarily "about" their native cultures. Faulkner, for example, frequently says that he is not writing about the South itself as subject, but rather about "universal verities" of the human heart in the people and conditions he knows best,[1] and it would follow that he wants the reader to acquire an insight rather into these verities, than into the particularly Southern qualities of his people and place. But this absence of conscious intention does not attenuate the fact that, when a novelist dramatizes a strange place as though it were as familiar to the reader as to himself, the reader will undergo the experience described, with its corollary thematic implications. The question of intention can indeed be pertinent, as will be apparent shortly, but in a more subtilized form.

Another important preliminary question is the broader issue of place in fiction: what it is, how it operates, how it relates, if at all, to actual locale. As usually conceived, place, like character and plot, is an "emergent construct" synonymous with "setting," a typical, fairly conventional definition of which is,

the physical, and sometimes spiritual, background against which the

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[1]See, for example, Faulkner in the University, ed. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1959), p. 197.

> action of a narrative . . . takes place. The elements which go to make up a setting are: (1) the actual geographical location, its topography, scenery, and . . . physical arrangements . . . (2) the occupations and daily manner of living of the characters; (3) the time or period in which the action takes place . . . (4) the general environment of the characters, e.g., religious, mental, moral, social, and emotional conditions through which the people in the narrative move.[1]

Such a definition is quite accurate from one point of view, and is especially valuable for its inclusiveness, for showing that place or setting is not restricted to physical location but radiates into the whole environmental context of action.

Still this conception is limited to only one aspect of place, the retrospective, as is partially evident in the passive phrasing (setting is that "against which," "in which," "through which" persons and events move); it disregards the operative, "rhythmical" mode of place in fiction. Now first we should observe that, while place is a universal element in fiction, fictional types do exist in which locale performs either an insignificant or a primarily symbolical role, serving either as a hardly visible backdrop for the action or as generative, incantatory signs of ideas and emotions. A nearly pure specimen of the first type is Marguerite Duras' The Square, whose background is virtually as empty as a geometrical square, while such a work as William Goyen's In a Farther Country illustrates the second type.

But examples of these types do not abound and are usually found to be short, rather experimental fiction. In the main, fiction relies heavily on place or setting for the body of significant factors which determine, constitute, define, illustrate, or otherwise relate to, the

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[1]William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1936), p. 401.

characters involved in the action. Eudora Welty probably does not exaggerate the function of place in fiction when she says, "The truth is, fiction depends for its life on place. Location is the crossroads of circumstance, the proving ground of 'What happened? Who's here? Who's coming?'. . . ."[1] And Frederick J. Hoffman, defining "place" as "the present condition of a scene that is modified through its having been inhabited in time,"[2] observes that "place is indispensable to scene in any literature that is more than merely abstract."[3]

In fiction where place has this typical importance, it may be present in the pictorial (romantic) or dramatic (novelistic) operative modes. In the former, place is rendered in large blocks or segments, for example in long descriptive passages by a third-person narrator who establishes massively the physical place, customs, manners, and conventions affecting the principal characters. This is in fact the dominant mode of place in fiction, so common that it hardly requires illustration. The practice of writers such as Hawthorne, Balzac, Thackerary, Tolstoy, and Dreiser, however, shows the method in its purest form. It is difficult to generalize the effect of a technique with so many possible variations, yet we can say that the pictorial rendition of place usually operates to establish principles, norms, or patterns of behavior which are going to determine, in some way, the main action. Thus Percy Lubbock speaks of Balzac's delight in "the effect of the generalized picture . . . supporting

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[1]"Place in Fiction," South Atlantic Quarterly, LV (Jan., 1956), 59.

[2]"The Sense of Place," South: Modern Southern Literature in Its Cultural Setting, ed. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., and Robert D. Jacobs (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1961), p. 61.

[3]Ibid.

the play of action,"[1] and concludes that "Balzac's care in creating the scene . . . is truly economical; it is not merely a manner of setting the stage for the drama, it is a provision of character and energy for the drama when it begins."[2]

In the dramatic mode, on the other hand, place appears piecemeal and indirectly, with spoken words, gestures, and fragments of thought referring to the conventions and other aspects of place which may never in themselves be fully articulated. We shall have a great deal more to say about the techniques of dramatization; at present we can observe merely that, where such dramatization of place occurs as in Henry James, Ford Madox Ford, James Joyce, and the Southern writers of this study, the concept of place emerges only gradually, by considerable inferential activity on the reader's part, with the consequent addition of an ontological theme to whatever else may be present (that is to say, at least a part of the reader's attention is attracted to the problem of <u>what</u> environmental forces constitute and motivate character and action, as well as to the usual interest in <u>how</u> they operate and the result they produce). Another consequence of the dramatization of place is that the ingredients of place are first perceived <u>as</u> they are acting—or perhaps, indeed, even <u>after</u> they have acted—upon the chief characters, so that their appearance is marked by a vitality and intensity foreign to the purely pictorial technique.

Hence, we cannot adequately describe the element of place in fiction by reference merely to its content, but must consider as well its

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[1]<u>Craft of Fiction</u>, p. 204.

[2]<u>Ibid.</u>, p. 206

mode of rendition—its entrance into and incidence upon the action. If we regard only the former, "emergent" aspect, two works containing roughly equivalent local materials—say Faulkner's Light in August and T. S. Stribling's Teeftallow—would show a similarity of place amounting to virtual identity. Viewed retrospectively and abstractly, the hypocritical, puritanical morality, the obsession with the past, the predilection for violence, the social and racial discrimination, and other apparently common features of place in these two works could be so described as to make them appear equivalent, as I in fact have just done. But this approach by itself nullifies the disparate operative modes of place "in solution" in the two works, one of which is distinctly dramatic and the other pictorial. We should conclude, therefore, that the characterization of place in fiction must comprehend the manner of its emergence quite as much as the construct which emerges.

The comparison between Faulkner and Stribling raises the question of the extent to which the fictional locales of two authors, or indeed of two novels, can be fruitfully compared. How can we generalize the practice of a writer in his several works, let alone that of several writers, if we accept the sound critical principle that the setting of a work, like its other parts, is unique to the aesthetic organism which it helps constitute? In a very exact sense, Yoknapatawpha County is not a place but as many places as the stories where it appears, insofar as emphases and attitudes, as well as "factual" data, vary from story to story, and as each avatar of Yoknapatawpha is centrally relevant to its own story. Moreover, each novelist has, as Wellek and Warren have remarked, a peculiar fictional "world" of his own, which is so imbued with his unique insight

and sensibility that its elements are inalienable, and therefore incomparable in a sense with elements from other novelists' worlds:

> The novelist offers less a case--a character or event--than a world. The great novelists all have such a world--recognized as overlapping the empirical world but distinct in its self-coherent intelligibility.[1]

I consider this issue important, although it is usually ignored by generic critics, or at best the principle of organic unity and relevance is given only lip-service. For example, in The American City Novel, otherwise a commendable study in many ways, the authoress constructs from sociological data and the included novels an abstract entity, the "city," to which the novels are presumed to refer in their several ways. Here the process of abstraction is not so questionable as the implication that the abstracted concept is somehow the ideal determinant and referent of the individual realizations, and that, furthermore, it is this abstraction of place that really functions in the novels' actions, under the guise of particular representations.

The proper critical approach to this matter is a truly nominalist position. That is to say, we can acknowledge the roughly commonly geneses of a group of novels, and perceive further that their worlds contain certain lines of concurrence, points of agreement, which permit the induction of generalizations about place. But we should never forget the artificiality of these concepts; we should never imagine that they correspond to a reality which the authors were able to embody only partially. Above all, we must not lose contact with the existent, functioning worlds of the novels themselves, so that an ens rationis is mistaken for an ens reale. Thus

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[1]Wellek and Warren, Theory of Literature, p. 221.

in the present study much will be said of the "South" as a common ingredient in the novels subsumed in the class, but this "image" of the South has about--and only--the same real relationship to the worlds of the actual novels, that the idea of redness for example has to the experience of red objects.

Of course the difficulty of maintaining this general distinction is augmented when places in fiction appear to represent actual places in "the empirical world," as in both Mrs. Gelfant's and my subjects. The final question for preliminary consideration is then the relationship between fictional place and real place.

First, it should be axiomatic that fictional place never refers primarily to actual locale, but to the total imaginative world to which it belongs. Here we may recall with profit Northrop Frye's perceptive discourse on literary symbolism where, after distinguishing the centrifugal (descriptive) and centripetal (literal) referents of all language, he notes that still,

> verbal structures may be classified according to whether the final direction of meaning is outward or inward. In descriptive or assertive writing the final direction is outward. Here the verbal structure is intended to represent things external to it, and it is valued in terms of the accuracy with which it does represent them. Correspondence between phenomenon and verbal sign is truth; lack of it is falsehood. . . .[1]

On the other hand,

> In all literary verbal structures the final direction of meaning is inward. In literature the standards of outward meaning are secondary, for literary works do not pretend to describe or assert, and hence are not true, not false. . . . Literary meaning may best be described, perhaps, as hypothetical, and a hypothetical or assumed relation to the external world is part of what is usually meant by the word "imaginative". . . . In literature, questions of fact or

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[1]Frye, p. 11.

> truth are subordinated to the primary literary aim of producing a structure of words for its own sake, and the sign values of symbols are subordinated to their importance as a structure of interconnected motifs.[1]

But if we subscribe to this opinion, as I think we are compelled to by the force of its insight, how can we explain the way that novels by Faulkner and his Southern contemporaries are often used, indiscriminately with such sociological treatises as Caste and Class in a Southern Town and The Mind of the South, as evidence for factual portraits of the Southern region? Or how can Joseph Frank imply that residents of the real Dublin have an initial advantage over non-residents in their approach to the imaginative Ulysses?

One reason is that, while always retaining its primarily literal reference, fictional place can occupy any point on a range of varying descriptive relationships with the real world. Near one end of the range stand settings of a highly generalized, non-specific, typical character, such as we find in Gulliver's Travels and The Castle. Likewise Sinclair Lewis's Zenith contains no intrinsic reference to a specific town but typifies all midwestern towns. The relationship between such settings and actuality is quite clearly the "hypothetical" one mentioned by Frye, and occasions no difficulty. But at the other end of the range occur those highly particularized settings, with their heavy incidence of "centrifugal" material in the form of allusions to historical figures and ascertainable places, which engender the present critical issue.

That problem again is, where such centrifugal or descriptive elements exist and are important, what is their status? What is their

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[1] Ibid.

effect in the works where they are found, and what critical method is appropriate to their consideration? First, since even descriptive elements keep their essentially literal values in imaginative works, we should expect to find topical allusions in a fiction explicable mainly by the total context of the work itself, rather than by extrinsic data. A single element with recognizably descriptive content—say, the name of an actual street, or of a historical person, or an allusion to a real custom or belief—still derives not only its value, but its central meaning from the surrounding constellation within the imaginative order, rather than from its correspondence with anything in the phenomenal world. This aesthetic principle is what Joseph Frank means when, in further explanation of Joyce's method in Ulysses, he says that

> Joyce cannot be read—he can only be re-read. A knowledge of the whole is essential to an understanding of any part; but, unless one is a Dubliner, such knowledge can be obtained only after the book has been read, when all the references are fitted into their proper place and grasped as a unity.[1]

But, second, the presence in an imaginative work of a heavy descriptive, centrifugal element unquestionably imparts an increment of meaning and effect not found in works more purely "literal." The validity of this observation (which of course is an entirely objective, not a normative, judgment) follows from certain truisms about the nature of language itself. Language refers, not to things directly, but to men's ideas or concepts of things, and proper nouns evoke more highly particularized concepts than do common nouns. Hence, when language in a fiction appears to refer to things with particular correspondents in reality, it actually appeals to our pre-existent notions—our knowledge and our

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[1] Critiques and Essays, p. 46.

feelings, in short our conventions—about those things, with the principal result that a determinate structure of meaning is introduced as an operative factor in the action and theme. The story itself may have any of several possible relationships (for example, illustrative, ironical—even negligible) with the invoked structure of meaning, but the latter is always present in some degree. This is not at all to say that the writer necessarily intends such an effect: the fact is that he simply cannot avoid it. And, if I read him correctly, it is just the inescapability of this evocation that leads the meticulous Henry James, in his re-vision of Roderick Hudson, to regret having "named" Northampton, Massachusetts, in that novel.[1]

The operation of this principle can be demonstrated almost at will, but appears most convincingly when we juxtapose two works that differ on this score of place but otherwise share a common subject. Take for example Stephen Crane's The Red Badge of Courage and Shelby Foote's Shiloh, both of which explore the general subject of man's initiation into manhood through the experience of battle. We know, too, that the raw materials of both works are battles of the Civil War. But Crane specifies nothing historical in his work; that is to say, the terrain, the armies, the officers, the battle itself are all anonymous, with respect to historical reality. Therefore Crane is working with an initial tabula rasa, so to speak, on the reader's part; the course of the action is unaffected by the reader's historical knowledge, but proceeds altogether by means of interior motivation toward an "open-end" conclusion.

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[1]"Preface to Roderick Hudson," The Art of the Novel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), pp. 8-10.

In contrast, Foote's very title educes a set of historical memories which tend to frame or control the action and to modify in various ways the reader's response to the materials immediately before him. The outcome of the engagement, for example, is known in advance; hence the reader's reaction to the Confederate jubilation on Sunday night of April 6 is qualified by the ironical recognition that it is pathetically premature. Similarly, one's expected response to the impressive appearance of General Albert Sidney Johnston, whose confident words "Tonight we will water our horses in the Tennessee River"[1] close the first chapter, is overshadowed by the knowledge that he is shortly to die at the height of battle. So, throughout the novel, the reader's experience is a successive, developing amalgam of what is happening in the particular, dramatic story and of what he knows—or thinks he knows—about the actual historical battle.

Of course not all works where the descriptive element is prominent are as readily analyzable on this point as Shiloh and similar historical fictions. Frequently the descriptive reference is either considerably more indefinite and general, or else so minutely and exactly local that little public knowledge can be assumed. The generalized reference may appeal to stereotypes or assumptions so concealed that their operation in the fictional experience is hardly perceptible, as is the case with many novels which use New York, Chicago, and other well-known cities as settings. The highly detailed but obscure reference, on the other hand, may agitate the reader with a sensation of puzzlement or bewilderment—the feeling that he ought to recognize certain allusions but doesn't—which itself becomes an operative force in the novel (such

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[1]Shelby Foote, Shiloh (New York: The New American Library, 1954), p. 26.

an experience, replete with gradations of perception, is probably the case with Ulysses). But these variations in practice require special consideration somewhat later; it seems at present that we can formulate the following principle about the effect of fictional place which seems to refer to actual locale: that fictional place with a centrifugal reference adds, to the normal and constant dependence of a fictional ingredient on its organic context, the further complication of the reader's knowledge (or ignorance) at the time it is encountered, and that this complication represents a qualitative difference in the total experience, and hence theme, of the novel.

To summarize this propaedeutic on place, we recall that the concept of place includes two phases, which, following Rickword, we may call the "emergent" and the "rhythmical." The emergent phase alone, which is the summarized, abstracted, conceptual residue of the experience of place, embraces, besides mere geography, the entire condition of life which appertains to a particular spatio-temporal point and which surrounds and gives rise to the dramatic action of a fiction. The rhythmical phase of place is place in solution, as it is encountered experientially in the course of a work. In this aspect place tends to appear in one of two principal modes: either the pictorial, in which the prominent features of place are represented disjunctively, in expository or descriptive segments apart from the main action, or the dramatic, where elements of place occur implicitly and fragmentarily in the progress of the action. These are modal tendencies rather than discrete modes, and never appear pure but always in some compound leaning in one or the other direction.

As a real entity, the concept of place is valid only for the

particular novel in which it appears. Similarities among the settings of different novels may permit us to abstract an idea of place common to the novels for the purpose of "bringing out a large number of literary relationships that would not be noticed as long as there were no context established for them"[1]; but that idea remains an artificial construct, and must not pre-empt the dignity of the several "worlds" from which it was inducted. The existence of an actual place for which the settings of certain novels might be mistaken as partial representations offers a special challenge to this critical stance. We do well to remember that the essential reference of fictional language is "centripetal," that is, to its own imaginative organism, and that "centrifugal" allusions, in Frye's vocabulary, indeed introduce a new factor, that of public conventions, into the experience of an imaginative work, but do not thereby transform that work into assertive writing which tries to approximate phenomenal reality.

II

The initial definition described as "regional" a novel "whose enveloping action is a dramatized regional culture." We are now prepared to explore the terms of that definition more carefully.

The term "regional novel" means, on the reader's side, the prominence in the novel of both a certain type of place and its emergence—that is, its rhythmical incidence upon action and theme—in a distinctive way. Now the particular place would vary from species to species of the regional class—we might have, for example, the regional novel of the

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[1]Frye, pp. 247-48.

Southwest, of New England, of Wales, of Provence, France, and so on—and each variation in place would produce a different thematic outline or configuration, of which the individual, included novels would represent the actual achievements. However the general method of the regional novel, which includes its values and its perspectives, as well as its compositional techniques, is a constant which holds valid for all species, and that method is the subject of the remainder of this chapter and of Chapter III.

Certain difficulties connected with the word "regional" and its cognates had best be confronted and resolved at this point. It is quite true that "regional" conveys associations with semi- and extra-literary matters, specifically with the controversial regional movement of the 1930's, and its several social, economic, and political programs. Especially because the most articulate advocates of regionalism were Southern, and some (Robert Penn Warren, Andrew Lytle, and Allen Tate, for example) wrote regional novels in our sense of the term, it might seem that we are introducing equivocal extrinsic considerations, and perhaps even entering upon the so-called "genetic" and "intentional" fallacies. But I think it can be shown that, in this and similar instances, the use of what Wellek and Warren call "extrinsic" studies[1] is an indispensable adjunct to the analysis, interpretation, and classification of the literary works themselves.

First, by the very nature of regions, there exists a degree, variable from case to case, of cultural differentiation between one region and others, or between a region and the dominant surrounding culture. The

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[1]Theory of Literature, pp. 65-66.

following definitions of "region," excerpted from a list of typical definitions at the beginning of the Odum-Moore sociological classic on the subject (American Regionalism), emphasize this matter of cultural differentiation:

> Regions are genuine entities, each of which expresses both natural and cultural differentiation from its neighbors.
>
> [A region is] any one part of a national domain sufficiently unified physiographically and socially, to have a true consciousness of its own customs and ideals, and to possess a sense of distinction from other parts of the country.
>
> A region is a natural-economic unit, and is an expression of a real differentiation in the physical and cultural landscapes.
>
> [Regions are] geographic areas which have become unified culturally, unified at first economically and later by consensus of thought, social patterns of education, recreation, and other forms of action which serve to distinguish it [sic] from other areas.[1]

This factor of cultural differentiation means that in "real" life the outsider to a region will encounter problems of meaning and value when he is confronted by peculiarly regional elements. That is to say, speech patterns, topical allusions, intonations, gestures, behavioral conventions—in short, regional manners, which express the regional ethos—are likely to occasion misunderstanding in the outsider, who is inclined either to read into these manners the beliefs and ideals of his own culture, or else to be totally bewildered by them. The possible misapprehension varies, of course, according to the degree of cultural differentiation, but in general the stranger in a region travels in a virtually foreign land, where things may seem familiar but apparently mean something different from what he is accustomed to.

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[1]Howard W. Odum and Harry Estill Moore, American Regionalism (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1938), p. 2. The cited authors are, respectively, George T. Renner, Josiah Royce, G. H. Smith, and Kimball Young.

Much the same, or at least an analogous, difficulty afflicts the outside reader of a regional novel, which, according to the preliminary definition, employs as enveloping action a "dramatized regional culture." Now, as we noticed in Chapter I and shall consider yet more fully in a short time, any form of dramatic literature renders its background material in a more or less synecdochic fashion, by implication rather than by extensive explanation. And when it is a regional culture so dramatized, the referents of the dramatic synecdoches are regional conventions, mores, and beliefs which are in some degree extrinsic to the general reading audience and which must, therefore, be provided somehow before the work grows thoroughly intelligible. This need is not obviated by the primarily "literal" reference of a work's language; we are speaking of a kind of literature with a heavily "descriptive" element which must be ascertained before the literal relations become articulate.

(It is worth a parenthesis to remark that the condition displayed contemporaneously by the regional novel is a condition to which all varieties of at least dramatic literature seem destined eventually to attain, so that the present discussion is relevant to a broader area of criticism than that merely of the regional novel. We have essentially the same problem in the case of works from past eras and other countries: the problem of a divergence between the controlling knowledge, ideas, and values of the literature and those of its present audience. And this divergence necessitates on our part some version of historicism, an attempt to appropriate in some minimal degree the cultural conventions which underlie and inform the literature. Whatever he may say theoretically, any teacher of literature knows that in practice he is always

informing his students—or exhorting them to inform themselves—about, say, the religious beliefs and social structure of fifth-century Athens, in the act of simply "explicating" Oedipus Rex. The difficulty is to account theoretically for what is done in practice, without falling on either side into older weaknesses of the "extrinsic" approaches to literary study.)

I should be prepared to say that the use of extrinsic material in the exposition of certain kinds of literature is not only justifiable but indeed essential to overcome the impediment of differences between world views, and I would argue to the point that such material, within broadly definable limits, is not really "extrinsic" at all, but is actually "in" the literature under consideration, at least synecdochically. John Edward Hardy has made approximately the same observation in his The Curious Frame: Seven Poems in Text and Context. The term "context," says Professor Hardy, is used legitimately in two different senses by literary critics.

> It can refer to what in some way seems to lie "outside" the poem—the tradition, literary and otherwise, the poet's life and other writings, etc. Or, "context" can mean what I prefer usually to call syntax, the specific order—grammatical, logical, recurrent-metaphorical, order of motif, order of sound when heard mentally or otherwise—which the poet seems to have created with words for the first and only time.[1]

And it is the two contexts together—that is, that part of context 1 as invoked and manipulated in context 2—that constitute the actual final "text" of the literary work. As Hardy says a moment later,

> I have already observed . . . that "knowing the language" in which a poem is written means also to know the systems of ideas to which it

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[1](Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962), p. 153.

> may refer. I have insisted that these references are an integral, inseparable part of the final text.[1]

Furthermore, not only knowledge, or "systems of ideas," but belief also is "an inextricable part of the poetic statement" of any literary work[2]; the reader must discover, and become actively engaged with, the beliefs operative in a work before he can be said to have comprehended the full extent or depth of its "statement."

What we are speaking of here is actually the question of "intention" in literature. For some time now literary criticism has labored under the constraints of the Wimsatt-Beardsley dogma of "the intentional fallacy," according to which "the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art."[3] Now, useful as this dogma has been in combatting the abuses of the historical and the biographical approaches to literary study, it nevertheless has imposed severe and artificial limitations upon the very explication of text which it appears to support. For, we need to remind ourselves, language is never self-contained, but is always gesture toward a meaning to be perfected by a listener who is in communion with the ideas and beliefs of the speaker.[4] And in addition to the personal history of the writer, which may, as even Wimsatt and Beardsley admit, be relevant to the study of his works because it may provide "evidence of the meaning of his words and the dramatic character

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[1] Ibid., p. 163. [2] Ibid., p. 177.

[3] W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., and M. C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," Essays in Modern Literary Criticism, ed. Ray B. West, Jr. (New York: Rinehart and Co., Inc., 1952), pp. 174-75.

[4] John Edward Hardy makes approximately the same observation in The Curious Frame; see pp. 161-62 and p. 188.

of his utterance,"[1] the reader may find it necessary to acquaint himself with the public linguistic context of the author's time and place, in order to know the meanings he intends in his words.

That the failure to observe this principle can have serious consequences for practical criticism can be shown by two examples pertinent to the present study. The first is the woeful misreading of Faulkner's early novels by humanist and leftist critics in the 1930's.[2] Of course much of this misinterpretation was due to other defective critical attitudes—misconceptions about the nature and function of literature, the inability to understand parts of a work in the light of organic relationships, the desire for a "virtue of statement in literature,"[3] and so on. But much also was due to cultural differences between critics and Faulkner, to the failure of Faulkner's fictional world to correspond to the world which the critics believed was true and valuable, and to the critics' refusal to learn about Faulkner's world. For a critic such as Maxwell Geismar to assert that Faulkner's writing belongs to "the anti-civilizational revolt rising out of modern social evils, nourished by ignorance of their true nature,"[4] means, for one thing, that Geismar and Faulkner have different ideas, caused in part by different cultural conditioning, about the natures of civilization and of social evils. And it is well for the reading critic to remember, as Professor Hardy remarks, "the fact

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[1]Wimsatt and Beardsley, pp. 182-83.

[2]Summarized by Frederick J. Hoffman in his Introduction to William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1960), pp. 1-8.

[3]Ibid., p. 2.

[4]Quoted by Hoffman, ibid., p. 7.

that he is at least primarily the listener, not the speaker, when he reads a poem"[1]—or a novel.

The second example comes from the testimony of a writer who has encountered the problem of cultural differences and the outside reader's refusal to supplement his own knowledge and values with those of the writer's culture. In a recent essay Ellington White complains that the language of a Southern writer like himself often speaks louder than the actions of his characters:

> Take the word "nigger" for instance. Here is a word whose power of ugly suggestion is larger than the person it denotes. If the writer puts this word in the mouth of a character, already that character's attitude toward the Negro is decided. His actions mean nothing. The character in question may have spent the energies of his life in the Negro's behalf, but let him use the word "nigger" and that energy—as well as the writer's—is wasted in the eyes of an outside audience.[2]

The reason is, according to White, that the outside audience does not know and refuses to believe that "there are Southerners with nothing but respect and admiration for the Negro who nevertheless use 'nigger' in their daily conversation because for them the word is strictly denotative."[3] Thus preconceptions and ignorance of cultural realities can baffle effective communication between writer and reader.

In view of these considerations, we should conclude with Professor Hardy that certain kinds of information, apparently extrinsic to the literal text of a poem or novel, are actually "an integral, inseparable <u>part</u> of the final text," and are therefore not only useful but actually

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[1] <u>Curious Frame</u>, p. 162.

[2] "The View from the Window," <u>The Lasting South</u>, ed. Louis D. Rubin, Jr. and James Jackson Kilpatrick (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1957), p. 167

[3] <u>Ibid</u>.

necessary in exhibiting its real nature. Of course the employment of such material by the critic should not become a "'causal' explanation, professing to account for literature, to explain it, and finally to reduce it to its origins (the 'fallacy of origins')."[1] Nor, certainly, is the employment of such material equally necessary and desirable in the elucidation of all genres and sub-genres of literature, in all periods of literary history: dramatic literature requires more annotation than poetry, but comedy more than tragedy, and satirical poetry more than lyrical. We can say generally that the use of "extrinsic" materials is especially desirable in critical situations centered on works which contain a prominent "descriptive" element, for there the exterior referents of the language are most likely to be concealed from the audience, and hence to cause misunderstanding.

This discussion began when I introduced the term "regional" and noticed that certain of its extrinsic associations appeared to be limitations of its usefulness. But it now appears that these "limitations" can be used to good advantage in explaining the character of the regional novel. For, by its reference to extra-literary political, economic, and social attitudes, "regional" points to an important part of the context (in Professor Hardy's first sense) of the regional novel. I reason that certain tenets of the regional movement, expounded in a particular historical situation, express a conception of man's nature and an attitude toward its formative, cultural background which are ideal in the sense that they inform all regional novels. Although in individual cases it can be shown that the regional movement exerted causative forces on regional novelists and

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[1]Wellek and Warren, p. 65.

works, more important is the general analogy which the philosophy of regionalism bears first to the writer's choice and treatment of his materials, and consequently to the effect and theme of his work. The philosophy of regionalism can be said to form part of the intention of all regional novels. By a selective examination of this philosophy, we should be able to understand in rational terms the process which Eudora Welty portrays in "Place in Fiction" as almost a mystique: how the regional writer is attracted to native locality for materials because "feelings are bound up in place"[1] and because "place has a more lasting identity than we have, and we unswervingly tend to attach ourselves to identity"[2]; how and why, subsequently, attachment to place focuses the writer's vision and produces "awareness, discernment, order, clarity, insight"[3] so that "he is always seeing double, two pictures at once in his frame, his and the world's"[4]; and how, finally, the writer, through point of view and other dramatic techniques, transforms this vision into aesthetic experience for the reader, with the result that "as place has functioned between the writer and his material, so it functions between the writer and reader."[5]

First, then, what is a region? Many types and magnitudes of regions exist, and for them as many regionalisms. There are natural, political, economic, anthropological, ecological, and other regions, from the world to the local level. In the United States alone, for example,

> there are regions of earlier historical significance. There are regions of newer administrative functions. There are regions of

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[1] P. 58. [2] Ibid., p. 59. [3] Ibid., p. 63.
[4] Ibid., p. 64. [5] Ibid., p. 67.

> convenience and of necessity. There are regions of government and regions of commerce. There are regions of literary achievement and regions of agricultural adjustment. There are regions of land and of water, of forests and of minerals, of flora and of crops. There are regions of educational institutions and football arrangements; regions of wholesale trade and of Rotary and Kiwanis. There are regions within regions, subregions and districts.[1]

Probably any branch of knowledge involving spatial phenomena could find an existent basis for analysis in terms of regions of one kind or another.

Like many sociologists of regionalism, however, we are interested in a more comprehensive idea of the region, one which incorporates several of the classificatory orders mentioned above. Searching for such an enlarged concept, Odum and Moore discover seven criteria, or "general attributes," by which a region can be defined:

1. Geographical definition.

> Beginning . . . with the elemental factor of space, the region is, of course, first of all an area, a geographic unit with limits and bounds. Regionalism is, therefore, an areal or spatial generalization.[2]

2. Flexibility of limits.

> Yet, in the second place, the region differs from the mere locality or pure geographic area in that it is characterised not so much by boundary lines and actual limits as it is by flexibility of limits, by extension from a center, and by fringe or border margins which separate one area from another.[3]

3. Homogeneity.

> The third attribute of the region is some degree of homogeneity in a number of selected characteristics.[4]

4. Taxonomical landmarks.

> The definitive nature of the region and the aspects of its homogeneity will be determined by the fourth attribute of the region, namely, some structural or functional aspect or aspects through

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[1] American Regionalism, pp. 5-6.

[2] Ibid., p. 14

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., pp. 14-15.

which the region is to be denominated.[1]

5. Practicable comprehensiveness.

> Yet there must be a limit to the multiplicity of regions, so that in general a fifth attribute must be found in the relative, composite homogeneity of the largest number of factors for the largest number of purposes in view, to the end that the region may be a practical, workable unit susceptible of both definition and utilisation.[2]

6. Inter-relatedness.

> A key attribute of the region is . . . that it must be a constituent unit in an aggregate whole or totality. Inherent in the region as opposed to the mere locality or the isolated section is the essence of unity of which it can exist only as a part.[3]

7. Organicism.

> The final key attribute is found in the organic nature of the region. A region has organic unity not only in its natural landscape, but in that cultural evolution in which the age-long quartette of elements are at work—namely, the land and the people, culturally conditioned through time and spatial relationships.[4]

The specification of physiographic and socio-economic indices in attribute three, and of manageability along desirable paths in four and five, yields for Odum and Moore the following concept of "region":

> Region in this volume means the composite societal region combining a relatively large degree of homogeneity measured by a relatively large number of indices available for a relatively large number of purposes or classifications. This means it must comprehend both the natural factors and the societal factors which must, of course, include the American states and prevailing historic, economic, and culture traits.[5]

Finally, using a "relatively large number" of indices and purposes, Odum and Moore discover six composite societal regions in the United States: the Northeast, the Southeast, the Northwest, the Southwest, the Middle States, and the Far West.

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[1] Ibid., p. 15 [2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 16 [4] Ibid. [5] Ibid., p. 30.

This introduction to the nature of regions and regionalism is valuable for three reasons: first, it illustrates something of the complexity of the question, even in the preliminary phase of definition; second, it propounds certain basic ideas about regions which can be further explored; and third, it shows an approach, which, having been sampled, is to be discarded, or at best used hereafter only for purposes of contrast. Briefly considered, the Moore-Odum approach, from the viewpoint of the "traditionalist" regionalists, is unacceptable because it is: (1) almost wholly materialistic (regions are defined and measured by indices of empirically verifiable quantities); therefore (2) extremely superficial and abstract (since these quantities lie only on the surface of regional life and are detached, for measurement, from their living contexts); and therefore superior and condescending (regions are viewed primarily "from above," in terms of a national picture, standard, and goal, and they are furthermore artificially cut to manageable size for purposes of planning and manipulation). Fiction written from a perspective analogous to this approach would produce a view of regional place found in the local colorists (Thomas Nelson Page, Sarah Orne Jewett, Zona Gale) or social realists (Paul Green, T. S. Stribling, William Bradford Huie). It was precisely in reaction to such tendencies in sociological and literary thought that the school of traditionalist regionalists arose in the mid-1920's.

Although this regional movement was a historical development, actuated and conditioned by the historical currents of its time, yet it produced a philosophy of cultural and literary regionalism which is not restricted to the particular, generating historical situation. That is

to say, stripped of the accidental, ad hoc historical terms in which it was sometimes cast by the pressure of polemic, regionalist doctrine is essentially a philosophical statement about the nature of man and society, and invites discussion and criticism on the level of philosophy, not of argumentation or of history alone. Therefore we shall take only a brief glance at its historical framework, and then concentrate our discussion on the central ideas of regionalism, the ideas whose aesthetic corollaries inform the regional novel.

Regionalism was from the first a predominantly Southern movement, both in quantity and value of support. Its beginning can be dated fairly precisely at about the time of the Scopes "monkey" trial in Dayton, Tennessee, when several of the Fugitive poets, incited by the derisive attitude toward the South of the defense and much of the national press, began to reconsider their former opinions of their native region. Earlier the Fugitives had stoutly rejected the use of specifically Southern materials in poetry. Thus the Foreword to the first number of The Fugitive (Spring, 1922) had declared, "The Fugitive flees from nothing faster than from the high-caste Brahmins of the Old South,"[1] and later, responding sharply to Harriet Monroe's call in Poetry for Southern writers to "accept the challenge of a region so specialized in beauty, so rich in racial tang and prejudice, so jewel-weighted with a heroic past,"[2] the principal Fugitives concurred with the line of Allen Tate's letter to the editorial office of Poetry:

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[1]Quoted by Louise Cowan, The Fugitive Group (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), p. 48.

[2]Ibid., p. 114.

> We do not disagree with Miss Monroe when she emphasizes the artistic possibilities latent in the traditions of the Old South. . . . But we fear very much to have the slightest stress laid upon Southern traditions in literature; we who are Southerners know the fatality of such an attitude—the old atavism and sentimentality are always imminent. . . .[1]

In short, the four most important Fugitives—John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren—had before the Dayton trial discerned no particular value in their Southern background, especially to their role as poets.

The spectacle at Dayton stimulated the re-examination of this position, in that "the turmoil issuing from the trial brought into the foreground ideas and attitudes that, taken for granted in the past, were no longer generally accepted."[2] As the result of their re-appraisal, these poets, who "at the end of 1925 . . . still considered themselves, as writers, disengaged from their society,"[3] were ready by the spring of 1927 "to declare open war against the New South program of industrial progress and . . . to affirm a positive belief in the principles of the Old South."[4] Allen Tate, for example, who had been the most avid "fugitive" from localism, wrote to Donald Davidson, "And, by the way, I've attacked the South for the last time, except in so far as it may be necessary to point out that the chief defect the Old South had was that in it which produced . . . the New South,"[5] to which Davidson replied, "You know that I'm with you on the anti-New South stuff. . . . I have fully decided that my America is here or nowhere."[6] Louise Cowan summarizes the effect of the Scopes affair on the central Fugitives in this way:

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 116. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 208. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 239.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 240. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 244. [6] *Ibid.*

> Thus, an event that caused many intelligent Southerners to reject their native land propelled Ransom, Davidson, Tate, and Warren into a careful study of Southern history. For the sake of honesty, they found themselves forced to defend in their native section characteristics which they knew to be inoffensive and even valuable. And, finally, from an understanding of the deeply religious structure of life in the Tennessee hills . . . grew the conviction that led these poets to their first overt defense of the South.[1]

I'll Take My Stand (1930) is indeed an "overt defense of the South," but it is also the first major document of the regional movement. For in the course of preparing their defense of the agrarian South against the industrial "American or prevailing way,"[2] the Southern spokesmen, now grown to twelve, had discovered a number of principles valid for all organic societies, irrespective of particular location, which desired to preserve their moral, social, and economic autonomies in the face of increasing pressures for cultural standardization and centralization. "Proper living," the "Twelve Southerners" wrote, "is a matter of the intelligence and the will, does not depend on the local climate or geography, and is capable of a definition which is general and not Southern at all"[3]; hence they sought alliances with other communities likewise interested in the pursuit of "proper living," which they called "humanism" (though distinguishing their version from that of the More-Babbitt-Foerster group):

> Humanism, properly speaking, is not an abstract system, but a culture, the whole way in which we live, act, think, and feel. It is a kind of imaginatively balanced life lived out in a definite social tradition.[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 240.

[2] Introduction to I'll Take My Stand (New York: Harper and Bros., 1930), p. ix.

[3] Ibid., p. xi.

[4] Ibid., p. xvi.

Under the flag of such a humanism, then, with its related ideologies of religious orthodoxy and cultural pluralism, these and a few fellow Southerners of like mind deepened their attack on scientism, the doctrine of progress, industrialism, and monolithic nationalism. Over the next ten years the Southern regionalists promulgated their viewpoint in a series of tracts, the most significant of which were Ransom's God Without Thunder (1930), Tate's Reactionary Essays (1936), and Davidson's The Attack on Leviathan: Regionalism and Nationalism in the United States (1938) whose epigraph from Blake, "One law for the lion and ox is oppression," could well stand as the unifying motto for the apologetics of cultual regionalism.

Though dominated by, the agitation was not confined to, Southerners, as various other sympathetic parties occasionally made common cause with the basic Southern group. Herbert Agar's The Land of the Free (1935), for example, defended the native democratic, Jeffersonian tradition against the Hamiltonian or European tradition of plutocracy and big business, and in 1936 Agar and other "distributists" collaborated with Southern regionalists (principally Ransom, Tate, Davidson, Warren, Cleanth Brooks, Andrew Lytle, Frank L. Owsley, George Marion O'Donnell, and John Donald Wade) in the symposium Who Owns America? A New Declaration of Independence. The American Review, published by Seward Collins, served for a time as the primary journalistic organ for the expression of traditionalist thought generally, including, besides the Southern Agrarians and Anglo-American distributist group, the Humanists and the neo-Scholastics. Other allied movements were Ralph Borsodi's program for domesticating the machine and the Catholic movement for restoring the values of

rural life.[1] And somewhat later in England, T. S. Eliot expounded the merits of regionalism in Notes Towards the Definition of Culture (1949).

It should be emphasized that these parties and programs never constituted a single, coherent platform for social reform, and also that their chorus of protest never succeeded in winning any appreciable audience away from the popular ideologies of their time. Indeed the parties, when they came together, often warred among themselves (the Agrarians and New Humanists, for example, seemed to dislike each other's thought almost as much as their common opponents'). And collectively they were regarded as a bemused, reactionary aberration from historical and progressive trends. Still, in opposition to a supposed common enemy, they shared a number of ideas about man and society, linking them, in their eyes, with the great Judaic-Classical-Christian tradition, from which modernism itself was an aberration. In any case, whatever the inter-relations and influence of the various parties, we are concerned here only to extract from these documents what can be called "the traditionalist philosophy of cultural regionalism."

One of the general characteristics of the traditional approach to regionalism is that it is non-scientific. Odum and Moore, calling this type "literary regionalism," take pains to point out its non-scientific character:

> Manifestly, such regionalism is in reality a sort of sentimental romanticism for the local area or for the historical period. No matter how much there is of this sort of thing or how real or how productive of certain results, it is not scientific regionalism.[2]

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[1]The affinities were noted by Donald Davidson in his "Regionalism in the Arts," The Attack on Leviathan (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1938), p. 94.

[2]American Regionalism, p. 18.

Traditionalist regionalism is non-scientific in at least three clear-cut ways: its realism, its dualism, and its moralism. Succinctly, these terms mean that the regionalists describe man and external nature as they really are, both essentially and existentially (as contrasted with the scientific concern with existence alone); that they discover, at least in man, a spiritual as well as a physical nature; and that they presume to judge performance against potential—to legislate what should be, in the light of man's full nature, and to criticize what is—where the scientific approach is, theoretically, merely descriptive. Hence, for example, far from disclaiming "a sort of sentimental romanticism for the local area," the traditionalists, finding such a sentiment to be a spiritual fact in themselves and apparently in other men, universalize it as a perdurable expression of a constant need in man's nature, and condemn such developments as would suppress it or allow it to atrophy. This pattern of thought is evident in Donald Davidson's interpretation of regionalism in the early 1930's:

> The new regional consciousness was no sudden phenomenon. . . . Basically, it was the old human desire of the particular as the complement or foil of the universal which industrialism in business and modernism in art had made entirely abstract.[1]

Beginning as a corrective to excessive abstractionism, this emphasis on the particular enlarges into a dialogue or interrelationship between particular and universal, quality and quantity, short view and long view, which sustains the characteristic tension of regionalism and structuralizes the regionalist concepts of man and society.

The concept of man which underlies all regionalist thought is

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[1]Leviathan, pp. 86-87.

"wholistic" and complex, against the fragmentary, reductive, simplistic view taken by science and industrialism. Science exalts the material and observable as object of knowledge, the rational mind as instrument of knowledge, and the abstract generalization as type of knowledge. In the ascendancy, science falsifies by oversimplification of both nature and man. According to Ransom,

> The conviction under which Western science labors is naturalism: the belief that the universe is largely known, and theoretically knowable, as the "nature" which science defines; and that there exists no God or other entity beyond or above this demonstrable nature.[1]

Under scientific inspection man is reduced to his animal nature, with its several appetites which industrialism or technology undertakes to satisfy. "Industrialism is simply the economic consequence of the faith or the cult whose name is Science,"[2] and industrialism exaggerates the economic function and nature of man, producing another abstraction, economic man, engaged in a ceaseless striving for material goods. The ideal of progress, which Richard Weaver calls the "metaphysical handmaiden" of science, assists science and industrialism in the destruction of values, hence the possibility of ethics and morality, by launching man on an infinite process of production and consumption:

> The mere notion of infinite progress is destructive. If the goal recedes forever, one point is no nearer it than the last. . . . Aristotle noted that the concept of infinity makes impossible the idea of the good.[3]

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[1] God Without Thunder (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1930), p. 27.

[2] Ibid., p. 187.

[3] Richard Weaver, Ideas Have Consequences ("Phoenix Books"; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 51.

The idea of progress also exalts the illusory process of "becoming" over the reality of "being," and so augments the fragmentation of man.

The regionalist idea of man does not deny reason, or science, or animal appetite, but rather their totalitarian arrogation of control over man's life, or the assumption that man is definable in terms of them alone. As Ransom says, "A scientific definition of the object is not false in the sense that it is not the truth, but only in the sense that it is not the whole truth."[1] The concept of the total man, the whole man, the integrated, unified man occurs again and again, with varying emphases, in regionalist thought. Explaining the unanimity of the Agrarians' common attitude in I'll Take My Stand, Andrew Lytle says, "All discovered that the total man involves a coherent unity of self in terms of the forms of social behavior and belief, and they proposed to say why man was no longer able to be the total man."[2] Again, Allen Tate, approving the New Humanists' call for human values but disputing their means of constructing them, says, "The religious unity of intellect and emotion, of reason and instinct, is the sole technique for the realization of values."[3] John Gould Fletcher writes in I'll Take My Stand that "the purpose of education is to produce the balanced character,"[4] and we recall that the Introduction to the same work declares for the "imaginatively balanced life lived out in a definite social tradition."

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[1] God Without Thunder, p. 259.

[2] "A Summing Up" from "The Southern Literary Renascence: A Symposium," Shenandoah, VI (Summer, 1955), 30-31.

[3] Reactionary Essays on Poetry and Ideas (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. 139.

[4] "Education, Past and Present," I'll Take My Stand, p. 111.

What faculties or traits in man does science ignore, and industrialism suppress? Different authors lament the neglect of different traits, but in general: the non-rational, that in man not susceptible of observation and rational analysis. For Ransom it is primarily the sensibility, composed of sentiments for beloved particular objects, that makes man truly social but is threatened by modernism:

> Sentiments, those irrational psychic formations, do not consist very well with the indifference, machine-like, with which some modern social workers would have men fitting into the perfect economic organization. It is not as good animals that we are complicated with sentimental weakness. The fierce drives of the animals . . . are only towards a kind of thing, the indifferent instance of a universal, and not some private and irreplaceable thing. . . . a sentiment is the totality of love and knowledge which we have of an object that is private and unique.[1]

For Richard Weaver, sentiment, giving man his "metaphysical dream" of the world, is not only co-ordinate with but prior to reason and logic:

> It must be apparent that logic depends upon the dream, and not the dream upon it. We must admit this when we realize that logical processes rest ultimately upon classification, that classification is by identification, and that identification is intuitive.[2]

As with Ransom, Weaver's sentiment is responsible for man's better manifestations, for "culture is sentiment refined and measured":[3]

> In the same way that our cognition passes from a report of particular details to a knowledge of universals, so our sentiments pass from a welter of feeling to an illumined concept of what one ought to feel. This is what is known as refinement.[4]

John Peale Bishop stresses the instincts: "We must live from the instincts, for the mind unsupported not only cannot tell us how to behave,

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[1] The World's Body (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), p. 36.

[2] Ideas Have Consequences, p. 21.

[3] Ibid., p. 23.

[4] Ibid., p. 22.

it cannot give us any very satisfactory reasons for living at all."[1] Herbert Marshall McLuhan stresses feeling or passion, "the passion of a civilized man for whom action is repugnant or unthinkable unless the whole man is involved,"[2] and thinks such passion is best cultivated in an agrarian society:

> The nature of simply agrarian society . . . is such as to produce men who are primarily passionate in the strict sense. They understand the severe limits of mere human motives and habitually feel the fatality of the larger forces of the life that is in them as well as outside them.[3]

The intuition of limitations, with which should be contrasted both the "notion of infinite progress" and the scientific "belief that the universe is largely known, and theoretically knowable," brings us to another lineament in the regionalist portrait of man: man's religious nature. That man possesses an immortal soul is not a necessary corollary of regionalist thought, though it is often the assumption of individual regionalists and is easily admitted by acknowledging the limitations of science. "Religious nature" means rather man's awareness of his own finiteness and "creaturelikeness," and his consequent inveterate disposition, before the inscrutability of nature, to worship deity. The Introduction to I'll Take My Stand, probably written largely by Ransom but subscribed to by all the twelve contributors, defines religion as "our submission to the general intention of a nature that is fairly inscrutable; it is the sense of our

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[1]The Collected Essays of John Peale Bishop, ed. Edmund Wilson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 9.

[2]"The Southern Quality," Sewanee Review, LV (Summer, 1947), 375

[3]Ibid., p. 360.

role as creatures within it."[1] Religion is weakened by the highly simplified picture of nature in an industrial society, because "we receive the illusion of having power over nature, and lose the sense of nature as something mysterious and contingent."[2] Various regionalists occupy specific posts in the bulwark of institutional religion, but their line of thought on this score remains substantially the same: man's religious character is a function of his relationship with external nature. Thus the argument of Tate, a Catholic, against "Humanism and Naturalism" evinces a sub-structure approximating that of Ransom's and Brooks's defenses of orthodox Protestantism. Nature is "the source of quality," according to Tate, and "the religious attitude is the very sense (as the religious dogma is the definition) of the precarious balance of man upon the brink of pure quality."[3]

Perhaps, then, his religious instinct or disposition is accidental, merely a product of man's historical agrarianism, and will be dispelled as illusory as he loses contact with nature in an increasingly urbanized and industrialized society? Not at all, in regionalist thinking, because nature, besides revealing finiteness, manifests something basic in the constitution of reality: the existence of evil. Tate says, "pure Quality would be pure evil,"[4] and

> it is the indispensable office of the religious imagination that it checks the abstracting tendencies of the intellect in the presence of nature. Nature abstract becomes man abstract, and he is at last condemned to a permanent immersion in pure and evil Quality; he is forever condemned to it because he can no longer see it for what it is.

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[1]Introduction to I'll Take My Stand, p. xiv.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Reactionary Essays, p. 140.

[4]Ibid., p. 141.

He has no technique for dealing with evil.[1]

Therefore, by insulating man from exposure to nature's realities, science and industrialism in effect commit him to ineradicable evil, which does not cease to operate just because it is not perceived. With the addition of evil, and therefore of good, to the picture, with the recognition of man's limitations, and with the acknowledgement "that nature is made and kept natural only by the virtue of a supernatural being that compels it,"[2] there follows logically the assumption of a moral order, a level and structure of values proper and peculiar to man—and the regionalist portrait of individual man is fairly complete. But there remains the concept of social man, the idea of the cultural region as social norm, which is the truly distinctive phase of regionalist philosophy.

We have seen, in the outline of regionalist thought about man as a person, how importantly nature figures. Regionalism distinguishes itself from naturalism by rejecting nature as ultimate norm, but it is distinguished from various other social, economic, and psychological philosophies by taking nature as a minimal norm--which is to say that no social or economic arrangement in violation of nature is valid, or even realistic, from the regionalist point of view.

> An essential step in retaining our hold upon the real reality is a definition of our proper relationship to nature. At one extreme is total immersion, which leaves man sentient but unreflective. At the other extreme is total abstraction, which leads philosophically to denial of substance. . . . The complete acceptance of nature and the complete repudiation of her turn out to be equally pernicious; we should seek a way of life which does not merge with her by responding to her every impulse, or become fatally entangled with her by attempting a complete violation.[3]

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[1]Ibid., p. 142. [2]Ransom, God Without Thunder, p. 75.

[3]Weaver, Ideas Have Consequences, pp. 174-75.

Regionalism therefore seeks to describe the kind of society which best defines and establishes man's "proper relationship" to external nature and at the same time responds most adequately to the needs of his own nature.

One of man's needs, because of his fondness for particularity and concreteness in things, is for ubiety, or attachment to local place. "Location is that other force in our inheritance which balances our need for movement,"[1] says Andrew Lytle. T. S. Eliot urges that "it is important that a man should feel himself to be, not merely a citizen of a particular nation, but a citizen of a particular part of his country, with local loyalties."[2] Location not only answers to man's instinctive need, but is necessary to the full realization of his human values:

> Spatial unity imposes upon the idea of value three solid dimensions, and the new co-ordinates in which they are expressed have an appreciable effect . . . on the perspective in which is seen the individual. They call attention to the obvious but neglected necessity of the persons in a given locality being the instruments by which any sense of value . . . is expressed. . . . The person who has made himself one with a local community can realize, as the philosopher or the cosmopolitan cannot, the full burden and fulfillment of his Humanism. . . . The place and its genius must find their expression through him, just as he must find his authenticity in them. . . .[3]

Finally, man and locality are so inseparable that no such thing exists as man considered apart from the conditions of place:

> People do not live in a vacuum. They live somewhere. . . . The natural man is an abstraction. He has never been seen, but what is

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[1]Introduction to Bedford Forrest and His Critter Company (Rev. ed.; New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1960), p. xvi.

[2]Notes towards the Definition of Culture (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1949), p. 57.

[3]Helen Hill, "A Local Habitation," Sewanee Review, XXXIX (Autumn, 1931), 463-64.

> natural to men always shows itself shaped by the manners and mores, the institutional restraints, of a given time and place.[1]

In describing the kind of place—the cultural region, of course—most congenial to man's development, the regionalists are quite as observant of nature as minimal norm. The single term which best subsumes all of the salient features of the cultural region is itself a naturalistic term—Organicism. "Organicism" comprehends all of those qualities of the cultural region—its natural and historical basis, its organic structure, its instinct toward self-determination, its interrelationship with other regions—which characterize it both as an existent and as an ideal society for man.

First, the cultural region is firmly grounded in natural and historical fact. Seas, rivers, mountain ranges, climatic variations, soil types, mineral resources, flora and fauna patterns, and other factors divide the natural world into regions. The migration and socio-economic adaptation of peoples then rear upon these substrata of natural circumstances societies which evolve into distinctive cultures. Nature and people together gradually produce a local "genius," as it were, a spirit of place that pervades all of the region's human activities—cookery, architecture, social pastimes, speech, and so on—and that distinguishes it from other regions.

Speaking of regions in America, Donald Davidson thus attests the reality of cultural regions:

> It is necessary to recognize first of all that regional differentiations are social and economic fact, and not poetic fiction. . . . The differentiations are the result of the occupation of a

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[1]Andrew Lytle, Foreword to A Novel, A Novella and Four Stories (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1958), p. xv.

> continental area by a vigorous people, habituated to a high degree of independence and self-determination, and shaped by diverse racial, social, political, and environmental influences.[1]

As examples of regional differentiations and local genii, Davidson describes the opposite spirits of Vermont and Georgia in "Still Rebels, Still Yankees":

> The Yankee genius of Vermont was upright, vertical, and no doubt Puritan. Where the landscape itself enforced consistency and order, how could the people concede much virtue to inconsistency and irregularity?[2]

In contrast, "the genius of Georgia was stretched out, relaxed and easy, in keeping with the landscape, which required a large and horizontal view of mundane affairs."[3] In consequence,

> Precision, for the Georgian, must rank among the Utopian virtues. If New England encouraged man to believe in an ordered universe, Georgia . . . compelled him to remember that there were snakes in Eden. Nature, so ingratiating and beautiful, which bound the Georgian to his land with a love both possessive and fearful, was a fair but dreadful mistress, unpredictable and uncontrollable as God.[4]

The interaction, then, between nature and people over a period of time is the process which produces the cultural region, the only source of real social values.

Second, the organic character of the cultural region proceeds from its natural origin and evolutionary growth, and it provides the best accommodation of man to other men and to nature. The idea of the regional culture as organism saturates the writing of traditional regionalists,

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[1] "That This Nation May Endure--The Need for Political Regionalism," Who Owns America?, ed. Herbert Agar and Allen Tate (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1936), p. 116.

[2] Attack on Leviathan, p. 133.

[3] Ibid., p. 139.

[4] Ibid., p. 140.

and is immensely important to the concept of the regional novel. The idea includes the organic interrelationship of differentiated socio-economic functions and institutions around a common center, the significance of forms and conventions, and the important role of tradition in transmitting culture.

The terms "organism" and "organic" are used so often, and often so carelessly, in all kinds of writing that we do well to recall the meaning of "organism" for natural science and philosophy. Dietrich von Hildebrand, a prominent German philosopher and theologian, describes the organism in this way:

> The various component functions in an organism are not merely contiguous to, and combined with, one another; they are coupled together in a kind of mutual interpenetration. All single aspects are united and ruled by a basic principle, as is never the case with any unit or accumulation of lifeless matter. Over and above mere contiguity and multiplicity, there appears a structural trait of mutual penetration and communion.[1]

The mild paradox at the heart of the organic concept is always this union of diverse parts in terms of a basic inner principle, so that members and functions remain separate yet somehow are one together.

The cultural region is characterized by this type of organization and relationship of parts. In a region, institutions, conventions, manners, dress, speech, and other folkways are related to each other by way of the common vital principle, or living center, or "local genius," of which they are the expression and which they help to promote and perpetuate. This harmony of parts stemming from interior determination is stressed in J. N. Oldham's "Anatomy of Provincialism":

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[1] Transformation in Christ (St. Paul: Helicon Press, Inc., 1960), p. 60.

> A reasonable culture is in the best sense an entity; and only integrity of culture—the essential harmony of the elements which go to make it up—gives any reason or abiding worth to a social system. . . . Culture arises where tastes and habits are adapted to one another in a pattern which has unity and satisfies most of the demands made on tradition and conventions.[1]

Andrew Lytle similarly explains the relationship between inner principle and its expression in the structure of the organic society:

> The structure is in its institutions. The institution is defined by conventions. Belief, the life of the state, functions through its conventions.[2]

And Richard Weaver holds that "the basis of an organic social order is fraternity uniting parts that are distinct."[3]

The integrating principle of a regional culture which informs all its ways and gives them coherence may be the "local genius" or "spirit" described by Davidson. Thus, because in the Old Southwest the "genius" of the land was in "its great irregularity and variety," which more or less "enforced self-sufficiency and isolation upon settlers and settlements,"[4] the "spirit of the Old Southwest" became the "heroic tradition" whose values are "intensity of conviction, frankness of love or hate, above all an unwillingness to submit one's integrity to abstract dictation or to taint it with even the shadow of disloyalty to what one holds dear." And these values inform the Southwesterner's whole way of life and his very character:

These are emotional rather than intellectual qualities, and it would

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[1]"Provincialism and Cultural Entity," (Part III of "Anatomy of Provincialism") Sewanee Review, XLIV (Summer, 1936), 296.

[2]"A Summing Up," Shenandoah, p. 31.

[3]Ideas Have Consequences, p. 43.

[4]Attack on Leviathan, p. 173.

> be proper to say that the Southwesterner's experience, backed by his land, his climate, his mores, turns the balance of his temperament toward the religious rather than the ethical, the intuitive rather than the logical, or . . . toward humor rather than wit.[1]

Consequently certain "peculiarities" of the modern resident of the Old Southwest—his obdurate fundamentalism in religion, his indifference to reform programs, his vulnerability to "demagoguery"—are explicable only by reference to this spirit and its tradition.

More than likely, however, the integrating principle of a regional culture is its religion—not so much the institutional forms publicly visible as the interior convictions about final values and their source shared by the people of a community. In his "Plea to the Protestant Churches" Cleanth Brooks defines religion as "that system of basic values which underlies a civilization"[2] and further claims that "civilizations are founded, not on ethical societies, but on religions."[3] According to Ransom, "The religion of a people is that background of metaphysical doctrine which dictates its political economy."[4] T. S. Eliot introduces his Notes toward the Definition of Culture with the assertion that "no culture has appeared or developed except together with a religion,"[5] and later, observing that the term "culture" includes "all the characteristic activities and interests of a people,"[6] he suggests that "there is an aspect in which we can see a religion as the whole way of life of a people, from birth to the grave, from morning to night and even in sleep, and that way of life is also its culture."[7] Because "behavior is also belief,"

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[1] Ibid., pp. 176-77.

[2] Who Owns America?, p. 326.

[3] Ibid., p. 332.

[4] God Without Thunder, p. 116.

[5] P. 13.

[6] Ibid., p. 30.

[7] Ibid., p. 29.

> . . . we may ask whether any culture could come into being, or maintain itself, without a religious basis. We may go further and ask whether what we call the culture, and what we call the religion, of a people are not different aspects of the same thing: the culture being, essentially, the incarnation (so to speak) of the religion of a people.[1]

Whether the integrating principle be a religion, a more indefinite "spirit" of place, or some composite of the two, it unifies both the various socio-economic functions and the forms and conventions of the cultural region. The organic society tends to be hierarchical and class-structured as the result both of the evolutional differentiation of functions and of the transmission of roles through the basic social unit, the family. Of societies at various levels of civilization, Eliot points out,

> the higher types exhibit more marked differentiations of function amongst their members than the lower types. At a higher stage still, we find that some functions are more honoured than others, and this division promotes the development of classes, in which higher honour and higher privilege are accorded, not merely to the person as functionary but as member of the class. And the class itself possesses a function, that of maintaining that part of the total culture of the society which pertains to that class.[2]

Eliot's "case for a society with a class structure, the affirmation that it is, in some sense, the 'natural' society,"[3] is based on the merits of such a society, as well as its naturalness, and parallels very closely Richard Weaver's defense of "Distinction and Hierarchy" in Ideas Have Consequences. Their common view supposes that the graded society, whose different classes are ulteriorly united in a central belief, expresses innate differences among men with the maximal freedom compatible with social stability and continuity.

Like the different classes, the forms and conventions of an

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[1]Ibid., p. 27. [2]Ibid., p. 33. [3]Ibid., pp. 46-47.

organic regional culture are relatively fixed and unified by the underlying belief of which they are the expression. But we cannot discuss these conventions without reference to the crucial role of tradition in the regional culture, for it is a traditional society, and the forms and conventions alluded to here are the inherited ways of conducting life which the regional people receive from their ancestors and pass on to their descendants.

Tradition and regionalism are inseparably connected with each other, for the development of traditions is impossible without a people's prolonged inhabitation of a particular locality, and such inhabitation tends invariably to develop traditions. Arthur Mizener points out that "a tradition requires a particular social situation with some degree of geographical localization and historical continuity."[1] Allen Tate defines "regionalism" as

> that consciousness or that habit of men in a given locality which influences them to certain patterns of thought and conduct handed to them by their ancestors. Regionalism is thus limited in space but not in time.[2]

These "patterns of thought and conduct" are traditional forms. "Tradition," says Ransom, "is the handing down of a thing by society, and the thing handed down is just a formula, a form."[3] John Peale Bishop defines "tradition" this way:

> Tradition is all the learning life which men receive from their fathers and which, having tried it in their own experience, they

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[1] "The Provincial Mentality," Sewanee Review, LIII (Winter, 1945), 160.

[2] On the Limits of Poetry (New York: Swallow Press and William Morrow and Co., 1948), p. 286.

[3] The World's Body, p. 29.

> consent to pass on to their sons. What remains is . . . a technique.[1]

And Donald Davidson gives specific content to the idea of a traditional society:

> A traditional society is a society that is stable, religious, more rural than urban, and politically conservative. Family, blood-kinship, clanship, folk-ways, custom, community, in such a society, supply the needs that in a non-traditional or progressive society are supplied at great cost by artificial devices like training schools and government agencies.[2]

What advantages ensue from a society's possession of traditional forms? One is suggested in the passage just quoted from Davidson: sheer utility and economy. From the societal point of view, the existence of traditional forms obviates the expenditure of resources for training and education and enables their investment in other interests. But the individual, too, benefits from the availability of traditional forms to learn by. John Peale Bishop stresses this latter point in his complaint over the general absence of tradition in America:

> For though for the country as a whole there are traditions of a sort (as in our foreign policy, for example) they are not there as aids to living. And this is the use of customs, courteous manners, and inherited wisdom. While there is always much that a young man must, of necessity, face in complete nakedness without so much as a tatter from the past, it is not a very profitable way to go through life. It means an emotional impoverishment. To have to learn everything for one's self is, as Ben Jonson remarked, to have a fool for a master.[3]

Regionalist thought usually, however, prefers to emphasize other advantages to traditional forms than the utilitarian. Taken together,

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[1] Collected Essays, p. 8.

[2] Still Rebels, Still Yankees and Other Essays (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), p. 172.

[3] Collected Essays, p. 4.

these can be called the "aesthetic" or "spiritual" benefits of tradition. The point is that, by providing a relatively easy accommodation to nature and a time-proved solution to the economic problem, tradition permits man to cultivate himself as a whole person and, moreover, provides him the forms with which to accomplish this self-fulfillment. Forms and conventions are usually conceived by the regionalists as having a limiting, restraining, hence refining, function. Thus Richard Weaver contends that "an illumined concept of what one ought to feel . . . is known as refinement."

> Man is in the world to suffer his passion; but wisdom comes to his relief with an offer of conventions, which shape and elevate that passion. The task of the creators of culture is to furnish the molds and the frames to resist that "sinking in upon the moral being" which comes of accepting raw experience.[1]

Similarly, Andrew Lytle thinks that man's best hope for combatting evil, both interior and external, is by utilizing the restraints of social conventions as agrarian man does:

> He [agrarian man] must have location, which means property, which means the family and the communion of families which is the state. He understands that awareness of limitations is as near as he can come to freedom. Without control of space he is lost in time. The discrete objects of nature make a treadmill. Lest he mount it again he must engage and restrain himself by ritual, manners, conventions, institutions. . . .[2]

But of all the regionalists it is John Crowe Ransom who has most thoroughly elaborated the function of social forms and their relation to aesthetic forms; therefore his ideas deserve special attention. For Ransom, as we saw earlier, man's sensibility, as much as his reason,

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[1] Ideas Have Consequences, p. 22.

[2] "How Many Miles To Babylon," Southern Renascence: The Literature of the Modern South, ed. Louis D. Rubin, Jr. and Robert D. Jacobs (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1953), p. 189.

distinguishes him from the animals; indeed, while man's reason enables him only to be a more efficient animal, his sensibility sets him apart qualitatively.

> By pure reason man would hasten and brutalize his animal processes, but by his free sensibility he elects to observe them, complicate them, and furnish them with background and accessory detail that cannot enter into the exclusive animal consciousness.[1]

It is by the use of aesthetic forms, whether specifically artistic, religious, or social, that man's sensibility develops and operates.

> The aesthetic forms are a technique of restraint, not of efficiency. . . . They stand between the individual and his natural object and impose a check upon his action. . . . To the concept of direct action the old society—the directed and hierarchical one—opposed the concept of aesthetic experience, as a true opposite, and checked the one in order to induce the other.[2]

What the form does, in effect, besides restraining the individual, is to <u>distance</u> the object, and thus allow it to emerge in its full particularity as a "precious" object.

Ransom illustrates this process from the area of manners. In the love relationship, the "severely logical" approach would be for the man to seize the woman directly and satisfy his desire as quickly as possible.

> If our hero, however, does not propose for himself the character of savage, or of animal, but the quaint one of "gentleman," then he has the fixed code of his <u>gens</u> to remember, and then he is estopped from seizing her, he must approach her with ceremony, and pay her a fastidious courtship. We conclude not that the desire is abandoned, but that it will take a circuitous road and become a romance.[3]

As a result of this "circuitous road" or "kind of obliquity" imposed by the formal code, "the woman, contemplated in this manner under restraint,

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[1] <u>God Without Thunder</u>, p. 189. [2] <u>The World's Body</u>, p. 31.

[3] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 33.

becomes a person and an aesthetic object; therefore a richer object."[1] Because "the social man, who submits to the restraint of convention, comes to respect the object and to see it unfold at last its individuality," and because "the function of a code of manners is to make us capable of something better than the stupidity of an appetitive or economic life,"[2] the older European communities, with all their formal amenities, recommend themselves to our study and emulation.

> For the intention of none of those societies can have been simply to confirm the natural man as a natural man. . . . It wanted to humanize him; which means, so far as his natural economy permitted, to complicate his natural functions with sensibility, and make them aesthetic. The object of a proper society is to instruct its members how to transform instinctive experience into aesthetic experience.[3]

Although some accents in this idea are peculiarly Ransomesque, I think it is fair to say that in general it is representative of regionalist thinking on the merits of forms and conventions in the organic society. Later we shall return to the regionalist aesthetic implicit in this line of thought; for the moment, however, we conclude the discussion of the region as organism by mentioning the two related concepts of cultural self-determination and cultural reciprocity.

Cultural self-determination means simply the region's tendency to develop in its own direction, according to its own inner principle and laws of growth. One of the reasons for objecting to the absorption of a region by a stronger neighbor, says Eliot, is "so profound that it must simply be accepted: it is the instinct of every living thing to persist in its own being."[4] Indeed, although the principle of self-determination

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., p. 34. [3] Ibid., p. 42.
[4] Definition of Culture, p. 54.

is a quite logical corollary of regional organicism, its enunciation has most often occurred in terms of a defensive maneuver against the threat of appropriation by external forces. Thus the Introduction to I'll Take My Stand announces the goal, not of the independent political destiny of the South, but of her "moral, social, and economic autonomy," and addresses itself to the question of "how much these must be surrendered to the victorious principle of Union." "The South," it continues, "proposes to determine herself within the utmost limits of legal action."[1] Similarly, Donald Davidson finds the reply to New York's cultural domination of the "hinterland" in "regionalism, a doctrine of self-determination which renews, in different terms, the old cleavage between the lands of the East and those of the South and West."[2] The ideal of organic growth is visible in the same author's invective against sociological "experts," who "are eternally looking for what they call 'social values,'" but who "strangely confine their research to libraries" and would not recognize a "living social value" if they saw it. "For them, nothing must grow according to its nature, but things 'develop' by laboratory formulae."[3] The toleration, by "functionalist" advocates of a planned economy (such as Odum and Moore?), of regional differences only to the point where they clash with "a perfectly neat and scientific adaptation of function to environment within a closed and regimented national economy," is not American, according to Davidson, because "it contradicts the prime force that has made the regions—their tendency, over and above economic

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[1] I'll Take My Stand, p. x.

[2] Still Rebels, Still Yankees, p. 264.

[3] Attack On Leviathan, p. 132.

specializations, to become autonomous units possessing whole cultures of their own, which often embody choices not economic at all."[1]

Ideally, counterpoising the region's impulse toward self-determination is a force or process which we may call "reciprocity." Any organism is itself a member of a larger, multipartite organism to whose good its own health contributes and by whose good its own state is partly measured. A region likewise co-operates with its fellow-regions to procure the total good of the nation which they together constitute. Thus Eliot says, concerning the British culture, "The absolute value is that each area should have its characteristic culture, which should also harmonise with, and enrich, the cultures of the neighboring areas,"[2] and "it is an essential part of my case, that if the other cultures of the British Isles were wholly superseded by English culture, English culture would disappear too."[3] Eliot's ideal of the "proper degree of unity and of diversity" in cultural relationships mounts upward from the regional-national level to the national-international level, as it is almost logically compelled to do.

> For the health of the culture of Europe two conditions are required: that the culture of each country should be unique, and that the different cultures should recognise their relationship to each other, so that each should be susceptible of influence from the others.[4]

American regionalism also recognizes the unity-diversity paradox, though perhaps emphasizing as a defensive tactic the necessity for diversity rather more than that for union. The basic point is quite the same as Eliot's, however: that the concept of American culture is meaningless

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[1] Who Owns America?, p. 123.

[2] Definition of Culture, p. 53.

[3] Ibid., p. 57.

[4] Ibid., p. 123.

without consideration of the constituting regional cultures. As Davidson described the regionalist attitude of the early 1930's, "To one who did not accept Lincoln's quaint idea that the United States must become 'all one thing or all the other,' it seemed more than ever true that the unity of America must rest, first of all on a decent respect for sectional differences."[1] Davidson's prescription for American culture resembles very closely Eliot's for the British Isles and for Europe.

> For the United States the ideal condition would be this: that the regions should be free to cultivate their own particular genius and to find their happiness, along with their sustenance and security, in the pursuits to which their people are best adapted, the several regions supplementing and aiding each other, in national comity, under a well-balanced economy.[2]

Admittedly, the equilibrium implied in these concepts of self-determination and reciprocity has not often been historically realized for any sustained period. Apparently the impulse toward regional self-determination graduates very easily into separatism, the urge for political as well as cultural independence, or into regional imperialism, the urge for a nationalism founded upon the subjugation of weaker communities by a dominant region. The cases of the American Civil War, of German nationalization on Prussian terms, of the long Irish war for independence—all illustrate the political metabolism which constantly threatens the identities of regions. While generally conceding the tendency of regions to behave in this self-destructive fashion, traditional regionalists nevertheless maintain the desirability of upholding self-determination and reciprocity as conscious ideals to be aimed at and approached, if never fully realized.

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[1] Attack On Leviathan, p. 136. [2] Who Owns America?, p. 123.

The concept of reciprocity or regional interrelationship at last explicitly admits the existence of extra-regional entities and points of view, with important consequences for a regionalist aesthetics. Previous phases of regional organicism have been concerned with the interior constitution of regions and have acknowledged only tacitly the region's possession of a superficies. But to concede the principle of regional interrelationships and even a national interest or "comity" is to at least recognize the presence of exterior planes and coigns from which the region may be viewed and perhaps seen to be different from the way it appears to its inhabitants. This new stage of perception is something akin to the development of self-consciousness in the human person, and at this point we must depart from the serviceable analogy with sub-human organisms and enter that dualistic perspective which is characteristic of human beings only.

That is to say, regionalism implies some degree of self-consciousness, some awareness, on the part of regional inhabitants, of a communal self that differs, or may differ, from its various estimates by outside observers. Somehow, perhaps as in Sartrean existentialism,[1] the fact of self-consciousness adulterates and complicates simple being by the awareness of being. Although regionalist philosophy usually expresses this condition as a contrast between outside and inside viewpoints of the region, the fact is that the true regional consciousness, simply by taking

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[1]For example, "Only the reflective consciousness has the self directly for an object, the unreflective consciousness does not apprehend the person directly or as its object; the person is presented to consciousness in so far as the person is an object for the Other." Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), p. 260.

cognizance of exterior points of view, comes itself to contain those points of view, and hence to distinguish itself from the way of life which is its center. Something of this real mystery is suggested by T. S. Eliot in the following passage:

> We must remind ourselves of the danger . . . of identifying culture with the sum of distinct cultural activities. . . . The anthropologist may study the social system, the economies, the arts, and the religion of a particular tribe . . . but it is not merely by observing in detail all of these manifestations, and grasping them together, that he will approach to an understanding of the culture. For to understand the culture is to understand the people, and this means an imaginative understanding. Such understanding can never be complete: either it is abstract—and the essence escapes—or else it is lived. . . . one cannot be outside and inside at the same time.[1]

The regionalist who has catalogued his way of life, who has become aware of its cataloguing by others, is not quite the same man who was simply living it. This double vision, as it were, of the region from inside and from outside becomes a source both of possible weakness and of great strength to the literary regionalist.

III

The dominating ideas of cultural regionalism translate readily into a philosophy of literary regionalism. Like cultural regionalism, literary regionalism was in part a definite historical movement, any systematic account of which would have to include the generating circumstances, a record of major contributors and contributions, an estimation of its effects on literary history, and so on. But beneath the historical facts lie both a philosophy of literature and an aesthetics which can be abstracted from the manifesting historical accidents for correlation with the evidence of the novels themselves. As B. A. Botkin wrote in 1936,

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[1]Definition of Culture, pp. 39-40.

"the conception of a regionally differentiated and interregionally related culture has something to offer to literature, namely, a subject, . . . a technique, . . . a point of view. . . ."[1] We want now to ascertain first the values which provide these resources to the regional writer, and then the character of the technique and point of view.

The first value of literary regionalism is its naturalness. That is to say, in so far as regions exist and a writer is born in one, it is natural for him to use local materials in his art, since they are what he knows best and have furnished, indeed, the very texture of his thought and imagination. This doctrine, that regionalism is natural, receives both relative and positive statements in regionalist tracts. Relatively, it is usually proclaimed as a warning against the false artistic standards of an alien culture and against the slavish imitation of exotic models. Thus Donald Davidson describes regionalism in its self-conscious phase as "only one phase of a general movement of revulsion and affirmation,"[2] a "retreat from the artistic leviathanism of the machine age, symbolized by the dominance of New York during the nineteen-twenties,"[3] a "protest . . . against the false nationalism that the metropolitans have been disseminating."[4] In America, at least, regionalism is a natural "condition under which the national American Literature exists as a literature. . . ."[5]

> Regionalism is not an end in itself, not a literary affectation, not an aesthetic credo, but a condition of literary realization. The

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[1]"Regionalism: Cult or Culture?" The English Journal, XXV (March, 1936), 184.

[2]Attack On Leviathan, p. 80. [3]Ibid., p. 81.

[4]Still Rebels, p. 276. [5]Ibid., p. 271.

> function of a region is to endow the American Artist with character and purpose. He is born of a region. He will deny its parenthood to his own hurt.[1]

The positive statement of the naturalness of regionalism makes of it a communal equivalent to the advice, "Look in thy heart and write." Mary Austin describes the relationship between the region, the artist, and art in this way:

> Art, considered as the expression of any people as a whole, is the response they make in various mediums to the impact that the totality of their experience makes upon them, and there is no sort of experience that works so constantly and subtly upon man as his regional environment. . . . Slowly or sharply it forces upon him behavior patterns such as earliest become the habit of his blood, the unconscious factor of adjustment in all his mechanisms.[2]

Eudora Welty says, "It is both natural and sensible that the place where we have our roots should become the setting, the first and primary proving ground, of our fiction."[3] Faulkner likewise sees his regional environment as simply a part of his "workshop," a natural source of his materials. For instance, in response to a query about the motivational force on a young writer of the Southern aristocracy's resistance to change, Faulkner replies:

> It does [furnish a motivation for writing], in that that is a condition of environment. It's something that is handed to a writer. He is writing about people in the terms that he's most familiar with. . . . He's writing about people. He is using the material which he knows, the tools which are at hand. . . . It's simply a condition, and since it is a condition it lives and breathes, and it is valid as material.[4]

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[1] Ibid., p. 277.

[2] "Regionalism in American Fiction," The English Journal, XXI (Feb., 1932), 97.

[3] "Place in Fiction," p. 69.

[4] Faulkner in the University, p. 57.

And Robert Penn Warren describes his intention in All the King's Men as being his "desire to compose a highly documented picture of the modern world--at least, as the modern world manifested itself in the only region I knew well enough to write about."[1]

This might seem to be so simple a proposition--to write about what one knows best--as hardly to require comment, and probably it is from the standpoint of the creative writer, whose job, after all, entails no philosophizing. This fact has led Eudora Welty to reject the epithet "regional" altogether, for "'regional' is an outsider's term; it has no meaning for the insider who is doing the writing, because as far as he knows he is simply writing about life."[2] Yet when we consider what this decision about materials means in the light of our review of cultural regionalism, then a wealth of implications unfolds which the reader and critic can scarcely ignore. Once the principle of the naturalness of regionalism has oriented the writer, consciously or not, toward regional materials, the other values of literary regionalism tend to assert themselves in his work.

One of these values, which answers to the regionalist conception of the wholeness of man, is the regional writer's ability to act as a whole person, and hence to see other persons in their wholeness or entirety. The regional writer refuses to abstract from the picture of man any function or role, including his own as artist, which separates man from fullness of being as individual citizen in a community. Rejecting

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[1] Introduction to All the King's Men (New York: The Modern Library, 1953), p. iii.

[2] "Place in Fiction," p. 72.

the proletarian writer's attempt to "reason himself into an appropriate relation to a class," Robert Penn Warren asserts that "the regional movement, with some implied conception of an organic society in its background, denies the desirability of such a program, claiming that the focus of literary inspiration should be the individual, not the class."[1] Like other writers, the regionalist has "the responsibility of inspecting the aims of the society from which he stemmed," but he pursues this activity

> . . . as a part, and perhaps the most significant part, of his role as a citizen and a human being. He is, then, motivated by the conviction that the study of the springs of human conduct and the representation of human conduct are important and positive because the human creature possesses an inalienable dignity and interest. . . .[2]

Consequently, his creation "is in itself, finally, but a phase of his own conduct as a human being and, as a matter of fact, a citizen,"[3] and he can achieve an objectivity and fulfillment unavailable to the artist deliberately searching for a theme.

Another quite real and related value at hand to the literary regionalist is a knowledge of things, as well as of persons, in their full particularity. The reasoning behind this claim is that prolonged familiarity with objects protected by traditional forms from utilitarian exploitation develops in the integrated citizen-writer a kind of pious knowledge of local things which is as much of the heart as of the head and which alone is capable of perceiving these things as particulars rather than as indifferent instances of universal laws or as superficial curiosities. This is the major theme of Ransom's disquisitions on the "precious

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[1] "Literature as a Symptom," Who Owns America?, p. 272.

[2] Ibid., p. 267. [3] Ibid.

object" in The World's Body and in God Without Thunder, of which we have sampled portions elsewhere. It is also the theme of Davidson's explanation of "Why the Modern South Has a Great Literature," wherein Davidson theorizes that the "blessed man" (Vergil's fortunatus) commands a kind of knowledge negotiable in the literary act:

> It is a knowledge that possesses the heart rather than a knowledge achieved entirely by the head--a knowledge that pervades the entire being. . . . Positively, it establishes the blessed man in a position where economic use, enjoyment, understanding, and religious reverence are not separated but are fused in one.[1]

As a consequence,

> the person who is born of a traditional society, if he is not corrupted, will act as a whole person in all of his acts, including his literary acts. . . . It is also natural for him to see men in their total capacity as persons and to see things in all their rich particularity as things and to understand that the relationships between persons and persons, and between persons and things are more complex and unpredictable than any scientific textbook invites one to think.[2]

Or it may simply be, as Miss Welty suggests, that attachment to place provides focus, hence an unusual type of knowledge:

> Focus then means awareness, discernment, order, clarity, insight--they are like the attributes of love. The act of focusing itself has beauty and meaning; it is the act that, continued in, turns into meditation, into poetry. Indeed, as soon as the least of us stands still, that is the moment something extraordinary is seen to be going on in the world. . . .[3]

Whatever their explanations, advocates of literary regionalism agree that the regionalist possesses a type of insight into things which conduces to artistic merit.

But the literary regionalist possesses an insight not merely into things in their discrete particularity but into things (and by "things"

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[1] Still Rebels, p. 172. [2] Ibid., pp. 176-77.

[3] "Place in Fiction," p. 63.

we mean objects, phenomena of behavior, institutions, conventions, and beliefs)—things in their organic context, in their actual, full relationships with other things. He thus enjoys a comprehensive perspective which conduces to wholeness, another value of literary regionalism.

This wholeness, or totality of viewpoint, displays two aspects, one a knowledge of things from the inside, the other, springing from the self-consciousness described earlier, a counter-balancing awareness of exterior interpretations and evaluations. The first aspect is often used to distinguish the true regionalist from the local colorist exploiting the surfaces of local peculiarities or the social critic judging regional phenomena in terms of preconceived standards—both types failing to perceive the organic interrelationship of regional forms. The distortion of regional realities implicit in either approach invalidates such a demand for a poetry of local color as Harriet Monroe's, according to Andrew Lytle, because, although "any literature is regional or local in the sense that it is somewhere, at some time,"

> . . . to ask for a local poem or novel with the emphasis on the local was to ask for the Procrustean bed. Something is always cut or stretched beyond its organic proportions. . . . Its point of view is that of the foreigner viewing the local scene, and the foreigner is first conscious of the convention as such, rather than what it conveys.[1]

Although "outlanders" may write local color, frequently the local colorist or propagandist is writing about his own society but seeing it as an outsider, that is, superiorly and patronizingly.

> Like a stranger, he is acutely aware of speech, manners, and dress, out of proportion to the action. He cannot see his people as human beings like all human beings speaking and acting as they are accustomed to, because he does not work from within. He does not

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[1]"A Summing Up," pp. 32-33.

understand the function of the convention. . . . He does not think of it as a need in the action, so falsifies the need and therefore the action.[1]

By contrast, the literary regionalist ideally brings to his craft a longtime, heartfelt familiarity with and understanding of his culture as a totality. His saturation in the traditional life of his locality enables him to perceive the true relations of conventions to each other, to manners, to institutions, and to the underlying, sustaining beliefs. Normally, then, he declines to isolate, and thereby exaggerate and distort, any feature of his environment out of its "organic proportions." Whatever his subject, he is able to inform it with "the balanced relationship of itself to its environment."[2]

The second aspect of the literary regionalist's comprehensive perspective consists in his awareness of outside viewpoints or attitudes toward his native culture. He is cognizant, in other words, not only of what his culture actually is, but of what strangers, especially hostile critics, think it is, and of the truths, half-truths, and downright errors contained in those opinions. Secondarily, he is conscious of other ways of life, the source of these exterior opinions, which criticize his own by the very fact of their existence in a different mode. The factor of this awareness adds a dimension to the writer's view of his native materials which creates special artistic problems but at the same time complicates and enriches the potential use of those materials in its introduction of the dual perspective characteristic of regional writing.

The ascription of such an awareness, which is a phase of self-consciousness, is rather implicit than otherwise in the apologetics of

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[1]*Ibid.*, p. 32. [2]*Ibid.*

literary regionalism. We find it only by implication, for example, in Donald Davidson's theory of why cultures undergo periods of intense artistic creativity. Greece in the fifth century, Rome of the late Republic, Italy in Dante's time, England in the sixteenth century, the South of the 1920's—all are examples of the traditional society invaded by change.

> A traditional society can absorb modern improvements up to a certain point without losing its character. If modernism enters to the point where the society is thrown a little out of balance but not yet completely off balance, the moment of self-consciousness arrives.[1]

At this point certain writers are forced into an examination of their total inheritance and "begin to compose literary works in which the whole metaphysic of the society takes dramatic or poetic or fictional form."

> This is what I mean by the moment of self-consciousness. It is the moment when a writer awakes to realize what he and his people truly are, in comparison with what they are being urged to become.[2]

Similarly, Allen Tate has explained the Southern "renaissance" in terms of a "double focus," a "looking two ways":

> After the First World War the South again knew the world, but it had the memory of another war; with us, entering the world once more meant not only the obliteration of the past but a heightened consciousness of it; so that we had, at any rate in Nashville, a double focus, a looking two ways, which gave a special dimension to the writing of our school. . . .[3]

And Louis Rubin comments upon the literature consequent from that focus:

> It is a literature in which the double image of past and present was present in the artistic vision of the poets and novelists who created the renaissance, and who could thus observe the teeming life going on all around them with a depth, a perspective, that could permit its

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[1] Still Rebels, p. 172. [2] Ibid., p. 173.

[3] Quoted by Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "A Looking Two Ways," Shenandoah, VI (Summer, 1955), 26.

transformation into art. They were of it and yet outside of it.[1] Although it is quite true that no external viewpoint is explicitly mentioned in these passages, the admission of such a viewpoint is implicit, I suggest, in the idea of a society's "invasion" by and mutation into forms alien to its traditional life.

The final and indispensable value of literary regionalism—and it is one which follows from all of the preceding values—is that it enables the writer to use his local materials strictly as medium, never as subject in and for themselves, and thereby to attain to universality. Through his knowledge of men as individuals, of things in their particularity, of things in their whole context, and so on, the regional writer is able to take his peculiar materials, as it were, for granted, so that, to use Miss Welty's apt phrasing once again, "as far as he knows he is simply writing about life."The possibility of universality follows because it is a universal condition of man to be shaped and molded, in large part constituted, by environmental forces and at the same time to find himself in conflict with various of those forces, which means to find himself in conflict with himself as well. A literary subject, says Andrew Lytle, "will always be some part of the universal predicament of man trapped in the complexities of experience, as the convention will always be the restraining form."[2] And Eudora Welty celebrates the universality of the regional medium quite lyrically in the following passage:

> It seems plain that the art that speaks most clearly, explicitly, directly, and passionately from its place of origin will remain the longest understood. It is through place that we put out roots, wherever

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[1] Ibid., p. 27.

[2] "A Summing Up," pp. 32-33.

> birth, chance, fate, or our traveling selves set us down; but where those roots reach toward . . . is the deep and running vein, eternal and consistent and everywhere purely itself--that feeds and is fed by the human understanding.[1]

The use of regional materials as medium rather than as subject is a theme which advocates of literary regionalism never tire of sounding, partly in order to emphatically dissociate regionalism from local color, and which accordingly deserves additional stress here. In "Some Don'ts for Literary Regionalists" Robert Penn Warren cautions, "Regionalism is not quaintness and local color and folklore, for those things when separated from a functional idea are merely a titillation of the reader's sentimentality or snobbishness."[2] Similarly, Joseph E. Baker writes, "The regionalist who ignores the universal is at fault, of course; the life of his region is his medium of expression, not his message, and he should not make his thinking a mere search for the curious, the odd, and the picturesque--that was the error of the local-colorist."[3] Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, after rejecting "regional writing done because the author thinks it will be salable" as "as spurious a form of literary expression as ever reaches print,"[4] admits as valid

> . . . the approach of the sincere creative writer who has something to say and who uses a specialized locale--a region--as a logical or fitting background for the particular thoughts or emotions that cry out for articulation. . . . the creative writer finds a fictional character's speech, dress, and daily habits of importance only as they make that character emerge . . . with the aura of reality, so

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[1] "Place in Fiction," p. 72.

[2] The American Review, VIII (Dec., 1936), 148.

[3] "Four Arguments for Regionalism," Saturday Review of Literature, XV (Nov. 28, 1936), 14.

[4] "Regional Literature of the South," College English, I (Feb., 1940), 384.

> that the author has a convincing and effective medium for the tale he means to tell.[1]

And Cleanth Brooks, denouncing the "tendency--still active--to associate tradition with dead conventionality and regionalism with mere local color," observes that "in John Crowe Ransom's or Allen Tate's verse, for all their interest in regionalism, a description of the Southern scene never becomes the raison d'etre of the poem."[2]

Before proceeding to the aesthetics of regionalism, we should pause for a moment to reassess our critical stance and the relevance this indirect approach to the subject of the regional novel bears. Two points need to be stressed. First, the exposition of cultural and literary regionalism has made no attempt to appraise the validity of either, because the effort was entirely to present the viewpoint of regionalists on these subjects. It may be that some or even all of the propositions defended by regionalists are fallacious in one way or another; but the truth or error of the regionalist argument is not the point here. The point is the nature itself of that argument: to ascertain what attitudes the articulate spokesmen for regionalism hold toward society and man, what values they perceive in regional cultures and literary regionalism.

The second point to be re-emphasized is the relevance of this material to a description of the regional novel. I have said before that, taken together, it constitutes a large part of the "intention" of the regional novel--that regional materials and the values of regionalism

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[1] Ibid., p. 385.

[2] Modern Poetry and the Tradition (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1939), p. 76.

permeate and inform the regional novel. Now since I would at all costs avoid suggesting that the regional novel is written according to program or formula, I should like to put the case in the form of a number of decisions which a writer might make in his choice and treatment of matetials.

Given the fact of regional nativity and nurture, let us say, a writer could elect to ignore his native culture, seeking elsewhere for materials; or to select for treatment those regional features which are indistinguishable from the same features in other areas; or to distort beyond their "organic proportions" certain features of his culture, perhaps consciously by symbolism for special thematic emphasis; or to take altogether an "outside" view of his area, viewing the entire regional complex in terms of some alien standard. The word "elect" is not meant here to imply necessarily a decision consciously made with reference to the writer's relationship to his culture; it is quite conceivable that the writer, dominated by other motives, will not even think within the framework of that relationship at all. Yet his decision is objectively analyzable in the light of that relationship, and the light reveals that a particular work issuing from any of the alternative decisions suggested will not be regionalist in intention, as traditional regionalism has been defined. That is to say, it will not tend to produce an enveloping action or setting of a nature and in a perspective which correspond with the regionalist concepts of man and society.

On the other hand another alternative exists of a sufficient latitude to attract writers of widely differing skills and temperaments, and that is to utilize regional materials in an incidence roughly

approximating their organic proportions and from a perspective which contemplates both their inside and outside aspects. Once again no calculation of the writer is implied, and it is quite certain, I think, that he never sets out determinedly to measure "organic proportions," or anything of that sort (presumably such relations are contained within himself and the visible scene before him, which he knows by long and intimate acquaintance). A work proceeding from such a decision will incline in the direction of a regionalist intention, in that its materials, perspective, and values will tend to approach or parallel the ideas of the regionalist philosophy. That is the reason why, presuming a solution has been found to certain formal problems, the regional novel can be said to be informed by the philosophy of regionalism, and consequently why an introduction to regionalism establishes a solid framework for understanding the regional novel.

CHAPTER III

THE REGIONAL NOVEL: THE AESTHETICS OF REGIONALISM

Several phrases at the close of the last chapter were designed to convey a certain tentativeness about the conclusions possible at that stage of elucidation. For the truth is that an artistic "decision" of the kind remarked is not sufficient in itself to produce the regional novel. There remains a major problem or complex of problems in the area of form, the theoretical solution to which provides what can be called the aesthetics of literary regionalism. In brief, the problem, which stems from the factor of cultural differentiation, is how to mediate between local materials and outside audience while preserving the integrity of local materials and maintaining the inside-outside perspective of them. It is a problem that would seldom occur in the form stated to a working novelist, although it would crop up in other forms in the practical execution of his imaginative vision; yet it is a very real problem which has merited the deliberations of several aestheticians, critics, and even novelists.

A good insight into the problem is provided by Donald A. Dike's fine article, "Notes on Local Color and its Relation to Realism." Professor Dike discerns two dissimilar ways in which local colorists could be related to local materials. In the inferior mode of relationship the

writer acted as visitor to a local community, struck by its singular differences from the norm of his own social group. He exploited the apparently eccentric and picturesque as facts, insisting on the truthfulness of his reporting and inviting his readers to wonder. As a type, this local colorist

> directs the response of his readers by mediating between their incredulity and the yarn he is spinning, by interposing a point of view which they can immediately recognize and share. Thus the remote is familiarized, because the experience of the narrator, who frequently speaks in the first person and sometimes appears as a character to comment upon his observations, is represented as public in the sense that it would be the experience of any ordinary person who happened to be in his place.[1]

This type of writer is clearly uninterested in, if he is even aware of, the integrity or organic structure of the local community. He is the kind of local colorist alluded to so often and so disparagingly by regionalists.

The other and more important branch of local colorists, including such figures as Hamlin Garland, James Lane Allen, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Mary Wilkins Freeman, "identified themselves with the community which was their subject matter." Anticipating their successors, the regionalists,

> they rejected altogether the assumption of a standard social experience which finds provincial life to be a necessary aberration. They were cultural relativists . . . convinced that human experience is less uniform than diversified and that the task of literature is to express rather than describe the particular.[2]

The intention of these writers was, we might say, regionalist in nature, yet they produced no regional novels. Why? Because they could not

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[1]Donald A. Dike, "Notes on Local Color and Its Relation to Realism," College English, XIV (Nov., 1952), 82.

[2]Ibid.

discover a form which would mediate between materials and audience without at the same time violating by reduction the nature of those materials. Faced with the problem of convincing a predominantly urban audience that what they represented was true and real, they were forced into the tactics of their inferior local colorists: the use of extra-local, mediating perspectives, which had the effect of distancing, reducing, and distorting their materials by adjusting them to the conventions of an outside viewpoint. The result of their inadequate formal approach is that their fiction tends to appear deterministic, propagandistic, and sentimental, insisting to the point of advertising on the pathos, humor, and industry of rural characters.

Dike concludes by doubting that, in the long run, local color can be "realistic" (though his canon of realism is not perfectly clear), because the ordinary man in local color is not ordinary to the reader, is not real in the sense that the experience of one's fellows or self is real. More broadly,

> the question raised is how many realities can literary realism, pressed by cultural relativism, acknowledge. Even the postulate that realism is essentially a method, rather than a metaphysics, does not answer the question; for as a method it must involve the use of conventions which can be unconsciously interpreted by a specific audience, which will remind that audience, in effect, of what it knows. And to adapt local-color material to the conventions of an unlocal audience is to distort it.[1]

Since the heyday of the local colorists, however, a number of impressive literary conventions have been developed capable of accomplishing this adaptation. Hence if the problem is mediation without distortion, the regionalists' theoretical solution is a high formalism,

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[1]Ibid., p. 87.

based upon a Ransomesque aesthetics and invoking the principles and practices of such technical innovators as Henry James, Joseph Conrad, Ford Madox Ford, and James Joyce.

The formalism of regionalist aesthetics I call "Ransomesque" only because John Crowe Ransom has made clearest and most explicit the artist-form-object relationship in which we are now interested. Ransom's own philosophical mentor is Kant, I believe, though I could not say just how much of Ransom's aesthetics is Kantian, how much derivative from other sources, and how much his own invention. Other regionalists have had other masters, and some have been content to practice art and criticism without promulgating their aesthetics. Implicit in all their practices and pronouncements, however, is a common formalist theory which can be described and illustrated by reference to Ransom's doctrines.

We are speaking now of the compositional aspect of formalism, not of its affective dimension, and the basic, ontological idea of that aspect is this: the oblique, indirect, formal approach to an object for artistic treatment establishes aesthetic distance between the artist and his object and thus preserves the full "body" of the object in all its mysterious particularity. By way of contrast, the direct, immediate, informal approach--the attempt, as it were, to seize the object in spontaneous expression--mutilates the object by reducing it to its minimal or public character. Ransom says:

> When a consensus of taste lays down the ordinance that the artist shall express himself formally, the purpose is evidently to deter him from expressing himself immediately. Or, the formal tradition intends to preserve the artist from the direct approach to his object. Behind the tradition is probably the sense that the direct approach is perilous to the artist, and may be fatal. . . . I suggest, therefore, that an art is usually, and probably of necessity,

> a kind of obliquity; that its fixed form proposes to guarantee the round-about of the artistic process, and the "aesthetic distance."[1]

Poetry, by which Ransom means formal poetry (and, by reasonable extension, formal literature) is thus the antithesis of science, as the gentleman, restrained by traditional forms and content with knowing the object of his sentiments, is the antithesis of the animal, "scientific" man, intent on using the object of his appetites. Poetry restores the "world's body," of which science by its abstractive processes has deprived us. "What we cannot know constitutionally as scientists is the world which poetry recovers for us," but "it is a paradox that poetry has to be a technical act, of extreme difficulty, when it wants only to know the untechnical homely fullness of the world."[2]

How does aesthetic distance through form effect the emergence of the whole object? Ransom suggests that the artist, being also a natural man, has his own special interests in objects, but that form and distance prevent these subjective concerns from dominating the artist's encounter with objects.

> Art has a canon to restrain this natural man. It puts the object out of his reach; or . . . removes him to where he cannot hurt the object, nor disrespect it by taking his practical attitude towards it, exchanging his actual situation, where he is too determined by proximity to the object, and contemporaneity with it, for the more ideal station furnished by the literary form.[3]

As specific poetical devices contributing to aesthetic distance and hence tending to increase the "volume of percipienda or sensibilia,"[4] Ransom mentions the poet's assumption of a mask or pseudonymity and then his assumption of a "costume"—both of them dramatic aspects of poetry:

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[1] The World's Body, p. 32.

[2] Preface, ibid., pp. x-xi.

[3] Ibid., pp. 38-39.

[4] Ibid., p. 130.

"[Poetry] maintains faithfully certain dramatic features. The poet does not speak in his own but in an assumed character, and not in the actual but in an assumed situation. . . ."[1] The mask frees the poet from his "juridical or prose self" and gives him an "ideal or fictitious personality."[2]

> First, the poet puts on the mask. It places him before his public--and in his own mind for that matter--as an anonymous person and not as himself. The mask covers his face sufficiently to conceal his actual identity, and intimates that he is not to reveal it otherwise; if he should reveal it, it would cause the irruption into the poetic drama of external action, or prose.[3]

The assumption of a mask thus provides for an objective or dramatic speaker; the assumption of a "costume" provides for an objective situation and treatment:

> It is a "period" costume perhaps; a rather conventional one, or else one that bears on the private history of the impersonator, or probably both at once; at any rate one that is distinct and identifiable, and implies a "business" to suit. The advantage of the mask is negative, inhibiting the prose function and releasing the aesthetic function, but the advantage of the costume is positive, giving form to the aesthetic activity. For the costume is selective. It binds the play of sensibility to the playing of a character-part, and unifies it by dramatic propriety.[4]

The "mask" and the "costume," then, constitute in Ransom's view the "ideal station" which removes the writer from proximity to his object and thereby permits its full emergence.

One word of caution is necessary here concerning the relationship between the achieved artistic object and its correspondent in actuality. Occasionally when Ransom speaks of poetic form as revealing the fullness of the world's body, he seems almost to imply an ideal equivalence between

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[1] Ibid., p. 254.

[2] Ibid., p. 2.

[3] Ibid., p. 257.

[4] Ibid., p. 259.

poetic and actual objects, as when he says "the public value of the poem would seem to lie theoretically in the competence with which it expresses its object."[1] Pursued logically, this idea would terminate in the old confusion between artistic and phenomenal reality, according to which artistic representations are checked for their realism by comparison with their actual counterparts. Elsewhere, however, Ransom makes it fairly plain that the poem does not aim at a literal transcript of actuality. An art-object, he says, is "hypothetical": "It cannot be true in the sense of being actual. . . . But it is true in the sense of being fair or representative, in permitting the 'illusion of reality'. . . ."[2] Objects are present in poetry by way of images, and good images permit the illusion of reality, not by photographically duplicating original objects, but by possessing the richness, particularity, and mystery found in the actual objects. Thus, approving the representative quality of Shakespeare's "full fathom five" passage, Ransom notes: "It has the configuration of image, which consists in being sharp of edges, and the modality of image, which consists in being given and non-negotiable, and the density, which consists in being full, a plenum of qualities."[3] The realism of a literary work would depend, then, upon its possession of these qualities—sharpness, non-negotiability, density—rather than upon its point-by-point identity with something actually existing.

Many of Ransom's ideas (for example, his literalist interpretation of Aristotle's cathartic principle and his structure-texture dualism) are peculiar to himself, but his general theme of objectivity through the indirect, formal approach recurs in variant strains in all regionalist

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 278. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 131. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

writing on the subject of aesthetics and the act of artistic creation. The idea is present negatively, for example, in Andrew Lytle's stricture of Thomas Wolfe:

> Wolfe never freed his work from a narcissistic preoccupation with his ego. He did not withdraw to a post of observation sufficiently objective from which his private revery could be checked against the discrete objects of the world. The obscurity of his views comes from a failure to master the conventions of his craft.[1]

Again, in a laudatory article on "Caroline Gordon and the Historic Image," Lytle insists that the "direct gaze" (like Ransom's immediate approach) and technical ineptitude distort the artistic object. He is speaking of both artistic creation and critical analysis of the creative act when he says, in his somewhat cryptic style,

> Even in the Grove where all was ritual . . . even there the pretender slipped in. I take it that the pretender is he who by brutal exposure would get at the secret which, for the sake of our humanity, must remain hidden; must, because the direct gaze sees too discretely, ignoring the representative quality in the object, the mystery of creation in the bare act.[2]

In contrast to the "direct gaze" are the detached, oblique viewpoint and approach (the "averted eye") and technical mastery (the "sure gesture"). These comprehend the instruments with which the true artist--in this case the novelist--practices the act of creation, described by Lytle as follows:

> The averted eye allows for an image which focuses the imagination and sustains and controls its vision; the sure gesture predicates the mastery of the tools of the trade, or the necessity of this mastery, and a formal method. Formality depends upon objectivity, which requires the novelist to post himself, whereby sight (of the world, according to his scale of observation) and insight (into himself, through imagination) relate and equate what is seen and so bring the double vision into focus. The end in view is to force the

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[1] "A Summing Up," p. 33.

[2] Sewanee Review, LVII (Autumn, 1949), 560.

> meaning of experience to show beneath appearance. . . . What results is his ability to deliver up out of any given situation what the tension between the discrete world and the controlling image precipitates. And this more explicitly is a fusion of complexities, or levels of interest, with an emphasis on a particular level which connects all the other levels (in terms always of the controlling image).[1]

So proceeding, the "initiate," unlike the "pretender" approaches the "secret" (that "the inner chamber is always dark, because what lies in that darkness are the shreds of raw matter and the dry ligaments of the beast"[2]) "ever obliquely, never toward but around, disguising and guarding it by assuming the qualities of the Muse's triple nature: meditation through memory, into song (for fiction, rendition)."[3]

Aesthetic formalism, as described generally by Ransom and elaborated by Lytle, is the regionalist response to the problem of treating local materials without distortion. Applying the principle of the "averted eye," the oblique and indirect approach, enables the literary regionalist to represent the plenum and particularity of local materials in an integral, organic context, so that proportional relations among actual beliefs, institutions, and manners are retained <u>analogously</u> in the literary product. There remains to be considered, however, the specific type of form which regionalist formalism involves, with the related question of how the mediating effect occurs—the actual formal conventions, in other words, "which can be unconsciously interpreted by a specific audience, which will remind that audience, in effect, of what it knows."

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 561.

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 560.

[3] <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 560-61.

II

Judging at once from the evidence of imaginative works, of critical and aesthetic documents, and of the inherent answerability of the methods to regionalist needs, I should say that regionalist formalism comprises mainly the related principles and methods of dramatization and mythicization. "Dramatization," for which "rendition," "enactment," and "impressionism" are occasional synonyms, has indicated a key concept in one important formal tradition since at least the time of Henry James. As used by the central figures in this tradition, the term designates several technical methods, all of which, however, can be generalized within the terms of the basic analogy with the dramatic genre.

Negatively, that analogy implies the withdrawal or abeyance of all overt devices by which the reader's response to a fictional matter is directly controlled. (I emphasize "all" because, while comment on this issue has focused on the techniques of narrative authority or point of view, other controlling devices are also involved, as will be seen.) The primary differentia between the narrative (epical-fictional) and the dramatic genres is the presence in the former of a teller standing in intermediate relationship between represented events and audience, and, correlatively, the direct exhibition of figures and events in the latter. As fiction approximates the condition of drama, this teller tends to become "effaced," either in the purer but rarer mode of disappearing altogether or nearly so ("The Killers," The Awkward Age, The Square, the middle portions of Requiem for a Nun), or in the relative but much commoner mode of ceasing to be an absolutely "reliable" reporter and

interpreter of facts or meanings or values—or of all these.[1] In other words, as regards the technical category of authority, dramatization means the avoidance of the omniscient convention (whether third or first person), with its confirming, interpreting control and commentary in the manner of Fielding and Thackeray and Scott, in favor of a strictly scenic method or a more contingent viewpoint such as the characterized first-person and third-person-restricted viewpoints.

It is easy enough to see how the scenic method of presentation comports with the ideal of dramatic form defined by Joyce's Dedalus as "the form wherein [the artist] presents his image in immediate relation to others" after "the personality of the artist . . . finally refines itself out of existence, impersonalizes itself, so to speak."[2] But perhaps it is not so clear why and how the techniques of the characterized first-person narrator and of the restricted third-person narrator contribute to dramatization—why, for example, Percy Lubbock should speak of "this device of telling the story in the first person, in the person of somebody in the book" as "the readiest means of dramatically heightening a reported impression."[3] The reason is, I think, that these techniques (plainly excepting the case of the undramatized, authoritative first-person narrator, who speaks with the "reliability" of virtual omniscience) introduce into the reader's response at any point in the

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[1]The most thorough and intelligent discussion to date of "reliable" and "unreliable" narrators is in Wayne C. Booth's The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

[2]James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (New York: The Modern Library, 1928), pp. 251-52.

[3]The Craft of Fiction, p. 127.

course of a dramatized novel a factor of uncertainty, contingency, indeterminacy or ambiguity respecting the factuality, signification, and evaluation of the matter at hand, and this effect is analogous to the provisional character of any single moment or standpoint in the progressive structural interaction of a play. In a novel containing a dramatized "I" like Nick Carraway of The Great Gatsby, for example, an immediate representation by the narrator is seldom unequivocal at the time it appears, but awaits qualification or confirmation in subsequent revelations, in contrast to the narrative technique of a novel ("romance") like Tender Is the Night, where an omniscient, "undercutting" authority is usually present to reveal the "truth" about immediate appearances. The dramatic techniques of authority thus contribute to a novel the heightened interrelative and contingent qualities ascribed by Henry James to the play-form:

> The play consents to the logic of but one way, mathematically right. . . . We are shut up wholly to cross-relations, relations all within the action itself; no part of which is related to anything but some other part—save of course by the relation of the total to life.[1]

Although the withdrawal of a validating authority is no doubt the principal of the "negative" means of dramatization, those means include the suppression of other more or less direct ways of controlling the reader's response to a fictional matter. It is not to our purpose—even if it were possible—to catalogue these devices in any systematic fashion, but a few illustrations will indicate the sort of control which, in conjunction with the revealing authority, the dramatic method relinquishes. For example, in characterization the dramatic method tries to

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[1]Preface to "The Awkward Age," The Art of the Novel, p. 114

avoid the caricature, the stereotype, the "flat" character who appeals to conventional notions—perhaps prejudices—about types of men and areas of society, and who therefore helps to establish the reader in an evaluative framework with respect to a given fictional situation. Although "outside" techniques of characterization (that is, chiefly by appearance, speech, gesture, habitual actions) conducive to the emergence of flat characters may be employed to characterize persons themselves enthralled in such a mode of interpretation, in general the dramatic approach disfavors the simple outside view of character by itself.

The possible dispositions of narrative structure are so numerous that almost any generalization is subject to question, yet two tentative observations can be ventured. First, structural dramatism tends to avoid the simple, straightforward, chronologically successive type of narrative whose cumulative logic acquires a determinative force and appears to the reader to "compel" later events (the "case-history" effects of Zola and Dreiser, for example). True, the dramatic genre itself is virtually forced by its "radical of presentation" (the "acted" word)[1] to proceed in a direct line of action, but the distance introduced in fiction by its own radical of presentation (the written word) and by the presence of a narrator, however dramatized, both requires and enables fictional structure to move by more devious routes, if it is to secure the dramatic effects of contingency and indeterminacy. Second, structural dramatism tends to avoid the undramatized (that is, authoritatively validated) "long view,"[2] comprising extensive exposition, panoramic description, and especially

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[1]Frye, p. 247.

[2]Defined and discussed by Tate and Gordon, House of Fiction, pp. 627-30.

narrative summary, and serving to situate the reader unequivocally as to background data and intervening events.

We could examine additional proscriptive tendencies of the dramatic method, such as, stylistically, the abstention from "patronizing" epithets ("our unfortunate heroine," "the intrepid adventurer")[1] and the flight from obtrusive, conventional symbolism unmotivated by the actions and thoughts of characters. It would produce a mistaken impression, however, to pursue the "negative" approach of dramatization further, as though the dramatic method were essentially a detailed repudiation of such methods. Rather the concept of dramatization is a composite one, designating several interrelated principles, with their implicit corollary techniques by means of which certain positive, definable effects are secured.

The various positive senses of dramatization are well-encompassed in the following exposition, by Brooks and Warren in Understanding Fiction, of the term "dramatic":

> Strictly speaking, fictional method is said to be dramatic when the author gives a purely OBJECTIVE rendering of his material, without indulging either in editorial comments and generalization of his own or in analysis of the feelings and thoughts of his characters. . . . But the term is used more loosely to indicate merely the presence of strong tension and sharp conflict in a fictional situation; and it is used more loosely still to indicate concrete presentation as opposed to abstract statement.[2]

Here the first sense of "dramatic," the "objective rendering" of material without commentary or analysis, corresponds to Henry James's usage when he speaks of the "complete and functional scene"[3]—the occasion

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[1] A device remarked by Joseph Warren Beach in The Twentieth Century Novel (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1932), p. 17.

[2] (New York: F. S. Crofts and Co., 1948), p. 603.

[3] Preface to "The Ambassadors," Art of the Novel, p. 114.

rendered, altogether scenically, in dialogue, without as James says "going behind."[1] Likewise the third sense, that of "concrete presentation as opposed to abstract statement," echoes James's cardinal principle of fiction: "Working out economically almost anything is the very life of the art of representation; just as the request to take on trust, tinged with the least extravagance, is the very death of the same."[2] Or, more fully:

> Processes, periods, intervals, stages, degrees, connexions, may be easily enough and barely enough named, may be unconvincingly stated, in fiction, to the deep discredit of the writer, but it remains the very deuce to represent them, especially represent them under strong compression and in brief and subordinate terms. . . .[3]

"Dramatise, Dramatise!" James is always saying, and means just this "concrete presentation."

But what is the relationship between these senses of "dramatic" and the second, "the presence of strong tension and sharp conflict in a fictional situation"? Why, ultimately, does dramatization in any sense always imply conflict? The answer evidently lies in this direction: as the author withdraws from overt control of occasions, projects his meanings and values into concrete presentations, commits his insights more or less totally to "objective correlatives," then his dramatic images compete among themselves, on the grounds solely of their implicit content, for the reader's understanding, judgment, and sympathy—speak for themselves, as it were, on a basis of equality. This "free competition"

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[1]Preface to "The Awkward Age," ibid., p. 111.

[2]Preface to "The Lesson of the Master," ibid., p. 224.

[3]Preface to "The Tragic Muse," ibid., p. 94.

among dramatic images, which seems to me the real basis of conflict in all dramatic exhibitions, is described with exactness by James in the following passage:

> No character in a play (any play not a mere monologue) has, for the right expression of the thing, a usurping consciousness; the consciousness of others is exhibited exactly in the same way as that of the "hero"; the prodigious consciousness of Hamlet, the most capacious and most crowded, the moral presence the most asserted, in the whole range of fiction, only takes its turn with that of the other agents of the story, no matter how occasional these may be. It is left in other words to answer for itself equally with theirs. . . .[1]

Since, according to this standpoint, the different values a dramatic author sees in a particular situation must be given their various proper "voices," the approach results also in the "multiplication of aspects,"[2] the "variety of appearance and experiment,"[3] the "precious element of contrast and antithesis"[4] which James finds characteristic of drama and which Cleanth Brooks, speaking of metaphysical poetry, calls "the structure of inclusion" or simply "irony."[5]

Objective rendering, concrete presentation, the presence of conflict, contrast, and variety of free agents—all entail yet another feature of fictional dramatization, now on the affective side: the working participation of the reader. Both artists and interpreters of fictional dramatism have insisted regularly on the need for avid and discriminating reader-participation if the method is to attain its full effectiveness. James himself pleaded constantly for critical reading (for him, "to

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[1] Ibid., p. 90. [2] Ibid.

[3] Preface to "Daisy Miller," ibid., p. 277.

[4] Preface to "The Altar of the Dead," ibid., p. 251.

[5] Modern Poetry and the Tradition, p. 76.

criticise is to appreciate, to appropriate, to take intellectual possession, to establish in fine a relation with the criticised thing and make it one's own"[1]), and his most enthusiastic commentator, Percy Lubbock, goes to the extreme of claiming that "the reader of a novel—by which I mean the critical reader—is himself a novelist; he is the maker of a book which may or may not please his taste when it is finished, but of a book for which he must take his own share of the responsibility."[2] Variations on this theme of the reader's creative involvement are offered by most spokesmen for the dramatic method: Allen Tate and Caroline Gordon ("Every masterpiece demands collaboration from the beholder,"[3] in connection with Chekhov); Andrew Lytle ("The meaning in fiction should always be received actively. . . . Reception is crucial; the reader must be moved affectively, so that his insight will comprise the fullest meaning which lies before him"[4]); Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren (of "objective rendering," "In cases of the dramatic method the reader must infer the inner situation from the external action"[5]); and so on.

Of course all fiction wants, ideally, close attention by the reader, but apparently the nature of fictional dramatism demands such attention as nearly a _sine qua non_. The reason is that, just because the dramatist declines to state and name "processes, periods, intervals, stages, degrees, connexions" and instead attempts to "represent" these facets—render them concretely—, the reader is obliged to discover these aspects for himself, to perform at a pitch of activity above that

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[1]Preface to "What Maisie Knew," _Art of the Novel_, p. 155.

[2]_Craft of Fiction_, p. 17.

[3]_House of Fiction_, p. 178.

[4]Foreword to _A Novel_, p. xi.

[5]_Understanding Fiction_, p. 603.

required by non-dramatic forms. When Allen Tate and Caroline Gordon say, "To dramatize the material, in the sense that we have in mind, is to render active everything in the story, from the close-up scene to the large summary,"[1] they appear to have in mind some kind of objective activity taking place within a story (they speak, for example, of "Flaubert's great discovery that in fiction no object exists until it has acted upon or been acted upon, by some other object,"[2] and of "the art of making the inert detail move" by bringing it "into the story through the immediate situations of the leading characters"[3]).

But the full truth is, that while the dramatic author provides the grounds for action and movement by his selection of appropriate details, the activity itself occurs within or is completed by the reader, as a simple example will show. Tate and Miss Gordon cite the opening lines of A Farewell to Arms and pick the phrase about the "pebbles and boulders, dry and white in the sun" as an instance of objects' coming to life because of interactivity.[4] But the real locus of activity is in the reader, who infers the submerged relationship between the sun and the stones—the drying and bleaching effect of the sun. Or again, the impression of moonlight which Chekhov conceived to get by exhibiting only a fragment of broken bottle flashing on a mill dam and the shadow of a dog will emerge only if the reader connects these details and then infers the cause of the phenomena. Both of these cases require a barely minimal exertion, to be sure, but even that effort is more than would be demanded if a non-dramatic author had written, "The sun had bleached and dried

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[1] House of Fiction, p. 627.

[2] Ibid., p. 24.

[3] Ibid., p. 631.

[4] Ibid., p. 420.

the pebbles so that they shone . . ." or "The moonlight gleamed on a fragment. . . ." And it is this active involvement, I suggest, which constitutes the true nature of that vividness, intensity, or excitement so often attributed to dramatization.

Specific techniques for implementing the principles of dramatization and securing its effects are almost immeasurably various. Still we can notice a few broad paths which dramatic technique tends to follow. In the category of point of view or narrative authority, dramatization favors, as remarked above, the characterized first person and restricted third person, which sharply confine the field of vision and render highly tentative whatever is immediately reported; we might add to this the frequent use of multiple perspectives--shifts from one authority to another, and often from one level or type of authority to another--which further complicate the presentation at hand. The dramatization of narrative structure includes several devices for relieving unbroken narrative chronology and hence for dislocating the reader in time and the sequential flow of events: chronological "loopings"[1] (entangled backward and forward motions), flashback within flashback, conical or spiral structures (converging lines of action treated alternately, perhaps from different viewpoints), narrative "digressions" (obtrusive, apparently unrelated episodes), parallel development of simultaneous but unrelated lines of action, and combinations of these and other methods. Another point: because of the preference of dramatization for the "short view" and because of at least a theoretical limit to that method's capacity for conveying extensive chronological and spatial relationships, dramatic subjects

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[1]A term used by Beach in The Twentieth Century Novel, p. 364.

are likely to be narrow in scope, and their structural developments intensive and exfoliating, rather than extensive, expansive, and panoramic.[1]

Nothing even general can be predicated of dramatic style, not only because of the extreme elusiveness of style as a technical category, but also because of the radical dependence of stylistic significance upon point of view. That is to say, for example, that the most factual and authoritative style becomes dramatic once it issues as the voice of a characterized first-person narrator. Coming from a third-person narrator, style can be considered dramatically contributory according as it evades a direct commitment to facts and values by employing such equivocating devices as conjecture, question, subjunctive predication, syntactical convolution, multiple negation, figurative ambivalence, and a host of other linguistic resources. Dramatic symbols are symbols arising from and sustained by the dramatic action—they are not initial and unchanging data, validated by a public consensus; hence, like other elements of dramatic technique, they are changing and dynamic in character, not finally fixed as to content until the course of the action has been run, and then fixed, perhaps, on a whole register of meanings. I should say also that dramatic symbols are very apt to emerge from and continually reactivate the consciousnesses of leading figures in a dramatic novel, from which source and field of activity derives much of their tentative character.

It should be clear why the formal mode of dramatization pertains

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[1]By somewhat different reasoning, Edwin Muir arrives at a similar distinction between intensive and dramatic developments in The Structure of the Novel ("Hogarth Lectures on Literature," No. 6; London: The Hogarth Press, 1954), p. 59.

centrally to regionalist aesthetics. Using the principles and techniques of dramatization, the regional novelist can project the terms of his local materials integrally, preserving their organic relationships by eschewing the interposing voice that mediates but distorts. Or, to put it more satisfactorily from a critical standpoint, the dramatic approach enables the regional novelist to invest his fictional scene with those desirable qualities of image—sharpness, non-negotiability, and density—which he has found in the real world of his local community. There remains to be considered briefly the question of mediation, which can be put thus: How does dramatization accomplish the mediating function, whose purpose is to establish a nexus between the "unlocal audience" and the regional materials—to provide a framework of knowledge and values from which the strange world of the regional novel can be apprehended?

Now mediation, when not by authoritative intervention, is by some more implicit convention, first literary or technical but also cultural. A literary convention, that is to say, not only is a way of doing something which has become established by literary usage, hence constitutes a literary agreement between author and reader, but also reflects to some extent public assumptions about the nature of reality, of values, of the ways of knowing, and so on. The epistolary convention in its early fictional stages, for example, both copies the practice of publishing "private" letters and also invokes an assumption of total veracity in personal, written communication. Hence a fictional convention, considered in both of these aspects, serves to fix or locate the reader with respect to the meaning and value of a represented object.

Particular literary and cultural referents exist in abundance

for the techniques included within the scope of dramatization. The interior monologue convention, for example, is an amalgam of several dramatic techniques. Its literary foundations are in the practice, eminently, of James Joyce, then of Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson, with both proximate and remote ancestors in Edouard Dujardin and Lawrence Sterne. In addition, the convention reflects an assumption about himself and the world which modern man entertains: generally, the loss of confidence in coherent, objective structures of reality, and, particularly, the location of primal subjective reality in the semi-conscious, sub-rational, associative processes of the mind. Encountering an instance of the interior monologue, the mature reader might be expected to respond, in effect: "From my previous experience with Joyce, I know that the represented matter is really occurring within a twilight state of the character's consciousness, under less than willful control, and that the meaningful relationship among thoughts and images is therefore not to be sought in logical terms, but in terms of disguised, unconscious, associative forces, and that. . . ." At least that is the way most fictional conventions seem usually to work.

Fruitful and interesting as such particular conventions are to study, however, there is one simple mediating function of dramatization which dominates and traverses all subsidiary conventions. That is the principle of <u>contextual validation</u>: that the meaning and value of a given representation are to be inferred only by reference to context, by comparison with other things on the same level of representation. As a cultural convention, contextual validation no doubt reflects a widespread assumption of philosophical relativism. As a literary convention,

it is the principle implicit in Henry James's idea about the play's "logic of but one way. . . . cross-relations." Hamlet's consciousness "only takes its turn with that of the other agents of the story." Hamlet's caution, which might by itself appear finicky scrupulosity, becomes visibly moral and admirable only by contrast with the malevolent duplicity of Claudius and Laertes' heedless impetuosity (we compare, for example, Hamlet's circumspect regard for the possibility of his own damnation in II, ii, with Laertes' "I dare damnation" in IV, v--to Hamlet's credit, formerly).

So it is in dramatized fiction. An object, an utterance appears, its signification and worth not immediately known; pages later it "speaks" again, in a new relationship, and gradually its status begins to emerge. The mysterious potato in Leopold Bloom's pocket, the honeysuckle in Quentin Compson's memory await illumination in later events and patterns of association. On the level of evaluation, Bloom judges Dedalus and in turn is judged by Molly, and the objectivity of Dilsey's section measures the solipsism of the three brothers Compson. The point here is that the mediating function occurs precisely by the reader's agreement to remain temporarily bewildered, to suspend judgment, to refer all matters to their contextual relationships, not to require immediate satisfaction as, perhaps, the reader of the last century required it. Fifty and more years of the dramatic method and of philosophical anarchy have enabled the regionalist writer to expect of his audience what the local colorist could not hope to elicit from his: the relegation of initially strange materials to organic context for interpretation and judgment, rather than to an interposed "point of view which [the audience] can immediately recognize and share."

III

Mythicization denotes the second complex of principles and methods which serve the ends of regionalist aesthetic formalism. Mythicization is a bold maneuver by which the regional novelist vaults the obstacle of cultural relativism, ignores the factor of cultural differentiation, and proceeds directly to universalize the locally concrete by investing it with mythical import. The mythical mode in this case maintains the particularity of things by insisting that in their very particularity (or perhaps we should say "concreteness"[1]) lies their universality. It is the nature and effect of this "Concrete Universal," whose rationale resembles closely William Blake's doctrine of the Minute Particular, that we wish now to explore, briefly, in connection with regionalist aesthetics.

"Briefly," indeed, and quite tentatively and warily, because the subject is potentially expansive beyond measure. The state of information about myth in general, and then myth in literature, is highly unsettled and wildly speculative. Unlike "dramatization," which is desirably tautological in its reference to another literary category, "mythicization" is only accidentally and peripherally a literary term; essentially it refers to an area of psychological, philosophical, and religious investigation, into which I have neither the desire nor the competence to venture at this time. "Dramatized" or "dramatic fiction" has a definitude which "mythicized" or "mythical fiction" does not have and, it may be, can never

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[1]Among others, Paul Tillich has pointed out that particularity—abstraction, concreteness—universality are the true antitheses of the Logos doctrine, of which myth is an analogue. Systematic Theology, Vol. I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 17.

have. Yet, while vigorous disagreements exist concerning the ultimate nature of what is apprehended in the mythic experience, there is a widespread consensus about the immediate character of that experience or that apprehension itself, and we can examine the proximate terms of the experience, and the fictional means of securing it, with some feeling of security.

As cognitive experience, myth is apparently an intuition of pure being, characterized by a momentary fusion of subject-object, in which the sensible, present object becomes invested with the qualities of universality, timelessness, and preternatural vitality, energy, or power ("mana"). Mythos, says Leslie Fiedler, "is intuition in the Crocean sense, an immediate intuition of being, pure quality without the predicate of existence."[1] According to Ernst Cassirer, who contrasts "mythical ideation" with logical conception or "discursive" thought, the former mode

> does not dispose freely over the data of intuition, in order to relate and compare them to each other, but is captivated and enthralled by the intuition which suddenly confronts it. It comes to rest in the immediate experience; the sensible present is so great that everything else dwindles before it. For a person whose apprehension is under the spell of this mythico-religious attitude, it is as though the whole world were simply annihilated; the immediate content . . . so completely fills his consciousness that nothing else can exist beside and apart from it. The ego is spending all its energy on this single object, lives in it, loses itself in it.[2]

From the extreme limitation, concentration, and compression of the mythic experience comes at least the impression of "universality," for

> this one content of experience must reign over practically the whole experiential world. There is nothing beside it or beyond it whereby it could be measured or to which it could be compared; its mere

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[1] "The Word: Logos or Mythos?" Sewanee Review, LXIII (Summer, 1955), 409.

[2] Language and Myth, trans. Susanne K. Langer (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1946), pp. 32-33.

presence is the sum of all Being.[1]

The temporary immanence of "the sum of all Being" in a single object: that is the concrete universal of myth.

"Mana" is the extraordinary--preternatural or supernatural--power attributed to the object of mythic apprehension by the "primitive mind," or the primitive level of every man's mind. The attribution of mana flows from the experience itself, rather than from anything intrinsic to the object.

> It appears . . . that the idea of mana and the various conceptions related to it are not bound to a particular realm of objects (animate or inanimate, physical or spiritual), but that they should rather be said to indicate a certain "character," which may be attributed to the most diverse objects and events, if only these evoke mythic "wonder" and stand forth from the ordinary background of familiar, mundane existence.[2]

Moreover, while the imputed power may be operative and efficacious, it may also be a more general quality of mysteriousness or inexplicability, an interpretation of mana which Richard Chase, citing anthropologists R. R. Marett and Ruth Benedict, calls the "aesthetic-dynamic":

> Sometimes mana may impress the savage immediately as a quality--awfulness, mysteriousness, beauty--while, as an operative force, it may remain dormant. A corpse, says Marett, is universally admitted to have mana; but what seems immediately important to the native is not the potential activity of the ghost but "the awfulness felt to attach to the dead human body in itself."[3]

With this extension, the mythic comes to be associated with virtually anything which excites unusual wonder and escapes rationalistic, naturalistic explanation. Thus Leslie Fiedler: "Mythos is finally the

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[1]Ibid., p. 58. (My italics) [2]Ibid., pp. 65-66.

[3]Quest For Myth (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1949), p. 69.

Marvelous, or, as we say nowadays, the Absurd."[1] Richard Chase claims that "anything that has mana is preternatural," and defines "preternatural" as "that which is magical, the Uncanny, the Wonderful, the Mysterious, the Powerful, the Dangerous, the Extraordinary."[2] And John Crowe Ransom asserts:

> The myth of an object is its proper name, private, unique, untranslatable, overflowing, of a demonic energy that cannot be reduced to the poverty of the class-concept. The myth of an event is a story, which invests the natural with a supernatural background, and with a more-than-historical history.[3]

Such is the character of the individual mythic experience. In its character as a collective creation and possession, this experience seems to be embodied always in narrative form. Whether cultural myths imitate religious rituals, or reflect archetypal patterns in the collective unconscious, or euhemerize cultural heroes, they appear invariably to project the original mythic experience in narrative terms and thus, at one remove, to remain the potential source of new mythic experiences. Incidental to the narrative element of myths is also the possibility of mythopoiea, that is, of myth-making through story. Thus Richard Chase finds story central to myth and insists on the mythopoieic capacity of literature: "The word 'myth' means story: a myth is a tale, a narrative, or a poem; myth is literature and must be considered as an aesthetic creation of the human imagination."[4] But whether literature creates myths, as Chase thinks, or myths penetrate literature, it is on

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[1] "The Word: Logos or Mythos?" p. 411.

[2] Quest For Myth, p. 73.

[3] God Without Thunder, p. 65.

[4] Quest For Myth, p. 73.

the two points of story-form and vivification that myth and literature abut. Hence, aside from his assumption of literature's priority, Chase's definition of "myth" is essentially comprehensive for our purpose here: "myth is literature which suffuses the natural with preternatural efficacy (mana)."[1] And, more specifically with respect to function, he asks:

> If a narrative suffuses the natural with the preternatural in reinforcement of the sanctity, the reality, the worthwhileness of any serious cultural activity or of life itself, may we not say that the narrative is a myth?[2]

What is it, then, to "mythicize" fiction? On the author's part, it is to work toward the mythic effect—the effect of immanent universality, of mystery, vibrancy, wonder—by clothing the commonplace with preternatural garments. We can think of several technical means by which writers have sought and/or secured this effect (to attempt is not necessarily to accomplish; conversely we know of mythic effects without conscious effort by writers in that direction). One common method is the association of routine details of life with archetypal rhythms and images which, if not actually inborn or universally developed in the collective psyche, are at least widely reputed by the modern reading public to be so ubiquitously present. The sought effect of this method is something like that described as follows by Maud Bodkin, who in turn is summarizing a theory of Jung's:

> The special emotional significance of certain poems—a significance going beyond any definite meaning conveyed—[Jung] attributes to the striving in the reader's mind, within or beneath his conscious response, of unconscious forces which he terms "primordial images," or archetypes. . . . "psychic residua of numberless experiences of the same type," experiences which have happened not to the individual but to his ancestors, and of which the results are inherited in the structure

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[1] Ibid., p. 78.

[2] Ibid., p. 79.

of the brain, *a priori* determinants of individual experience.[1] As I intended to suggest, we need not accept the psychological theory in order to admit the possibility of an author's evoking the sort of response described by Miss Bodkin. For the fact is that this theory and a cluster of variants have become so widely and authoritatively circulated that they have become conventional. A great many people believe, or think they believe, or think they ought to believe, that water images stimulate their rebirth archetypes, journey motifs their nostalgic archetypes, familial patterns their Oedipal and Electral archetypes, and so on, with a resulting force *as if* such evocations were based on demonstrable truth. Thus, regardless of whether the river in *Huckleberry Finn*, and Huck's rhythmical returns to it, represent and appeal to actual "primordial images" of rebirth, probably most of the book's modern audience are willing to read this mythical (not merely symbolical) interpretation into the novel.

A second method of fictional mythicization is representing the conditions of the mythic experience on both the individual and the community levels. On the level of the individual, an author may exhibit a character's psyche "captivated and enthralled by the intuition which suddenly confronts it," and thus manage to convey the excitement of the mythic state and the "preternatural efficacy" of the exciting object. In *Moby Dick*, for example, the representation of Ahab's monomaniacal obsession with Moby Dick—surely a prime instance of the mythic experience in fiction—is one of the ways by which Melville exalts the whale and "suffuses" him with the qualities of the preternatural. Another example, from *Absalom*,

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[1] *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 1.

Absalom!, is Rosa Coldfield's "demonizing" of Thomas Sutpen, which contributes so much to the magnification of that figure to mythical proportions. On the level of the group, a whole community or society can be portrayed in the process of myth-making, as its members collectively confer mythical values on certain objects, persons, and events so that they assume the vibrancy and dynamism of mana. This method is often used by Faulkner, who enacts it by the shifting, communal viewpoint and the "bardic voice"; ready instances are the apotheosis of Eula Varner in The Hamlet and the "satanization" of Flem Snopes throughout the Snopes trilogy.

Easily the commonest method of mythicization, however, as well as the most susceptible of critical analysis, is the modern author's use of traditional myths to parallel his own events and characters. Obviously this method may overlap the first two, insofar as archetypal patterns and the mythopoieic process may be involved or touched upon in the course of mythological allusion. It is considerably different from them, however, in calling into play a fund of knowledge solidly rooted in both cultural and literary history, with the result that effects can be estimated with much greater precision than in the case of the more suppositious formulae.

The most important way of using mythological data is the more or less elaborate paralleling of narrative structure with one or more mythological stories, a paralleling such as we find in Ulysses, Absalom, Absalom!, Buechner's A Long Day's Dying, and Eudora Welty's The Golden Apples. This is the method to which T. S. Eliot first called significant critical attention in his "Ulysses, Order, and Myth" (1923), when he

spoke of Joyce's "manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity" and suggested that, as the result of psychology, ethnology, The Golden Bough, and Joyce's experimentation, "instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method."[1] Although, from a later perspective, we can see that the "mythical method" (in this present, restricted sense) by no means always replaces the narrative method, it is probably true that its principal effect is the one, stressed by Eliot, "of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."[2] The ordering of contemporary history by mythological parallels may take any of several particular forms: the discovery of timeless or cyclical patterns operating beneath the apparent anarchy of the present; the tracing of present disorder to origins in a mythologically dominated past; the attribution of present conditions to the mythological past itself—a trick which Gide manages with verve in Theseus; and, of course, various combinations of these and other forms, depending on an author's intellect, insight, skill, and intention.

In addition to the method of continuous parallel between fictional narrative and traditional myth, there is the more casual method of transient allusion to traditional mythology. By this familiar technique, the author associates a character, say, with a figure or scene from conventional mythology in order to establish the character's nature and significance, without intending, however, to prosecute the parallel in any detail. Thus Caroline Gordon calls her hero of Green Centuries

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[1] Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction, p. 426.

[2] Ibid.

"Rion Outlaw" to affiliate him with Orion and his hunting prowess, his passionate and rather barbarous character, and his generally tragic destiny; but she does not intend or attempt to duplicate closely in her own narrative the pattern of Orion's story. Similarly, Eudora Welty names a red-haired character in Delta Wedding "Troy" and links him with destructive fire and the theme of imminent disaster generally: beyond this broad application, however, events and figures from the Trojan legend are not especially pertinent to the action in Delta Wedding.

Whatever their degree of involvement, whether casual or more sustained, the introduction of traditional myths into fiction would appear to issue invariably in at least two general effects. One is the exaltation of the fictional object when it is juxtaposed with a mythological counterpart. No matter what other effects may be incidental to the comparison—comedy, irony, pathos, even ridicule—there cannot help but occur a rise in status when some homely, everyday, fictional object is suddenly illuminated by the radiance of a mythological correspondent—as when a lowly, oft-cuckolded, Jewish advertising solicitor in Dublin is dignified by comparison with the venerable Ulysses. This elevation occurs, to be sure, primarily on the intellectual plane, and hence might not be regarded by some students of myth as properly mythic in character because it does not possess per se the emotional energy springing from contact with the deeper levels of the psyche. In my own opinion, nevertheless, such an effect is sufficiently potent to warrant its classification as mythic.

The second general effect of traditional myths in fiction is the introduction of narrative and ideational patterns which become at least

partially determinative of the reader's response to later developments. The extent and importance of the determination will of course vary according to a number of factors, such as the extent of the author's insistence upon the mythological parallel by emphasis, repetition, and detailed elaboration, and the reader's sensitivity to suggestion and allusion. But, generally, once mythological references have been made, the stories called to mind will cause the reader to anticipate later happenings and compare them, when they arrive, with their mythological counterparts. Indeed, a myth employed both intensively and extensively, as in Ulysses, can provide such a structure of expectation that immanently motivated narrative can be virtually foregone (this, surely, is what Eliot meant when he spoke of substituting "mythical method" for "narrative method"). In any case, it can be said of a mythicized fiction that the reader's response at a given point is compounded of the cumulative narrative development, plus those pertinent factors of mythological lore which have been previously evoked and have remained hovering, so to speak, for later summonses to perform.

The use of mythicization to the regional novelist is that it enables him to bypass the adjustment to cultural relativism which confronted the local colorist before him. That is to say, instead of interposing a viewpoint that interprets local peculiarities for outsiders on the cultural level, the regionalist who employs the mythical method can play up and represent regional particularities in detail, and then universalize them by the leap to the mythical level. In fact, by what is only a seeming paradox, this very elaboration of concrete particulars enables and may produce the ascension to universality by circumventing the abstract

perspective of discursive reason which is antipathetical to myth. Much like William Blake's idea of the "Minute Particular," the mythical approach in fiction, with its own celebration of the particular, allows the regional novelist "To see a World in a Grain of sand/ And a Heaven in a Wild Flower."[1] Or, less mystically, Hans Meyerhoff has pointed out that "myths are chosen as literary symbols for two purposes: to suggest, within a secular setting, a timeless perspective of looking upon the human situation; and to convey a sense of continuity and identification with mankind in general."[2] By myth, then, the regional novelist reaches through the regionally particular to this "timeless perspective."

A brief instance will illustrate this method in practice. In Go Down, Moses, Faulkner's central subject is the South's "peculiar institution," slavery and its residual bi-racial society. A non-mythical approach might seek to represent and interpret this subject by cross-cultural references, that is, by locating the subject within its larger contemporary context. Such, for example, is partly the method of Robert Penn Warren in Band of Angels, where the institution of slavery and the predicament of the Negro are illuminated by contacts with cultures outside the South, first by Amantha's interlude at Oberlin College, later by a series of representatives from the North, Northeast, and West, all of whom evaluate—and are evaluated by—the Southern milieu. Similarly, in T. S. Stribling's trilogy on the Vaiden family (The Forge, The Store, Unfinished Cathedral), we find a number of characters—some alien, others native—who represent

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[1]From Blake's "Auguries of Innocence."

[2]Time in Literature (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1955), p. 80.

culturally exotic ideologies and whose function is in part to criticize the Southern social and economic order from the viewpoint of another cultural norm. By contrast, Go Down, Moses vaults the level of cultural interrelationships and assimilates its subject directly to the mythical. The novel is saturated with the several mythical techniques mentioned above—for example, the communal imputation of mysterious value to a bear and to figures from the communal past, the portrayal of the mythic experience in Ike's encounters with Old Ben, the imitation of "archetypal" initiation patterns, and the like. But in terms of the racial subject, the important mythicizing device for the whole novel is the invocation of Old Testament myth, which first appears in the title and which dominates, though not with complete coherence, the presentation of Negro-white relationships from start to finish. Slavery and its attendant evils are thus seen, not merely as the product of economic conditions nor even of individual moral decisions, but as a deepening phase of God's perpetual trial of man. Both the curse and the covenant of the Israelites are projected onto Southern whites, Negroes, and land, which thereby transcend the level of cultural relativism and assume "identification with mankind in general."

As is true of dramatization, the efficacy of mythicization as a fictional principle in regionalist aesthetics depends upon the mediating possibilities of convention. Professor Dike, we recall, says that the mediating device must assist the interpretation of peculiar local materials by reminding the unlocal audience of what it knows. Well, one of the things which a modern audience knows, and which a nineteenth-century audience did not know, is about myth. Through the agency of anthropologists,

psychologists, and philosophers such as Frazer, Joseph Campbell, Jung, and Cassirer, through the works of novelists and poets such as Joyce, Faulkner, Eliot, and Hart Crane, and through the literary criticism of writers such as Maud Bodkin, Leslie Fiedler, and Philip Wheelwright, modern readers have grown enormously sophisticated in their sensitivity to the mythical handling of characters, situations, and themes. The modern reader can be expected both to recognize archetypal patterns and mythological allusions and to aptly apply the content of such references for the illumination of the fictional situation, so that interposed commentary to explain cultural oddities is rendered unnecessary. Thus, a reader who follows the intricate parallelism of Joyce's Ulysses with Homer's Odyssey does not need to know that "one of the remarkable features of Dublin life in the heyday of Mr. Bloom was the boundless enthusiasm of all classes for music, especially of the vocal and operatic varieties,"[1] in order to appreciate the basic significance of the Sirens episode--although, of course, we would maintain that its full significance depends upon a possession of both these kinds of information, plus a familiarity with the other orders of knowledge which Joyce has incorporated into the episode.

Dramatization and mythicization, then, designate the chief combinations of fictional principles and methods answering to the regionalist's needs in the way of an aesthetic formalism, though no pretensions to total inclusiveness are advanced for these concepts. Both modes, from the writer's standpoint, are oblique, indirect approaches to the fictional object, dramatization providing for the "mask" and "costume" which allow the

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[1]Stuart Gilbert, James Joyce's Ulysses (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 240.

exhibition of the full object; mythicization refracting the object through the prism of mythological lore. Possessing well-established, conventional resources of mediation and interpretation other than the direct, intervening explanation of cultural peculiarities, both modes can preserve the integrity and organic relationship of local materials by enabling writers to project an image of place with an analogous particularity and fullness. Finally, both modes can accommodate critical, "outside" views of a regional culture without assuming an unequivocally alien, condemnatory tone. The dramatic approach merely incorporates such views in the cast of equitably competing voices in a novel, without technical bias toward any party—for example the voice of Joanna Burden, in Light in August, which competes—impartially—with the voices of such spokesmen for Southern culture as old Hines, Percy Grimm, Gail Hightower, and Gavin Stevens. The mythical approach always contains its own inherent instrument of evaluation, which is not so much extra- as supra-regional in character; here it is the "timeless perspective of looking upon the human situation" which measures and evaluates the limited regional experience.

Although the mythical and the dramatic methods overlap in some particulars—a mythicized narrative, for example, almost always entailing considerable active participation by the reader—, they differ basically in their orientation of the reader's attention. As explained above, the dramatic method is essentially "literal," in that the reader's orientation is primarily centripetal, horizontal, or linear, from single words and larger elements (images, actions, characters, scenes, sections) to other elements of the same order and to the total configuration, but all within the work itself. Moreover, for the reasons proposed in Chapter I,

the purer the dramatic method in a work, the more that work is likely to possess the several qualities associated with the concept of novel. On the other hand, the mythical method is essentially "descriptive," in that the orientation is primarily centrifugal, from single expressive elements outward to pre-existing and self-contained patterns of meaning and, perhaps, "primordial images." And in the degree that such patterns and images come to dominate the action of a work, that work possesses the qualities of romance; a purely mythical fiction, if it were conceivable, would be pure romance--like a dream, its components and their relations determined altogether by structures outside itself. Therefore, when we speak of "the regional novel," by definition we assert the priority of the dramatic mode before the mythical; but the two modes often occur within the same work, and then the interplay between formal impulses outward and inward becomes, in fact, thematic.

IV

Recognizing that the description of particular themes depends upon the specification of regional materials, we still have sufficient evidence now to outline the generic features of the regional novel. Our knowledge of the general character of regions, of cultural and literary regionalism, and of regionalist aesthetics enables us to form a concept of what the regional novel, as a sub-type of fiction, is--a concept which, of course, is also inducible and verifiable by the study of actual novels. In sketching the outline, we shall find it useful occasionally to indicate relationships--similarities and differences--with other kinds of novels.

Regarding that "motivation" whose importance as a generic index

was stressed in Chapter I, the regionalist ideas of man and of society, as well as the prominence of dramatization in regionalist aesthetics, insure the ascendancy of novelistic over romantic elements in the regional novel. The type of man centrally portrayed in the genre, the nature of its enveloping action, its structural composition, ideational corollaries, and affective dimensions--all characterize a type of fiction which is distinctly novelistic, in both the traditional and the expanded senses discussed earlier.

The regionalist "hero" is usually complex and complexly motivated. He possesses a full range of powers and faculties--instincts, appetites, passions, sensibility, imagination, intellect, and will--although, as the regionalist portrait of man suggests, the writer is likely to emphasize the non-rational components of his protagonist's make-up. Moreover, and inherent in his dualistic constitution, this protagonist is both a personal and a social being--or, to use a common philosophical distinction, is simultaneously an independent, self-subsistent person and a dependent individual subservient to his species.[1] Of his social proportions, more presently; now we can say that the complex and divided nature of the regionalist protagonist allows for an internalization of conflict, as the character tries to regulate his various, often-warring faculties and discover the nature of his personal identity.

Of course this type of character is not peculiar to the regional novel; in fact he belongs, I should say, to the "great tradition" of

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[1]"The individual, as a member or part of the species, exists for the sake of that species; the person does not exist for the sake of anything else. It is, on the contrary, a 'reality which . . . constitutes a universe by itself.'" Charles A. Fecher, The Philosophy of Jacques Maritain (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1953), p. 161.

world fiction. But our description of him serves to distinguish the typical regionalist character from the principal characters of certain other types and authors of fiction (not necessarily to their disparagement, by any means): for example, from the strictly biological and economic characters of the naturalistic and proletarian schools; from the "orgastic" characters of the "pan-sexual" school (Henry Miller, Norman Mailer); from the rather bodiless sensibilities of Virginia Woolf, the instinctual and asocial characters of Hemingway, the adolescent initiates of Salinger and John Knowles, and so on. Now, such simplistic characters very often appear in regional novels, but they appear as foils and as menaces, representatives like Flem Snopes of standardizing, reductionist forces in life which seduce, betray, overpower, and otherwise confound the man who is trying to realize his whole, complex nature.

Of far greater significance in describing the regional novel, however, is the character of its enveloping action, the regional culture. It has, first, unity of place. Both by the nature of regions and by the regionalist belief in ubiety as a value, the enveloping action of the regional novel is a relatively fixed and stable place, rather narrowly limited in space but temporally extensive because of the active presence of regional tradition. This feature differentiates the genre from a picaresque type of fiction whose setting shifts widely and rapidly for purposes of social contrast and geographical comprehensiveness. It is a feature whose value Allen Tate acclaims in his prophesy (1945) of later trends in fiction:

> For without regionalism, without locality in the sense of local continuity in tradition and belief, we shall get a whole literature which Mr. John Dos Passos might have written. . . . This new literature will probably be personal, sentimentally objective, tough, and

> "unsocial," and will doubtless achieve its best effects in a new version of the old travel story. . . . both abroad and at home.[1]

On this point of fixed location of enveloping action, then, the regional novel contrasts with such fiction as On the Road and William Gaddis's The Recognitions.

Still more importantly, the enveloping action of a regional novel is a whole, organic society. It is a dense, thick social medium including an entire register of socio-economic classes and institutions, and all their manifold appurtenances of established forms, conventions, and beliefs. In its "emergent" or retrospective aspect alone, this characteristic marks a difference between the regional novel and the restricted-class fictions of Henry James or the early Steinbeck, which are concerned with highly selected social strata; or heavily symbolical fictions which portray the social organism through a few representative figures (The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter, Other Voices, Other Rooms, Wise Blood); or fictions in which society is virtually non-existent or quite insignificant (The Old Man and the Sea). Thus the presence in the regional novel of a massive social milieu as enveloping action associates the type with the novel in its traditional English form, whose "first concern," we remember, "has been man in society and society in its totality, an organism."

But in addition the dramatization of the societal organism produces an enhanced novelistic effect which further distinguishes the regional novel from other fiction possessing, in outline, social enveloping actions of comparable density and scope. Most naturalistic novels, for example, employ substantial social backgrounds as enveloping action,

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[1]Limits of Poetry, p. 283.

but, because of the generally pictorial manner of representing these backgrounds, they tend to emerge as discrete entities, separate from and outside the protagonists, and thus to yield a romantic effect. Allen Tate and Caroline Gordon describe such fiction in this way:

> In the past generation sociological fiction has shown us the Individual opposed to Society. . . . This school tends to personify the Enveloping Action as if it were a single mind. . . . The technique of the school has been on the whole photographic and documentary.[1]

This type of fiction works contrary to the novel's voluntaristic "theory of causation" because, as Andrew Lytle remarks,

> like all sinners it looks entirely to the object, society or some part of it, as the cause of the human predicament. . . . To assume that society is external to man obscures the actors' humanity and the contingencies which surround and modify action. . . .[2]

Antithetically, the regional novel's method of dramatizing the social organism renders society internal to man, in a sense. That is to say, elements of the organism become visible primarily as they act <u>through</u> characters, who in turn act upon and modify the social principles affecting them. There is a mass of institutions, forms, conventions, and values incessantly constituting and defining the character, yes; but these are internalized by dramatization so that they appear fragmentarily and occasionally, affording the character the chance to question, accept, reject, or alter them, as he tries to define his personal and social identities. In short, they appear as "the contingencies which surround and modify action," not as external arbiters of action.

Another distinctive feature of the regional novel's enveloping action is the ambiguity obscuring societal norms. By definition a region

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[1] <u>House of Fiction</u>, p. 631.

[2] "Caroline Gordon and the Historic Image," p. 560.

possesses an integrating principle, in terms of which its organic parts are explicable; and sometimes, indeed, the regional culture appears a monolithic structure, especially to the outsider. But, and equally by definition, regionalism occurs as a self-conscious phase in the life of a region, when new ways have crept in alongside traditional, and also when the traditional life is challenged by juxtaposition with extra-regional cultures. Therefore beneath the apparently monolithic surface of the regional organism, considered as enveloping action, will frequently co-exist alternative and contradictory values and forms of behavior. Old forms will perhaps have lost their original significance, and new forms will compete with them for the character's allegiance. Once-harmonious relationships among institutions structuralizing communal and individual life may have developed into irreconcilable demands. Consequently a real operative irony which often emerges in the regional novel is this: that a character must discover, or create, his identity from contradictory imperatives imposed by traditionally sanctioned ways of life.

I have stressed the novelistic proportions of the regional novel because the emphasis justly lies there, but, if they are effective, it is because they are articulated successfully with the novel's romantic dimensions--which is only to say that the novelistic effect achieved without resistance is aesthetically unsatisfying. Briefly, the regional novel's romantic dimensions derive from two primary sources.

The first is the descriptive or centrifugal reference of the materials of the enveloping action. Our earlier discussion of place in fiction demonstrated that the use of place with a correspondent in

reality introduces into fiction a determinate structure of meaning and attitudes, stemming from reader conventions about the named place, which becomes an operative factor in the narrative process. Now mere knowledge, or apparent knowledge, of topical references can be elicited toward the enhancement of the dramatic effect, as when it economizes expository preparation and enables foreshortening. But certain kinds of knowledge are usually accompanied by judgments of value, particularly when our personal interests and ideals are involved. For example we know--or think that we know--the living conditions of Cuban campesinos under the Batista regime, and we not only know them but deplore them. And it is when such evaluative attitudes accompany knowledge in our conventions that topical references in fiction introduce the romantic effect, as in the use of a "recognizable" regional culture for enveloping action.

For a regional culture, because of cultural differentiation and its minority status, possesses enormous potentialities for evoking deterministic patterns in the reader. If the writer gestures too emphatically toward substantiating reader conventions at the outset--for instance by the use of stereotyped characters--a host of preconceptions may descend to victimize his actors. On the other hand the conventions are definitely existent, cannot be wished away, and it is by coping with them through dramatization that the regional novelist earns his novelistic effect. A conventional attitude toward a regional characteristic can be first undermined, through dramatization extorting a reversal of attitude in the reader, and then perhaps confirmed, thus creating an ambivalence of feeling and a depth of understanding that augment the novelistic effect. Or, much to the same end, a repugnant stereotype can be first dramatized, to

create sympathy for him, before his stereotyped features are revealed. Whatever the particular case or method, however, the point to be stressed is this: that the regional novel contains, as a significant operative factor, a heavy descriptive reference which functions, on the whole, deterministically or romantically.

The second main source of the regional novel's romantic dimensions is its mythical component. Unlike the descriptive reference of the enveloping action, which is always present in some degree, the mythical element is not a universal property of all regional novels. However, when it is present, its effect, like that of the recognizable regional culture, is normally to introduce into the narrative determinative structures of knowledge, emotion, and judgment, in the manner explained during the discussion of mythicization. Yet another point: even when the mythical method is primarily "literal," consisting of exhibiting the mythic experience in characters and community, its effect is deterministic or romantic. For such an exhibition shows the mind, individual or collective, so enthralled by a dominating person or event that it is incapacitated for significant moral action in the present. Such a tension between the mythic (captivation by a mana-filled experience in the past) and the dramatic (the urgent need for present action) is the motivational "figure in the carpet" of Faulkner's novels.

Finally, the tone of the regional novel is susceptible of general characterization. We have seen that, while his regional culture is the novelist's medium, not his subject, it yet constitutes the bulk of his materials. We have seen furthermore that, much like a self-conscious person, the literary regionalist entertains a dual perspective of his native

culture: from long and intimate familiarity he knows it thoroughly from the inside, yet at the same time he is aware of its character as perceived from an exterior standpoint, either universal or extra-cultural. This double vision comprises both knowledge and judgment: knowledge of the true and false, judgment of the good and bad. But the significant point is that, in the handling of his cultural materials, his double vision passes over into a distinctive tonal property. It can be called ambivalence, sympathetic irony, objectivity, even suspended judgment, but it never implies either total acceptance or complete rejection. As an attitude, this perspective is related to Keats's "negative capability," and no doubt enables the dramatic method; as a tonal property, it enhances the dramatic effect by leaving evaluation open to the reader.

I can best summarize this generic outline by suggesting very broadly the typical action of the regional novel, emphasizing its affective and ideational dimensions. As the result of the author's dual perspective and his dramatic method, the dense regional materials of the enveloping action impinge fragmentarily and contradictorily upon the consciousness of a character who, possessing a full array of human faculties, reacts complexly in an effort to understand his society and himself, and to act responsibly from his knowledge. For the character, the hypothetical poles of determinism and voluntarism are represented, on the one hand, by the constituting pressures of the regional culture, including whatever mythic enthrallment it may subject him to, and, on the other hand, by his own exertions to understand and act.

The reader undergoes an actual experience analogous, up to a

point, to the imaginary one of the character. The dramatic technique enforces effects of contingency, immediacy, and absorption upon the reader, who in addition witnesses the spectacle of a complex figure confronting earnestly mysterious forces within and without himself. But the reader's response is modified by certain kinds of information not available to the character, and these provide for the reader the deterministic ingredient of the novel. They are the contribution of the topical enveloping materials and the enlightenment shed by whatever mythical components may be present. But in general the reader accompanies the character on the thematic pursuit of the regional novel: the search for self.

CHAPTER IV

THE IMAGE OF THE SOUTH

We come now to an actual species of the regional novel, the regional novel of the South. In truth, as will perhaps have become obvious, the Southern regional novel is the species which has enabled the foregoing generalization. Other regional novels exist outside the South of the United States. There are Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and Ulysses. There are the Algerian novels (The Plague and The Stranger) of Albert Camus. There are, in a somewhat adulterated form, the regional novels of the Bordeaux area written by Francois Mauriac, some of whose words in acceptance of the 1952 Nobel Prize for Literature express perfectly the regionalist credo of universality through locality.[1] And there are doubtless many other regional novels with which I am not familiar or do not now recollect.

Yet it remains true that Southern regional novels compose both the principal body of evidence for the existence of such a type and the most important collective contribution to the type. Just why this

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[1]"All humanity is in this or that peasant back home, and all the landscapes in the world coalesce in the horizons familiar to our childish eyes. The novelist's gift is precisely his power to make plain the universal quality concealed in that sheltered world where we were born, and where we first learned to love and to suffer." "An Author and His Work," Words of Faith (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), p. 71.

should be so is not to our purpose to investigate here, but I can suggest, on the one hand and negatively, the general, progressive effacement of local cultures in the twentieth century, just about the time that the technical means for achieving the generic effect became available; and, on the other hand and positively, the singular persistence into this century of the South as a regional identity, at the same time that a mysterious flowering of literary talent occurred in that area--especially among novelists (not nearly all of whom, by the way, wrote regional novels). An additional factor enabling not the regional novel but valid generalizations about it was the simultaneous development and public exposition of regionalist doctrine, mostly Southern-based also, which clarified the nature of regions and regionalism and thus assisted the precise identification of a regional culture functioning as enveloping action in the previously described manner.

The purpose of this chapter is to draw a composite portrait of the South used as enveloping action in the regional novel, and to illustrate its typical operation from a variety of novels, particularly emphasizing its effect on the theme of identity. But an initial, brief reminder of our critical stance is desirable before proceeding.

First, the "image" I project here is place, or cultural enveloping action, considered in scheme or retrospect. It is, precisely, "emergent" image or concept of place, not "rhythmic" place as it develops energetically in the course of a novel, striking disconnectedly upon both character and reader because of its dramatization.

Second, the image is abstracted from the enveloping actions of many novels and is not to be confused with the existent nature and

operation of place in any single novel. It is a rational construct, not a real thing, and as such, this image of place has about the same relationship to place in a given novel, as a concept of the nature of man has to a particular human being. We should not expect to find that all of the local features described here occur in a single novel, nor in the same proportions, nor even, though I have tried to be reasonably comprehensive, with exactly the functions ascribed; least of all should we consider the portrayed world a substitute for the world of a particular novel, which is incomparably richer and more substantial than any class-concept. Hence, if caution is to be exercised with respect to mistaking the schematic aspect of place in one novel for its whole, operative existence, we must be doubly wary of allowing the concept to supersede the real thing. The principal use of such a concept is just that it provides a ground for recognizing and appreciating particular effects.

Third, the South presented here is the world of the Southern regional novel; it is not the "real" South—whatever <u>that</u> is—but a "hypothetical construct" without necessary relationship to anything in the actual world. Yet we frequently discover a coincidence between this fictional world and attempts by certain writers to describe the actual South, and in the following essay I shall in fact occasionally draw on such material to elucidate the fictional world. What is the reason for this coincidence, and what the justification of this procedure, if the two worlds are indeed ontologically incommensurable? The reason is that the South of the regional novel parallels in close detail a set of conventions, or assumptions, about the real South entertained by a faction of commentators on the region (generally, but not exclusively, the

Southern traditionalist regionalists), so that the two kinds of evidence are mutually illuminative--a fact which argues for neither the truth nor the falsity of either. Furthermore, this correspondence is tangential with other, divergent pairs of fictional worlds and parallel conventions about the South, such as the "sociologists of fiction"[1] and the New South-social criticism school of commentators.

The probability that such bodies of comment are rather partial conventions than genuine transcriptions of the South is strongly suggested by the discordant factional estimates of such matters as Faulkner's "realism." John T. Westbrook, who grew up in the Yocona ("Yok-na") River country of Mississippi, says, "I do not find Faulkner a realist. . . . Faulkner is presenting not a southern region of today but a South of yesterday fictionalized and mythologized."[2] Further, of Robert Penn Warren, "Warren's books, <u>like Faulkner's</u>, are twice removed from reality, remote from our concerns, deep in a fictive yesterday."[3] But Eudora Welty has this to say of Faulkner's realism:

> Faulkner is, of course, the triumphant example in America today of the mastery of place in fiction. . . . I am not sure, as a Mississippian myself, how widely it is realized and appreciated that [Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha] works of such marvelous imaginative power can also stand as works of the carefullest and purest representation. Heightened, of course: their speciality is that they are twice as true as life. . . .[4]

For our purposes, we should conclude from this disagreement that, although Miss Welty is perhaps no better witness than Westbrook to the

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[1]Tate, <u>Limits of Poetry</u>, p. 291.

[2]"Twilight of Southern Regionalism," <u>Southwest Review</u>, XLII (Summer, 1957), 232.

[3]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 233. My italics.

[4]"Place in Fiction," p. 66.

South's reality, she is certainly an excellent witness to the congruity between her personal view of the South--or at least of Mississippi--and Faulkner's fictional representation of it.

So with the Southern regionalist commentators. By and large they share a common view of the South and endorse the same novelists for realistic portraiture of that South (sometimes, of course, because the regionalists and the novelists are the same men, as in the cases of Warren, Lytle, and Tate). Therefore when I introduce the testimony of a regionalist on the general existence and nature of a Southern trait, it is an indirect way of corroborating the existence of the same feature in the regional novel; it is not that I have begun to confuse the two worlds which I have taken some pains to discern. Also, and I hope needless to say, it is not that I have undertaken Southern apologetics.

Furthermore, and finally in the way of introduction, since I am describing an imaginative world which is timeless, I have oriented that description on the present tense and employ other tenses to indicate appropriate temporal relations with the fictional present. The Southern regional novel itself has been produced with fair consistency from about 1925 to the present, with a concentration in the 1930's and 1940's. But the temporal setting of the novels, with the exceptions of frequent excursions into the past and of occasional historical novels with anticipations of the future, is the period, roughly, 1900-1940, when the South's regional identity was still clear-cut. My "is" therefore refers mainly to the period 1900-1940.

II

The <u>family</u>, taken with its ramification the <u>clan</u>, is the primary,

dominant social institution in the South. Andrew Lytle comments:

> Nowhere else in this country is the family as a social unit so clearly defined as in the South. The large "connections" amplifying the individual family life, the geographic accident which allowed the family in this greater sense (it was the community) to extend itself in a mild climate and alluvial soils . . . and slavery, too, gave the family a more clear definition of its function as not only an institution but the institution of Southern life.[1]

Elsewhere family life is disintegrating under the impact of industrialism, urbanization, and socio-geographic mobility, but in the South several interrelated factors making for stability--the rural culture, the caste system, the power of the past, attachment to place, poverty--have enabled the family to endure relatively intact, so that, according to Malcolm Cowley, "In the South family relationships appear to be stronger and more lasting than in the industrial North. . . ."[2]

Hence the family-clan, conditioning the individual throughout his life, is also the most significant formative agent in the psychic life of a white Southerner, and its role is enlarged rather than diminished by the ambiguity of its effect on personal identity. Personal identity--self-sameness--answers the question, "Who am I? What can be predicated of the 'I' existing now in the tenuous present?" But at the same time, by the very syntax of the question, the "I" resists total identification with other substances; otherwise it would cease to exist as a separate entity, leaving no self to ask itself what it is. With regard to both these aspects, the family-clan serves both to confer and to deny personal identity.

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[1]"The Displaced Family," Sewanee Review, LXVI (Winter, 1958), 115.

[2]Introduction to Great Tales of the Deep South (New York: Lion Library, 1955), p. ix.

It serves, on the one hand, to confer identity in a number of ways. It gives the individual Southerner an objective, publicly recognized and recognizable social structure, to which he innately, undeniably belongs and in whose body he finds protection against an often-menacing world. Though inwardly diversified, sometimes disorganized and warring, the Southern family unites solidly against hostile forces. So the McIvor clan, in the first part of Lytle's The Long Night (1936) bands together, submerging personal differences, to help Pleasant McIvor avenge the murder of his father by a group of unscrupulous slave-traders. And, less violently but perhaps more insidiously, the Fairchild clan of Miss Welty's Delta Wedding (1946) consolidate when threatened by the intrusion of outsiders, as the eldest daughter, Shelley, confides to her diary: "We never wanted to be smart, one by one, but all together we have a wall, we are self-sufficient against people that come up knocking, we are solid to the outside."[1] Such a family wall is a bulwark against the terrors and uncertainties of life, and to be part of or behind it creates a sense of identification with substance that helps sustain individual lives.

But the family gives the Southerner not only horizontal extension in the present, but also vertical extension in time because it places him in intimate contact with a past and a future beyond himself. Ellington White says that the family

> acts as a bridge linking the Southerner to his past. By means of it he is in immediate and concrete touch with both ages, and this contact provides him with a vision that does not begin and end with himself. Thus he is spared the horrors of solipsism.[2]

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[1](New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1946), p. 84.

[2]"The View from the Window," The Lasting South, p. 169.

The typical Southerner grows up in a home inhabited by three and sometimes four generations, and thus has daily contact with ages before and after himself. In addition there are endless stories and material vestiges of dead ancestors, so that the past lives on into the present and reminds the individual of what, through the family, he has been. For example, the Fairchild clan living on the Delta plantation includes two great-aunts, the generation of parents Battle and Elleh, their children, and, shortly to be, issue from the marriage of Dabney and Troy Flavin. Great-aunt Shannon talks constantly to her brothers as though they were alive, and the library is so hung with the portraits of ancestors that, to visiting cousin Laura, "no matter what hide-and-seek went on here, in this room where so many dead young Fairchilds, ruined people, were, there seemed to be always consciousness of their gazes, so courteous and meditative they were."[1]

The family also bestows identity by locating the white Southerner in the social hierarchy, and thus informing him of his rights, duties, expectations, and appropriate manners. By virtue of having a family name, he knows where he is socially, what is due him, and what is expected of him. This relationship between family name and social and personal identity is illustrated by Dabney's musings as she rides over the fields of Shellmound:

> Sometimes, Dabney was not so sure she was a Fairchild--sometimes she did not care, that was it. . . . What she felt, nobody knew! It would kill her father--of course for her to be a Fairchild was an inescapable thing to him. . . .
>
> Troy [her fiance, the overseer] treated her like a Fairchild--he still did; he wouldn't stop work when she rode by even today.[2]

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[1] Delta Wedding, p. 55.

[2] Ibid., pp. 32-33.

Admittedly, this social stationing by family may be oppressive to the lower-class Southerner, tending to thwart personal fulfillment; but if, like the young tenant-farmer Ote Mortimer in Caroline Gordon's The Garden of Adonis (1937), he accepts the role and status transmitted to him by his family, he has little or no problem of finding himself or making a place for himself in the social scene. Moreover, the very institution which situates the poor white protects him from depredations by the upper class, for the family, at least among whites, is an inviolable institution. Consequently, both Wash Jones of Absalom, Absalom! (1936) and the moronic little Othel in Andrew Lytle's The Velvet Horn (1957) have a social (not to say legal) sanction to take vengeance when women in their families are abused by aristocrats.

On the other hand, the Southern family also works in a number of ways to obstruct the achievement of identity, to obscure the outlines and even the existence of a distinguishable self. The family threatens in many ways to consume the self. While the family-clan sustains and protects the Southerner against hostile forces, it also exacts a considerable sacrifice of individuality, for as Lytle remarks, "Each member is called upon to deny much of his individual nature in the service of the whole. . . ."[1] Thus, in Allen Tate's The Fathers (1938), old Lewis Buchan attempts, on the occasion of a political and domestic crisis, to enforce familial loyalty and discipline on his errant sons, who have been seduced by his magnetic son-in-law George Posey:

> "My son," said papa to George, "there is this necessity, that families must face the times together. The young men of my family will consult me in their politics. You will decide whether you can

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[1]"The Displaced Family," p. 117.

act as a member of my family. . . ."[1]

But Charles interjects, "It is too late to consult anybody, even you, papa," and Charles and Semmes follow Posey to war and death.

Lacy Buchan, however, is uncertain, and is torn between alternate loyalty to father and family and attraction to George Posey. His plight thus illustrates the inner challenge of family to identity. The Southern family often poses this dilemma to an individual member: proper allegiance to family may commit him to principles and acts repugnant to his private character; yet betrayal of family duty, such as the refusal to defend family honor or to obey parental injunction, also generates a feeling of guilt, and even of self-betrayal since he and the family are organically interpenetrative. These are at least some of the inner pressures working on Bayard Sartoris in The Unvanquished (1938) when he is confronted with the demand to kill B. J. Redmond and thus avenge his father's murder.

The inner diversity of the family-clan may be another source of confusion and anguish to the Southerner. Though to the outsider the clan may appear unitary, the member descries fissures in the familial structure. There may be bitter antagonisms between persons or factions within the family, or hidden crimes threatening to emerge and disgrace the family, or shameful eccentricities to conceal, or other weaknesses which it is in the family's interest to dissemble. Yet the individual knows the family secrets and may be self-divided between what he knows and how he must act. An amusing illustration of such a division is in Miss Welty's The Ponder Heart (1954), where Uncle Daniel and Edna Earle, both compulsive talkers, struggle in vain to keep secret Uncle Daniel's aberrations,

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[1] The Fathers (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1938), pp. 144-45.

especially that he literally tickled his wife to death.

Likewise, the same family that prevents solipsism by linking the Southerner with his ancestral past may also associate him with shame and dishonor, and in general complications which threaten his personal integrity. In The Velvet Horn Jack Cropleigh warns his nephew Lucius that he is not autogenous, that his personal identity is implicated with familial tragedy before his birth: "'You think you are you,' Jack said, 'but when you came out of your mother's womb, you also came out of what happened to her and her brothers the day we learned our father and mother went up in fire and smoke. . . .'"[1] And "what happened," it transpires, was the beginning of the family's dissolution and of a self-indulgent way of life culminating in an incestuous union, from which Lucius really issued.

The ancestral past may also threaten to consume the Southerner's identity by its very magnitude and glamor. This is a particular danger in the South because of her courageous performance in the Civil War and the way defeat, a merciless Reconstruction, and consequent perpetual poverty have turned her collective face backward to that performance. Disenchanted with the present, the Southerner may grow bewitched by the heroic past of an illustrious family, to the extent that he becomes almost totally identified with figures from the past and, in effect, forfeits his selfhood. Such has been the fate of Gail Hightower in Light in August (1932) until that moment when he comprehends his former captivation by the past and, freed from its grasp, regains his self-possession:

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[1]Andrew Lytle, The Velvet Horn (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1957), p. 12.

> "Then . . . if I am the instrument of her despair and death, then I am in turn instrument of someone outside myself. And I know that for fifty years I have not even been clay: I have been a single instant of darkness in which a horse galloped and a gun crashed. And if I am my dead grandfather on the instant of his death, then my wife, his grandson's wife . . . the debaucher and murderer of my grandson's wife, since I could neither let my grandson live or die . . ."[1]

And, with the restoration of his identity, time also resumes its proper proportions, "so that it can be now Now,"[2] and Hightower has his finest vision of the past.

In addition, as indicated before, the way family locates the Southerner socially can serve either to deprive him of personal worth in his own and the world's eyes, or else, at the upper end of the scale, to so burden him with a sense of responsibility—to family, to class, to community, to dependent inferiors—that his personal life is stifled. A good instance of the first effect is young Thomas Sutpen's imaginative vision of himself through the eyes first of the Negro, then of the owner who has him turned away from the front door, looking

> at the boy outside the barred door in his patched garments and splayed bare feet, looking through and beyond the boy, he himself seeing his own father and sisters and brothers as the owner, the rich man (not the nigger) must have been seeing them all the time—as cattle, creatures heavy and without grace, brutely evacuated into a world without hope or purpose for them. . . .[3]

But aristocrats, too, can be overwhelmed by the burden of class which the family transmits. Thus, in Ovid Williams Pierce's The Plantation (1953), Ed Ruffin is compelled by the death of his father and his understanding

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[1]William Faulkner, Light in August (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 430.

[2]Ibid., p. 431.

[3]William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! (New York: The Modern Library, 1951), p. 235.

of noblesse oblige to forfeit his law career, his fiancee, and any hope of a full personal life, in order to manage the plantation and care for the dependents, both kin and Negroes, who are sustained by it.

But it is not only that family membership can affect the Southerner in these conflicting ways. In addition we must consider that, in a society where family is of such paramount importance, deprivation of family is a traumatic, catastrophic experience to the person so afflicted. "Deprivation" can be understood in several ways. It can be actual physical deprivation, perhaps through violent death, of family members urgently loved and needed. The loss of brother Denis and his great promise, killed in World War I, runs as a minor theme throughout Delta Wedding. Again, in The Velvet Horn the parents Cropleigh are blown up in a steamboat race; as a result the Cropleigh children go to seed and grow up socially and psychologically eccentric. Or, "deprivation" may be a figurative loss, a sense of family failure like that expressed in Quentin Compson's "if I'd just had a mother so I could say Mother Mother. . . ."[1]

But undoubtedly the worst kind of familial deprivation is that wrought by bastardy, which produces anonymity, a lack of warm natural ties, anomalous social status, ignorance of one's blood lines--in short, conditions making for a terrible, agonizing doubt about one's identity. From such despair young Lucius Cree, after discovering his own illegitimacy in The Velvet Horn, cries out to his girl, "'Don't you see, I'm nothing. Less than nothing. Nobody. No place. Nothing. Just myself. I can't stay here. I've got to go away. You see that, don't you?'"[2]

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[1]William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (New York: The Modern Library, 1946), p. 191.

[2]P. 342.

The presence and peculiar status of the Negro in the South complicate bastardy. One of the worst evils of slavery was its violation of the Negro family, as in Go Down, Moses (1942) and Robert Penn Warren's Band of Angels (1955), but tabooed miscegenation, not entirely one-way, has continued to the present, yielding such haunted, hopeless figures as Joe Christmas of Light in August and Baptiste of William March's Come in at the Door (1934).

Another, though more peripheral, threat to identity inherent in the Southern family is the danger of incest. Because of the sparsely-populated rural culture and the family's ramification in one locale, Southern families tend to be ingrown through intra-marriage, and this creates the superficial problem of discerning lineage and relationships, as when cousins with the same surnames marry. But the possibility of real incest is increased by the intimate daily life of a rural or village family, especially when one or both parties are tormented by a narcissistic preoccupation with innocence, or non-involvement with the world. Incest is, as St. Thomas Aquinas observes, "the avarice of the affections"[1]; it symptomizes the impulse to preserve one's blood intact, and thus to restore a lost, Edenic state of innocence and unity, before even the differentiation of genders. Such is the meaning of the incestuous act between Duncan Cropleigh and his newly-affianced sister, Julia, in The Velvet Horn, as is suggested by Duncan's memory, the night before the act, of earlier hunts when he and Julia had slept innocently together between deerskins:

They could not be felt apart then. It was like sleeping with yourself

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[1]Noted also by McLuhan, "The Southern Quality," p. 382.

> doubled up, with none of you missing, until the skin opened back, all hard, and the air slid in and you shivered apart, halved but still one. Now they were two, and something between.[1]

Finally, all of these influences of the family on Southern character are complicated by the factor of change. Relative to the rest of the United States, the Southern family is intact; but relative to its own past, the Southern family is deteriorating. The forces of modernism--principally urbanization, industrialization, and the spirit of egotism and materialism--are largely responsible for this decay. The main symptoms of the decay are the same as elsewhere: an increasing incidence of divorce and desertion; a shrinkage in the size of families and of that portion of a family living together; a progressive mobility, with children moving out of the South, to the city, away from the family "place"; a consequent weakening of family ties caused by distance, the failure of family sentiment, self-absorption; and spiritually in the individual, a kind of aimlessness or "existential vacuum" when no worthy institution substitutes for the displaced family as informing center of the Southerner's life.

The effect of these trends on the Southerner is aggravated, moreover, by his vivid memory of past norms and by the persistence about him of unfounded confidence in familial forms and values. That is to say, first, that he contrasts the family's present fragmentation and his own insecurity with the apparent solidarity of the ancestral family, and is bewildered by the change, perhaps also feeling vaguely inculpated in the loss. Then, second, as the substance of family life erodes, heightened public stress is likely to be laid on the forms and virtues of the family,

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[1]p. 124.

in an effort to re-invigorate the failing institution. Thus the Southerner may be harassed by demands for traditional behavior, at the same time that alternative, subversive forms of behavior are increasingly available and alluring.

The decay of the family, with the effects mentioned, is visible in almost all regional novels of the South, but, next to Faulkner's, Caroline Gordon's novels treat the subject most thoroughly. Like other Southern novelists, Miss Gordon sees family disintegration as an ever-present possibility in the traditional society, not as a peculiarly modern phenomenon, although the social extent and acceptance of the malady are uniquely modern. None Shall Look Back (1937) exhibits, first, the existence of eccentric, potentially ruinous strains in the Allard clan even before the Civil War; but then the disastrous effects of the war on the traditional Allards, as the young men are killed off and maimed, as the surviving women perforce assume control of family destinies, as the opportunists prosper by flight and collaboration, and as the Allards are impoverished and driven, some of them, into mercantilism. In Penhally (1931) the fortunes of the Llewellyn family, neighbors to the Allards, are traced from ante-bellum days to the present. Again evidence of internal disorder in the family appears before the Civil War, in the fraternal strife over division of Penhally, but the disease, checked by conventional restraints, does not become mortal until the onslaught of modernism, which leads to fratricide. Then, in The Garden of Adonis and The Women on the Porch (1944) we focus on the consequences for the family of the forces which have gathered momentum through the years. In the former novel, old Ben Allard has been left alone on Hanging Tree to

manage the heavily mortgaged plantation; son Frank has deserted father and family home for his own insurance agency in the city, while daughter Letty Allard, desperately seeking self-definition in a vital personal relationship, is involved in an adulterous affair with another deracinated aristocrat, with whom she finally elopes. In The Women on the Porch conditions have worsened. Now Catherine Chapman repatriates from New York to her familial home, Swan Quarter, after her Yankee, intellectual husband's adultery, only to find a ruined, barren skeleton of a family and an adulterous affair for herself. Both these novels stress the corruption and sterility of family and land alike wrought by the forces of modernism, especially mobility and irresponsible wealth, and both are peopled with drifting, lonely, desperate figures--spinsters, childless divorcees, homosexuals, promiscuous fornicators--who betoken the Southern family's dissolution and for whom Catherine Chapman speaks when she thinks, "I have made a mistake. . . . I have taken the wrong road and it is too late to turn back. Am I lost?"[1]

The last point to be remarked about the Southern family is its occasional appearance as protagonist in the regional novel. The narrative focus is then not upon individuals but upon the family entity, and the issue is whether that entity can adjust to and survive the impact of change. There is a hint of this intention in those of Miss Gordon's novels just reviewed, especially in Penhally but in the others too as the same families and places keep recurring in changed states; but Miss Gordon's emphasis is finally on the individual. But in Delta Wedding

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[1]The Women on the Porch (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), pp. 220-21.

the Fairchild clan is definitely the central "figure," and the issue is whether the family unit can continue to absorb repreated invasions by outsiders--whether the family can "wed" the outside world without mortal jeopardy to either. Likewise, in The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying (1930) the fortunes of the Compson and Bundren families are the true loci of interest, and the narcissistic, individual viewpoints in both novels are symptomatic of familial decay.

The local community is the second major social institution in the South. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., observes, "Except for a few cities which in the North would be at best only medium-sized cities, the South has been predominantly a region of towns, villages, and small cities."[1] Although other parts of the United States also have their quota of small communities,

> The difference lies in the fact that in the South . . . the chief social emphasis still rests upon small cities and towns. They do not exist as auxiliaries to metropolises; they dominate the region's cultural life. Until recently the Southern small town and city has not been an industrial center for which the surrounding countryside acts as feeder of produce and raw materials, so much as a kind of cultural and social seat for the activities of the countryside.[2]

The reason for both the importance and the particular character of the Southern community is the South's preponderantly agrarian economy. Whether the community be the plantation "big house," surrounded by its complex of tenant (formerly slave) quarters, barns, smithy, and possibly gin, or the crossroads store, village or county-seat town, its life is geared to the needs of the land and of the people who farm it. It is important as

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[1]"An Image of the South," The Lasting South, p. 4.

[2]Ibid., pp. 4-5.

the place where the essential business of agrarian life is transacted: supplies obtained, crops sold or traded and transported, and justice administered. But, because of several factors--the sparse population and isolation of rural life, the people's poverty, their restricted mobility, the absence of large cities nearby for diversion--the community is the social center, as well as the economic center, of the South, from which fact derives much of its cohesive character. Rubin explains:

> The inhabitant of this typical small Southern community finds his choices of recreation limited. It is necessary for him to seek in intensity what is not possible in variety. . . . And where people are concerned, he has no easily accessible group of thousands of persons within the radius of a few blocks. He must get to know and enjoy almost everyone in his community, because by the very nature of small town life he is thrown in with them day after day, at work and at play.
>
> The Southern community is therefore likely to be a much more tightly-knit affair, much more an organic unit, than any Northern metropolis.[1]

This enforced intimacy of the people, plus their common economic base, their relative homogeneity in national origin, their common religious view proceeding therefrom, their common past, and the presence of the Negro in their midst--all give to the Southern white community a unitary character, much like that of the Southern family. This condition approximates what Richard Weaver calls "the spiritual community, where men are related on the plane of sentiment and sympathy and where, conscious of their oneness, they maintain a unity not always commensurable with their external unification."[2] Such a spiritual, or "metaphysical," community is "suffused with a common feeling about the world which enables all vocations to meet without embarrassment and to enjoy the

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[1] Ibid., p. 4.

[2] Ideas Have Consequences, p. 71.

strength that comes of common tendency."[1]

The community therefore plays a role very similar to that of the family in both conferring and obscuring the Southerner's identity. Like the family, the community solidifies against dangers which challenge the communal security, and thus simultaneously protects and substantiates the existence of its members. Similarly, by classifying and identifying things, people, and events from a collective viewpoint, the community functions to safeguard its members against surprise and menace, as seen in this passage from Miss Welty's The Golden Apples (1949), where Miss Virgie Rainey, apprehended in a "love-nest," is confronted by the Morgana ladies emerging from a Rook party:

> And nobody else was surprised at anything. . . . People saw things like this as they saw Mr. MacLain come and go. They only hoped to place them, in their hour or their street or the name of their mothers' people. Then Morgana could hold them, and at last they were this and they were that. And when ruin was predicted all along, even if people had forgotten it was on the way, even if they mightn't have missed it if it hadn't appeared, still they were never surprised when it came.[2]

And the community's power to confirm at least the semblance of personal worth is implicit in Flem Snopes's successful struggle to achieve respectability, as V. K. Ratliff reflects near the end of The Town (1957):

> He had ever thing now that he had come to Jefferson to get. He had more. . . . He had his bank and his money in it and his-self to be president of it so he could not only watch his money from ever being stole . . . but nobody could ever steal from him the respectability that being president of one of the two Yoknapatawpha County banks toted along with it.[3]

Again, like the Southern family and indeed largely because of it, the Southern town possesses historical continuity, so that communal

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[1]Ibid., p. 33.

[2](New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1949), p. 90.

[3]William Faulkner, The Town (New York: Random House, 1957), p. 347.

citizenship gives the individual Southerner a sense of vicarious prolongation. So Rubin comments on the relationship between familial-communal history and the sense of identity:

> And family history can be so clearly tied in with political and social history, that a sense of one involves a sense of the other. . . . For a community with bases so complex and so firmly placed as that [sic] of a Southern town, the awareness of history is the only logical ordering device.[1]

And "it is the historical sense which in the South makes the individual identity, the sense of individuality, possible."[2] Such an extension of the "I" or "we" into the past through identification with family and community heroes saturates Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha novels; a sample is this reflection by Gavin Stevens in The Town:

> Because we all in our country, even half a century after, sentimentalise the heroes of our gallant lost irrevocable unreconstructible debacle, and those heroes were indeed ours because they were our fathers and grandfathers and uncles and great-uncles when Colonel Sartoris raised the command right here in our contiguous counties.[3]

On the other hand, by providing the Southerner with a definition of the self which is too complete, the community can threaten to extinguish inner being and frustrate contact with the vital mysteries of life. In the "Moon Lake" section of The Golden Apples, the camping girls are divided into the Morgana set--stolid, complacent, communally defined--and the outside orphans, representing mystery--the "golden apples" of this section--and Nina Carmichael, one of the former, discovers the void in her life:

> The orphan! she thought exultantly. The other way to live. There were secret ways. She thought, Time's really short, I've been only thinking like the others. It's only interesting, only worthy,

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[1] "An Image of the South," p. 5.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Town, p. 42.

> to try for the fiercest secrets. To slip into them all--to change. . . . To have been an orphan.[1]

Moreover, the intimacy of small-town life in the South guarantees that everybody knows everything about everybody else. As in the Southern family, a truly private life is impossible; but unlike the family, the community is not compelled by blood relationship to maintain recognition of its eccentrics, with the result that offenders against communal mores are either ostracized or coerced into conformity. The community can thus become a kind of prison to the person who has to reside there. For example, this is the communal voice of Morgana discussing the "private" triangular affair of cuckolded Ran MacLain, his wife Jinny Love, and her lover Woody Spights, in a section of The Golden Apples significantly called "The Whole World Knows":

> He'll do something bad. He won't divorce Jinny but he'll do something bad. Maybe kill them all. . . . And oh, don't you know, they run into each other every day of the world, all three. Sure, how could they help it if they wanted to help it, how could you get away from it, right in Morgana? You can't get away in Morgana. Away from anything at all, you know that.[2]

And the futility of rebellion is similarly remarked by Gavin Stevens in The Town, who incidentally notices an important distinction between the Southern community and the big city:

> Because you simply cannot go against a community. You can stand singly against any temporary unanimity of even a city full of human behavior, even a mob. But you cannot stand against the cold inflexible abstraction of a long-suffering community's moral point of view.[3]

But the traditional, homogeneous Southern community is in decay. Rubin describes the change:

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[1] Golden Apples, pp. 138-39.

[2] Ibid., p. 163.

[3] Town, p. 312.

> Gone . . . is the small town Southern life as it used to be. In its place is the increasing standardization, the stepped-up tempo, the enforced conformity of modern industrial life, which measures its days by factory whistles and its nights by television channel changes.[1]

The old communal unity of spirit has been discomposed by an influx of exotic types and new ways which, often by the arrogation of power through wealth, divide the original community into factions, sometimes parents against children, as traditional name and new wealth compete for prestige. In The Garden of Adonis, for example, the social hegemony of Countsville has shifted from people like the genteel Carters to the industrialist Camps (once "Kampschafers"), nouveaux riches who produce hygienic goods for women and babies. To Mrs. Carter the Camps are

> "people who can change their names as easily as they can change their clothes. They are very rich. They make--products. I remember your father tried hard to prevent these very people from coming into this town."[2]

It is a mixture of bitter envy and bewilderment that leads Mrs. Carter to describe Sara Camp as "'a young lady who is dictatrix—social dictatrix of Countsville. They run wherever she leads them. . . .'"[3] Yet, with some feeling of guilt, Jim Carter enters the Camp business and eventually marries Sara Camp, even though "his mother, with her old-fashioned ideas, connected the Camps so intimately with their products that she couldn't meet them without embarrassment,"[4] but later discovers that Sara both reveres and resents his distinguished pedigree. This confusion in communal values and relationships, with its consequent derangement of

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[1] "An Image of the South," p. 13.

[2] Caroline Gordon, The Garden of Adonis (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), p. 131.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 132.

personal identity and relationships, typifies the nature and effect of change in the Southern community of the regional novel.

Yet again like the Southern family, the Southern community is frequently the protagonist of the regional novel. In broad outline, Faulkner's Snopes trilogy traces the subversion and transformation of a traditional community into a modern agglomerate mass by a clan that is more of a mechanical force than a real family. Other novels which deal specifically with the decline of Southern community are Requiem for a Nun (1951), The Golden Apples, and Shelby Foote's Jordan County: A Landscape in Narrative (1954), which employs the inverse chronology of beginning in the chaotic present and ending in the primitive, precommunal past (1797) of Indians, missionaries, and trappers.

A third distinctive feature of the South is its agrarianism. As an attribute of the region, the South's agrarianism belongs to a descriptive order or category different from that of the family and community. The latter are social institutions, but agrarianism is an economy, a whole way and philosophy of life traversing, creating, and informing all the South's beliefs, institutions, conventions, and manners. No other feature of Southern life can be considered apart from its agrarian economy, as we have partly seen in our review of the family and community, and shall see again in connection with other Southern traits. Here, however, I want to concentrate on two outgrowths of agrarianism which have a considerable impact on the Southern character: attachment to place and closeness to nature.

First, though, it is important to recognize that "agrarianism"

signifies not merely a present economic fact resulting from an accidental historical determination; it is partly that, of course, but it is also a philosophy or set of ideals resulting from a series of decisions which a society has made when confronted by the bare facts of geography, climate, and historical circumstances. This is to say, in other words, that any theory of economic determinism alone provides an insufficient account of Southern agrarianism. A fuller, more accurate view of agrarianism is that of the Introduction to I'll Take My Stand:

> An agrarian society is one in which agriculture is the leading vocation, whether for wealth, for pleasure, or for prestige--a form of labor that is pursued with intelligence and leisure, and that becomes the model to which the other forms approach as well as they may. . . . The theory of agrarianism is that the culture of the soil is the best and most sensitive of vocations, and that therefore it should have the economic preference and enlist the maximum number of workers.[1]

Agrarianism is therefore not a matter merely of is, but of ought also. It is necessary to consider this idealistic dimension of Southern agrarianism in order to understand why attachment to place, for example, should have positive as well as negative aspects for the Southerner; economic determinism can explain only the negative aspects.

The Southerner's attachment to his home place, now and in the past, is proverbial. Historian Clifford Dowdey asserts that, of the many disputed causes of the "Confederate War for Independence," "the one element beyond all hazard and controversy was the Southerner's devotion to his land."[2] Further, of the modern Southerner, "his land and himself are one. . . . The Southerner retains the Confederate heritage of love of a

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[1]p. xix.

[2]"The Case for the Confederacy," Lasting South, p. 29.

place."[1] Ellington White amplifies the nature of the bond between Southerner and his place:

> The family's closest rival for the Southerner's affections is his place. . . . Largely this pride in place is aesthetic, having to do with the pleasure it gives the senses, but also it carries with it the idea of the place as a sustaining force imparted by nature, and as such it has tended to replace other sustaining forces in the Southerner's life.[2]

The concept of place in this sense extends outward concentrically from the Southerner's family place, whether farm or town house, to the local community, to the state, and to the whole South, as a region both historically united and also inhabited by other lovers of place. Basically, however, "place" means home place, and its relation to Southern agrarianism is clear. Subsistence farming in itself requires the resident continuance of families in the same location for years and even generations, if building improvements are to be made, the soil enriched by crop rotation and fertilization, and additional land made arable by clearing. Moreover, the lush fertility of Southern lands and the relatively early closing of the Southern frontier for political and economic reasons tended to discourage that kind of incessant pioneering which elsewhere in the United States hindered the development of attachment to place, to which factors making for stable location should be added the more or less conscious adoption by the plantation class of classical democracy as a life style and the growth of a yeomanry related to the land according to the European order.[3]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 44-45.

[2] "The View from the Window," Lasting South, p. 169.

[3] Noted by several writers, for example John Crowe Ransom in "Reconstructed But Unregenerate," I'll Take My Stand, pp. 1-27.

Therefore the Southerner has always tended and still tends, by and large, to be born, to grow up, to propagate his family line, and to die in the same physical location. As a consequence both human constructions and topographical features are saturated, for the Southerner, with personal and ancestral memories, and he develops toward them an attitude which John Crowe Ransom would call "sentiment" and which attaches only to objects which are old and familiar, antiquated, highly individual, and "innocent"--requiring only to be known and loved, not primarily to be used.[1] This is the nature, then, of the Southerner's attachment to place.

It is heavy with implications for the Southerner's character. Memory of place forms a base for the Southerner's sense of who he is--a kind of permanent psychic center which measures and evaluates later, fluctuating states of being. Thus Catherine Chapman, now almost rootless, wonders at the durability and power of certain childhood memories as she gazes over the fields where she grew up: "It was strange how the geography of this country stayed in her mind. Those ponds, a hill at Swan Quarter . . . these remote, rarely glimpsed places had for her a reality, an importance that no other places had."[2] And later in her familial home she seems to hear again the "presences"--something like lares--which she used to hear as a child:

> The presences had been then only companions whom one could not conveniently address. After she became a woman they had seemed at times to menace or at least to prophesy evil. Four nights ago their voices had driven her out of the house, into the fog. . . . This morning . . . the presences spoke in the tones they had used in childhood.[3]

Memory of place can even displace actual place in its control of the

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[1]Ransom, World's Body, pp. 215-16.

[2]Women on the Porch, p. 49.

[3]Ibid., p. 191.

individual's psyche, as Mink Snopes discovers in The Mansion (1959): "Why yes he thought it aint a place a man wants to go back to; the place dont even need to be there no more. What aches a man to go back to is what he remembers."[1]

This sentiment, the beckoning of place, is not confined to the wealthy and genteel, as an economic determinist might assume, but is felt as well by the common Southerner, poor and unlanded—even the sharecroppers. Thus, as the tenant Mortimers move back onto the place where he was born, Ote Mortimer recalls how his father has always treasured its memory:

> It was funny: Joe Mortimer, no matter where he was living, always looked back in memory to this place. If he were cropping anywhere in the neighborhood he would ride over some time during the summer to look at the crops and . . . would compare the yields of the various fields. . . . But Old Man Mortimer had been born on this place. Perhaps a man always thought a lot of the first land he ever worked. It settled into his mind, somehow, so that no matter where he lived or what land he was working he was always comparing it to those fields he had known first as a boy.[2]

The identity and social status of the Southerner are so connected with his place that place-name often serves as an abbreviated evocation of family and individual nature, or at least it was so before wealth preempted place and family as sign of quality. In The Fathers Lacy Buchan feels compelled to apologize for discussing the Buchan holdings:

> In giving this account of our property I am straddling two ages. Nobody in my youth discussed money; we never asked how much money people had; and it was a little different, I believe, from the ordinary good breeding that demands reticence about the cost of things. That too was never done; but the point of the "rule" was that it had grown out of long habit, out of a way of seeing men in society; it was less a rule than an actual habit of mind. It was significant that we

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[1]William Faulkner, The Mansion (New York: Random House, 1959), p. 106.

[2]Garden of Adonis, p. 5.

> always spoke of the Carters of Ravensworth, the Carys of Vaucluse, the Buchans of Pleasant Hill. The individual quality of a man was bound up with his kin and the "places" where they lived. . . .[1]

When for some reason the Southerner is alienated from his native place, he usually suffers a partial loss of identity and self-possession. Sometimes the Southerner flees from the painful associations of home-place, but, because that place is so much a part of him, he is also fleeing from and denying a portion of himself. Flight from home thus often appears as flight from self, and conversely, return to home represents a recovery or acceptance of self. This is the regular pattern in Robert Penn Warren's novels, for example in All the King's Men (1946), where Jack Burden's periodic escapes from Burden's Landing to the Stark world represent his inability to confront and accept a portion of his personal and familial past. In Night Rider (1939) Perse Munn's total loss of identity is symbolized by the burning of his home place, but the recovery of identity is illustrated when Willie Proudfit's prophetic "dying" vision, later realized, points the road back to his native place--and a humble acceptance of his weak and sinful human nature:

> "Hit was the road come-en down to Thebes, in Kentucky, when I was a kid thar, and the church setten thar whar hit takes a bend. I ne'er seen hit since pappy done up and taken outer Kentucky fer Arkansas when the war come and he was on-easy in his mind, but hit come to me plain as day, and I said, 'I'm a-goen thar.'"[2]

Southern agrarianism also entails a closeness to nature on the part of the average Southerner. Whether actually farming or living in a community which is surrounded by field and wood and depends economically on the seasonal rhythms and vagaries of nature, the Southerner possesses

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[1] Pp. 134-35.

[2] Robert Penn Warren, Night Rider (New York: Random House, 1939), p. 425.

from childhood a familiarity with nature that leaves an indelible mark on his character.

One result of his intimacy with nature is the Southerner's sense of his own limitations and frailty, which is connected, somewhat paradoxically, with a sense of his own worth and dignity. Walter Sullivan explains the relationship in this way:

> One watches the seasons and the cycle of birth and death, the sowing and the reaping, the planting and the pulling, and understanding comes. A man gets a sense of his own frailty and the brevity of his own time, when he considers the large world and how long it has been turning from day back to night and following its own course from spring to winter. The man who is conscious of his frailty is the man who knows best his own individual worth.[1]

In other words, his intimate contact with and radical dependence upon nature convinces the Southerner of his own weakness before nature, but at the same time of his equality before other men in this frailty.

This condition manifests itself in the Southerner's leisureliness, his stubborn individuality or independence, and his conservatism. As to the first, Andrew Lytle contends that

> the farmer knows that he cannot control time, whereas he can wrestle with space, or at least with that particular part which is his orbit. He can stop, set, chaw, and talk, for, unable to subdue nature, it is no great matter whether he gets a little more or a little less that year from her limitless store.[2]

This leisureliness is hardly illustratable in a single passage from a regional novel; it is rather a quality that pervades the Southern scene in the novel: a slow, unhurried tempo of activity, even in crisis; a willingness of the Southerner to break off a momentary task to talk a spell; a certain nonchalance in the Southerner's response to the

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[1]"The City and the Old Vision," Lasting South, p. 122.

[2]"The Hind Tit," I'll Take My Stand, p. 212.

exigencies of time and duty. It is partially visible in the haphazard, festive approach to tobacco-farming by the sharecropping Sheelers in The Garden of Adonis; in the careless interruption of farm-family routine occasioned by the wild horses in The Hamlet (1940); and in Faulkner's portraits of Jefferson on Saturday, when the country folk come to town:

> Slow as sheep they moved, tranquil, impassable, filling the passages, contemplating the fretful hurrying of those in urban shirts and collars with the large, mild inscrutability of cattle or of gods, functioning outside of time, having left time lying upon the slow and imponderable land green with corn and cotton in the yellow afternoon.[1]

The Southern farmer's struggle with nature also toughens his will and develops a hardy individualism that can at times reach incredible proportions. The man who has the tenacity to "wrestle with space" is not easily daunted by the opposing wills of other men. At one extreme this individualism may take the form of an arrogant, intolerant Jack Houston (The Hamlet, 1940, and The Mansion) concerning whom at fourteen "finally even his father admitted that there was nothing else about the farm for him to learn"[2] and who at Varner's store can sit his blooded stallion and order "whoever was on the front gallery to step inside and fetch him out whatever it was he had come for like they were Negroes."[3] Or it may be the patient, smouldering bitterness of a lowly Mink Snopes, who yet believes in "a simple fundamental justice and equity in human affairs"[4] and who, after bushwhacking Houston, thinks,

> What he would have liked to do would be to leave a printed placard

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[1]William Faulkner, Sanctuary (New York: The New American Library, 1951), p. 63.

[2]William Faulkner, The Hamlet (New York: Modern Library, 1940), p. 209.

[3]Mansion, pp. 7-8.

[4]Ibid., p. 6.

> on the breast itself: This is what happens to the men who impound Mink Snopes's cattle, with his name signed to it. But he could not, and here again, for the third time since he had pulled the trigger, was that conspiracy to frustrate and outrage his rights as a man and his feelings as a sentient creature.[1]

Of course the intense contact, often strife with nature in agrarian life is not the only factor operating to produce such individualistic characters, but its contribution is considerable.

The agrarian base for the Southerner's individualism also provides for his conservative world view, which Richard Weaver likens to Spengler's concept of the "Apollinian" perspective:

> It knew nothing of infinite progressions but rather loved fixed limits in all things; it rejected the idea of ceaseless becoming in favor of "simple accepted statuesque becomeness." It saw little point in restless striving, but desired a permanent settlement, a coming to terms with nature, a recognition of what is in its self-sustaining form. The Apollinian feeling . . . is of a world of "coexistent individual things". . . . Other things are because they have to be; one marks their nature and their limits and learns to get along with them.[2]

Hence the Southerner tends to prefer things as they are, the status quo, the presently existent, to change, "progress," and confidence in the limitless future; "The idea of stasis is not abhorrent to him, because it affords a ground for the identity of things."[3] And this metaphysical interpretation of the Southerner's conservatism is supported by James J. Kilpatrick's observation of its factual agrarian basis, in connection with the Southerner's distrust of industrialism:

> This attitude of cautious reserve toward industrialism is allied with the Southerner's love of place, and his sense of community; it has its roots in a tradition of man's dependence on the soil and his

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[1] Hamlet, p. 222.

[2] "The South and the American Union," Lasting South, p. 50.

[3] Ibid., p. 55.

independence by reason of this. The factory may or may not be permanent; the land is.[1]

His conservatism, which is far more and much deeper than his mere public, politico-economic conservatism, shows in the Southerner's resistance to change and, when it comes, in his bewilderment and inability to cope with it. It appears early in Sartoris (1929), for example, in old Bayard's maintenance of team and carriage after the onset of the automobile age, and one meaning of his fatal heart attack in his grandson's car is his failure to adjust to change. The accommodation to change is a major issue in all of Eudora Welty's novels, as in Faulkner's, and a humorous instance in The Ponder Heart is Uncle Daniel's "trial" marriage with salesgirl Bonnie Dee Peacock and his easy submission to her, much to Edna Earle's indignation:

> Now I'll tell you about Bonnie Dee. Bonnie Dee could make change, and Bonnie Dee could cut hair. . . . Uncle Daniel used to look like a senator. But that day his hair wasn't much longer than the fuzz of a peach. Uncle Daniel still keeps it like that—he loves himself that way.[2]

And a fine illustration of the Southerner's conservatism, and of its relation to the agrarian life, appears in sharecropper Joe Mortimer's reaction to landlord Ben Allard's suggestion to raise burley tobacco and Lespedeza:

> "I ain't never what you might call raised any Burley," he said. "Now dark-fired tobacco I understand. I was raised you might say between the rows. . . . Hit's a fact now," he said, "you put me in a tobacco patch and they's something tells me what to do and when to do it. I don't never have to study about what to do. They's something tells me."[3]

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[1] "Conservatism and the South," Lasting South, p. 193.

[2] The Ponder Heart (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1954), p. 35.

[3] Gordon, Garden of Adonis, p. 26.

And after Allard leaves, Joe tells his son Ote:

> "You and Mist' Ben kin have your lesbeder," he said, "and I don't mind givin you a hand in the field. . . . But I'm goin to put my crop in, same as always. Dark tobacco. I growed up raisin it and I ain't ready to give it up for ever' new fangled thing comes along."[1]

Lastly, the Southerner's closeness to nature tends to nurture in him a sense of the inviolability of nature, and its corollary, a sense of guilt when nature is in some way desecrated. Concerning the Southerner's older relationship to his land and his reverence for her, a writer in the Times Literary Supplement points out that

> The South was also--and more self-consciously than the North--a land. . . . The image of a land on which its people lived in close physical and moral dependency was a popular one and persisted. . . . From this image arose several convictions . . . that the land is sacred, that the ideally moral life is one lived in close relationship with it, that the land should not be "violated" (i.e. that Nature should neither be ignored, exploited, nor viewed abstractly), and that violation of the land is a major sin, for which there were punishments.[2]

And such, too, was the persistent theme of all the Southern Agrarians, especially John Crowe Ransom.

In the Southern regional novel this attitude toward nature appears in a number of forms--idyllic portraits of pristine nature, nostalgic reminiscences of nature and farm life by "denaturalized" Southerners, the representation of the land as a woman (virgin, bride, or wife) to be jealous of and safeguarded--, as does the pattern of personal guilt and self-degradation which accompanies the abuse of nature. In Night Rider the scraping of the tobacco plant-beds, signifying the violent sterilization or abortion of nature, is both cause and symbol of Mr. Munn's

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[1]Ibid., p. 30.

[2]"The Southern Revival: A Land and Its Interpreters," London Times Literary Supplement, 2746 (Sept. 17, 1954), 16.

progressive deterioration. The same theme runs throughout Faulkner's works: the indirect communal collaboration in Isaac Snopes's bestiality, the wanton slaying of game without need or feeling, the denudation and impoverishment of the land through man's rapacity—all are effect and symptom of personal and communal moral decline and bring on retribution, as Isaac McCaslin thinks:

> This Delta. . . . This Delta. This land which man has deswamped and denuded and derivered in two generations so that white men can own plantations and commute every night to Memphis and black men own plantations and ride in jim crow cars to Chicago. . . . No wonder the ruined woods I used to know dont cry for retribution! he thought: The people who have destroyed it will accomplish its revenge.[1]

And before him, Isaac's father and uncle, Uncle Buck and Buddy McCaslin, had entertained similar ideas:

> They believed that land did not belong to people but that people belonged to land and that the earth would permit them to live on and out of it and use it only so long as they behaved and that if they did not behave right, it would shake them off just like a dog getting rid of fleas.[2]

So the norm of agrarianism pervades the regional novel of the South.

Related to its agrarianism is another distinctive feature of the Southern scene: its religious fundamentalism. "The Southerner is a religious conservative who is unwilling to modify his fundamentalist concepts of original sin, the necessity of God's grace to individual salvation, the divinity of Christ, and the last judgment,"[3] says Walter Sullivan. The nature of this fundamentalism necessitates our consideration of two aspects of the Southerner's religious life, his generally

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[1] Go Down, Moses (New York: Modern Library, 1942), p. 364.

[2] The Unvanquished (New York: New American Library, 1938), p. 33.

[3] "The City and the Old Vision," Lasting South, p. 123.

religious outlook on the world and its institutionalized expression, which usually overlap but are not identical.

The religious institutions of the South are pre-eminently the "low" Protestant denominations: Methodism, Baptistry, Presbyterianism, and the evangelical sects. Their establishment is traceable primarily to the Anglo-Saxon, Scotch-Irish origins of the early settlers. But their perpetuation and "hardening" are attributable to a complex of interrelated factors: the maintenance of a relatively homogeneous white population co-existent with a large Negro population; the South's defeat in the Civil War and her poverty afterwards, which discouraged the development of any liberalizing confidence in the efficacy of man's will and works; and perhaps most important, the coincidence between these denominations' doctrines and methods—the radical contingency of man's existence, the ubiquity of evil and the consequent need for a rigid moral code, the individualistic organization and mode of worship of these churches—and the religious perspective shaped by an agrarian way of life.

For, as we noticed in Chapter II, the close contact with nature inevitable in agrarianism conduces to a profoundly religious view of the world. In contrasting rural and urban populations, John Crowe Ransom points out that

> [the city's] effect is to insulate its inhabitants against observation of a fact which it is well for the realist to take always into account: the infinite variety of nature. The agricultural population is constantly aware of this fact, and accordingly its temper differs from the temper of industrialists and city-folk: it is humble, religious, and conservative. Its God is inscrutable. The nature it knows is not the nature that the city-folk think they have mastered.[1]

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[1] God Without Thunder, p. 125.

James McBride Dabbs indicates how farm life tends to confirm one Calvinistic ingredient in many low-Protestant churches, the doctrine of predestination:

> In addition to [his] sense of submission to the unpredictable, the farmer is aware, however vaguely, that he deals with great, mysterious forces, in a scene forever attractive, forever changing . . . an illimitable arena through which passes the faultless procession of the seasons. Both participant and observer in this procession, he gains therefrom a sense of inevitability. He leans toward Calvinism. . . .[1]

Furthermore, because the farmer sees the malignant as well as the beneficent side of nature—"the rattler coiled by the rotting log"[2] as well as the "scene forever attractive"—and because his whole life is so intimately involved with the play of natural forces and objects, rural life is more likely than urban to develop a sense of evil and sin; the farmer is more apt to discover relationships, including retribution, between his personal behavior and economic fortunes than the city-dweller, who can more easily dissociate the two.

It is important to stress this religious outlook of the Southerner, and its connection with agrarianism, first because its channeled, institutionalized expression appears distorted without an understanding of the semi-philosophical and experiential bases, and then because the religious view often counters the effects of various institutions in establishing the Southerner's identity. In Robert Penn Warren's <u>At Heaven's Gate</u> (1943), for example, the itinerant, ecclesiastically non-affiliated evangelist Ashby Wyndham, dispossessed of family, community, home place, and even economic rights, yet has found himself in his conversion through God's grace:

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[1]"The Land," <u>Lasting South</u>, p. 80. [2]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 81.

> The pore human man, he ain't nuthin but a handful of dust, but the light of Gods face on him and he shines like a diamint, and blinds the eye of the un-uprighteous congregation. . . . I laid on the floor, and it was dark. I wasn't nuthin. . . . But the light come in the dark room, like a finger apointin at me through the hole. . . . I shined in the light.[1]

Continuing his "Statement" from the Mulcaster County jail, Wyndham suggests, through his style, the agrarian preparation for his religious conversion, and then states his personal version of irresistible and inscrutable grace:

> But a man don't know, nor was made to. Salvation has laid hid behind a dark bush, like a enemy man up to meanness. . . . But the Lord, He made the world and what walks on it, and it out of pure love. The copperhead, and him layin for sun in the path where the women folks and the children goes down to the spring for water. And the wicked man in his power of meanness, he puts out his hand, and he don't know, but the Lords love is in it, in a far country, and it only retches out to lay holt and come home.[2]

A very similar figure is sharecropper Ed Trivers, in <u>The Garden of Adonis</u>, who has undergone a mystical, transforming experience in the fields and who explains, "'Hit's just like the Book says. . . . Hit's a mystery. Poor mortal man, he ain't expected to onderstand it.'"[3] And Ed, like Ashby Wyndham and also Joe Goodyhay of <u>The Mansion</u>, has achieved a profound serenity despite his worldly dispossession and has become an unordained minister, associated with no denomination yet bearing witness to God's miraculous ways.

It is well to remember such manifestations of Southern fundamentalism when we turn to its more notorious expressions, which are largely institutionalized (that is, sponsored and promoted by the organized churches, either directly from the pulpit and through semi-ecclesiastical

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[1]<u>At Heaven's Gate</u> (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co.), p. 35.

[2]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 35-36.

[3]Gordon, p. 54.

societies, or indirectly through concurrence of communal sentiment with church policy). This side of fundamentalism includes a literalist interpretation of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, and, stemming largely therefrom, a rigid, illiberal, largely prohibitive morality which oppresses its violators and degrades and dehumanizes its upholders. This moral system results, often, in cruelty, intolerance, bigotry, obscurantism, hypocrisy, and pharisaism, and can have a devastating effect on the Southerner's life and sense of identity.

Offenders against fundamentalist morality, sexual morality in particular, become pariahs. They are shunned, harried in various ways from place to place and day to day, and, if their offenses are grave enough, punished physically as well, perhaps even lynched. Ready examples of such victims are Ruby and Goodwin of Sanctuary, Lena Grove and Gail Hightower in Light in August, Eula Varner Snopes and (to a less extent) Manfred deSpain in The Town. The fundamentalist churches' direct sponsorship of such persecution is typified in the Baptist preacher's diatribe against Ruby and Goodwin, as reported by Horace Benbow:

> "This morning the Baptist minister took him for a text. Not only as a murderer, but as an adulterer; a polluter of the free Democratic-Protestant atmosphere of Yoknapatawpha county. I gather that his idea was that Goodwin and the woman should both be burned as a sole example to that child; the child to be reared and taught the English language for the sole end of being taught that it was begot in sin by two people who suffered by fire for having begot it."[1]

Such religious leadership bears fruit in the repeated expulsion of Ruby and child from places of refuge and, later, in the holocaustal lynching of Goodwin.

A less spectacular but possibly more pernicious effect of

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[1] Sanctuary, p. 72.

fundamentalism is its creation of a purely negative sense of being in many Southerners—that is, a definition of self which depends heavily upon specifying what one is not. In its milder form this is simply the psychical dimension of pharisaism—a thanksgiving because one is not an adulterer or fornicator or thief or accursed son of Ham or other "God's abomination"[1]—which dissembles an interior deficiency or sense of inadequacy, which places a heavy premium upon respectability as the external verification of individual worth, and which insists on the communal maintenance of moral laws in order to safeguard the repository of its identity. Charles Mallison attains an insight into this condition in The Town as he muses upon the town's reaction to the impending catastrophe of the Eula Snopes-Manfred deSpain affair:

> And now, after eighteen years, the saw of retribution, which we of course called that of righteousness and simple justice, was about to touch that secret hidden unhealed nail buried in the moral tree of our community—that nail not only corrupted and unhealed but unhealable because it was not just sin but mortal sin—a thing which should not exist at all, whose very conception should be self-annihilative. . . .[2]

But the town's condemnation proceeds from the personal envy, he thinks, of such as

> those of both sexes—no: the same sour genderless sex—who hated them both for having found or made together something which they themselves had failed to make, whatever the reason; and in consequence of which that splendor must not only not exist, it must never have existed. . . .[3]

Therefore, Mallison perceives, the "saw of retribution" must not fail or disintegrate against the adulterous "nail," for "if that righteous and invincible moral blade flew to pieces at the contact, we all might as

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[1] Light in August, p. 327. [2] Town, p. 307.

[3] Ibid., p. 308.

well give up, since the very fabric of Baptist and Methodist life is delusion, nothing. . . ."[1]

A rare though more maleficent form of this negative definition occurs when a Southerner defines himself in opposition to fundamentalist precepts. Since the precepts are themselves largely negative, on the model of the Decalogue, such identification amounts to self-definition by a kind of double negation; the individual requires for his sense of being and direction an interdiction to react against, and without it he is bewildered and lost. Joe Christmas is the perfect exemplar of this type (although his case is admittedly complicated by his uncertain blood). The fanaticism of Hines and the Calvinistic rigor of Presbyterian Simon McEachern are cruelly privative of personal dignity, yet they afford Joe his only definition, first as a tot at the orphanage ("He [Hines] hates and fears me. So much so that he cannot let me out of his sight. . . . That is why I am different from the others: because he is watching me all the time. . . ."[2]); later as a stripling after the routine of beatings has established an invariable pattern:

> He seemed to recognize McEachern without surprise, as if the whole situation were perfectly logical and reasonable and inescapable. Perhaps he was thinking then how he and the man could always count upon one another, depend upon one another; that it was the woman alone who was unpredictable.[3]

Fundamentalist rigidity and negativism thus create in Joe Christmas a reliance upon rejection for his sense of selfhood; hence in his maturity he must periodically violate other persons to provoke that repudiation which confirms his existence.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Light in August, pp. 120-21.

[3] Ibid., p. 139

Southern fundamentalism assumes other modes of negativism. Gail Hightower intuits a death wish, a self-crucifixion in Protestant music:

> The music has still a quality stern and implacable, deliberate and without passion so much as immolation, pleading, asking, for not love, not life, forbidding it to others, demanding in sonorous tones death as though death were the boon, like all Protestant music. . . . And so why should not their religion drive them to crucifixion of themselves and one another? he thinks.[1]

The canons of fundamentalism often gainsay the natural appetites of the body in an unrealistic manner, as in the disproportionate value laid on female virginity, and this discrepancy between precept and fact frequently produces an astonishing dilemma in the Southerner's life. For example Mink Snopes finds himself irresistibly attracted to a nymphomaniac, although "he had been bred by generations to believe invincibly that to every man . . . there was reserved one virgin, at least for him to marry; one maidenhead, if only for him to deflower and destroy."[2] Similarly, Mink's counterpart and victim, Jack Houston, lives seven years with a Texas prostitute, and "he even thought of marrying her, so had the impact of the West . . . softened and at last abolished his inherited southern-provincial-Protestant fanaticism regarding marriage and female purity, the biblical Magdalen."[3] Finally, the disjunction between precept and fact can lead to an actual romanticizing of illicit sexuality, as it does in the case of Addie Bundren's adulterous affair with Rev. Whitfield in As I Lay Dying (1930):

> I would think of sin as I would think of the clothes we both wore in the world's face, of the circumspection necessary because he was he and I was I; the sin the more utter and terrible since he was the instrument ordained by God who created the sin, to sanctify the sin He

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[1] Ibid., pp. 321-22.

[2] Hamlet, p. 242.

[3] Ibid., p. 215.

> had created. . . . I would think of him as dressed in sin. I would think of him as thinking of me as dressed also in sin, he the more beautiful since the garment which he had exchanged for sin was sanctified.[1]

As a last word on this point, it should be re-emphasized that no picture of Southern fundamentalism which represents only its negative aspects can pretend to accuracy. The moral negativism of institutional Protestantism functioning through the community is countered in some way or degree by a profound religious spirit of humility and charity, or, it may be, simple human decency. At any rate, while recording the narrowness of religious fundamentalism, the Southern novelist in some fashion is always saying with Charles Mallison,

> because I know now that people really are kind, they really are; there are lots of times when they stop hurting one another not just when they want to keep on hurting but even when they have to; even the most Methodist and Baptist of the Baptists and Methodists and Presbyterians—all right, Episcopals too. . . .[2]

Another outstanding feature of the South is its bi-racialism, which is considered by some observers to be the principal Southern differentia. Howard W. Odum says, "We conclude . . . that our first and most distinctive difference between the South and other regions is the existence of an organic bi-racial civilization in the Southeast made up of a dominant white 'state-society' and the subordinate Negro 'folk-society' within the region."[3] This bi-racial society displays two interdependent aspects in

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[1]William Faulkner, As I Lay Dying (New York: Modern Library, 1946), p. 466.

[2]Town, pp. 340-41.

[3]"Patterns of Regionalism in the Deep South," Saturday Review of Literature, XXV (Sept. 19, 1942), 5.

regard to its effect on the Southern character: the dominance of a relatively homogeneous white population, and the subordination of a Negro population as an inferior caste with a history of enslavement.

The two aspects are interdependent in several ways. The white homogeneity and the presence of the Negro as a physically stigmatized inferior caste (a stigmatization further prophesied and sanctioned by a fundamentalist interpretation of Genesis) has always promoted a white fraternity which transcends class differences and consolidates the white community against both the Negro and his aspiring liberators from the outside. These factors, for example, in addition to their mutual love of a common place, rallied the Southern yeomanry to the support of the gentility against the Union in the Civil War, in spite of the fact that the former class had no real proprietary interest in slavery. Conversely, white Protestant homogeneity has tended to perpetuate and worsen the Negro's plight by distinguishing him more sharply from Caucasians and by giving Caucasians the appearance of a unitary menace to him. My meaning is easier to see if we can imagine how a more heterogenous white population, with a large admixture of swarthy Catholics from continental Europe, might have altered the racial situation in the South by blurring racial outlines and dissolving the religious, moral, and social solidarity of the Caucasian community. The conjecture is not altogether hypothetical, for we see in Absalom, Absalom! and Band of Angels how the prevailingly Latin ethos of New Orleans tended to liberalize racial relations.

But south Louisiana is anomalous in the South. In an overwhelming preponderance, Protestant Anglo-Saxons settled in and developed the

region. Furthermore, and aside from slaves, subsequent immigration was both minor and largely confined to elements of the original stock; there was no large influx of alien kinds such as occurred in the North, partly because of economic conditions (an agrarian economy and a plentitude of slave labor, hence an absence of paying jobs to attract immigrants), partly too because, as Clifford Dowdry says, "To be blunt, the South did not want them. A homogeneous society and its rulers abhorred the presence of a 'restless proletariat' and any elements of population which could throw political power to numerical majorities."[1] It is this white homogeneity which produces the genuine community, described earlier, as well as the relatively free association among different classes of a hierarchical society. A Wash Jones can identify and drink whiskey with a Thomas Sutpen by the facts of their common backgrounds, their common opposition to Yankees, and their common, observable differences from the "nigger"--up to the time, that is, when Sutpen treats Jones and his granddaughter like Negroes.

White homogeneity has also been a factor in the South's conservatism, as remarked by Robert Hazel: "Separateness, relative solidarity and homogeneity of the white community, dispirited enterprise--all conspired to make the region seem stable, to make change almost imperceptible and to urge the cherishing of local myths of permanence."[2] Another, normative relationship between Southern white homogeneity and its political conservatism is articulated by Gavin Stevens in Intruder in the Dust (1948):

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[1]"The Case for the Confederacy," Lasting South, p. 37.

[2]"The Southern Writer and His Region," ibid., p. 173.

> "It's because we alone in the United States . . . are a homogeneous people. . . . So we are not really resisting what the outland calls (and we too) progress and enlightenment. We are defending not actually our politics or beliefs or even our way of life, but simply our homogeneity from a federal government . . . Only a few of us know that only from homogeneity comes anything of a people or for a people of durable and lasting value--the literature, the art, the science, that minimum of government and police which is the meaning of freedom and liberty, and perhaps most valuable of all a national character worth anything in a crisis. . . ."[1]

These are the facts, and some of the general effects and values, of homogeneity among the white population of the South. The facts of the Negro's history and present state of existence in the South are too well known to require much recitation. He was snatched away from a savage African "home" where, according to Hamish Bond, "if you took one of 'em off to pick cotton five thousand miles away, you did him a favor."[2] He was transported in unspeakably vile circumstances to an alien land, where he was sold as chattel property. Until his emancipation, he was treated thereafter as chattel property, subject to the same vicissitudes that any other property undergoes: abused by cruel and careless owners, attended carefully and perhaps even commiserated by practical and sympathetic masters, but still, always, property. He was forbidden literacy, he could be whipped, hunted by dogs, uprooted and sold away from his family, see his wife and daughters bred like animals to superior black stock--or to white.

Then came the Civil War and Emancipation, and the dumb hope for

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[1]William Faulkner, Intruder in the Dust (New York: New American Library, 1949), p. 118.

[2]Robert Penn Warren, Band of Angels (New York: New American Library, 1956), p. 160.

a new life. "'I ain't a nigger anymore. I done been abolished,'"[1] Ringo says in The Unvanquished, and in the same novel we see the Negroes flocking en masse, "'Going to Jordan . . . Going to cross Jordan.'"[2] And in Band of Angels the freed Negroes are "'crazy to larn, crazy to larn. . . . to read the Good Book and the Promise. . . . be lak white folks.'"[3]

The delusion was temporary. Quickly the Negro found himself exploited by his very liberators, so that frequently his only protection was his old master and the plantation from which he had so recently fled. During Reconstruction the Negro was used as a political tool by unscrupulous Northern politicians, carpetbaggers, and scalawags, and as the object of retaliation by embittered, resurgent ex-Confederates. Since that time the Negro's role has developed ambiguously. In some ways his lot has worsened, for he has incurred the responsibilities of freedom (such as the duty to provide for himself and family, to answer personally to the law, to pay taxes) with few of its rights and privileges; moreover, racial lines have hardened with the advent of jim crow segregation, the rise of a demagogic political leadership, and the adulteration or attenuation of the old paternalistic gentility. On the other hand, the gradual, general diffusion of education, the Negro's opportunity to flee the South to the attractive Northern cities, the invasion of the South by industrialism, the growth of labor unions, the renewed friendship and interest of the Federal government--all have operated to create new opportunities and hope for the Negro which he has not known since Emancipation.

All of these are general characteristics of the Southern bi-racial

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[1] Unvanquished, p. 126. [2] Ibid., p. 60.

[3] Band of Angels, pp. 210-11.

society; we wish now to observe their effects on the character of the individual Southerner, both black and white. We take the Negro first because, in the regional novel, he is less important. It is not that the regional novel scants the Negro's predicament; on the contrary, that predicament is one of its cardinal themes. It is rather that the Negro and his condition are of less importance in themselves, than in their effect on white people. Nevertheless, even as refracted through the white observer, the effects of the Negro's situation on his own character are clear and monstrous.

The most widespread effect is the questioning of his very existence as a human being which being a Southern Negro involves. By the mere pigmentation of his skin enrolled innately and irremediably in an inferior caste, the Negro is thereby deprived of most of those rights normally appertaining to the human person in any just society, and certainly ascribed to persons by the Christian religion which his white superiors profess. Such rights include the right to know, to learn, to exercise the intellect freely; the corollary right to speak freely one's thoughts; the right to select freely one's spouse, and to raise a family in the security of its inviolability; the right to reasonable security of life and property—in short, the whole range of human rights encompassed in the natural law, specified in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, and entailed in the Christian belief that man is a creature of God made in His image.

When the Southern Negro is denied partially or wholly the exercise of these rights, he naturally experiences resentment, but he may also entertain serious doubts of his status as a human being. This

latter is the first reaction of Amantha Starr to the revelation, after her white father's death, that she is half-Negress and is to be transported and sold as a slave:

> My hatred had not yet reached its formulation. Now, there was only the numbness, the muffling of all things, the period in which I was a being without being, as though my inner experience reflected the abstract definition of the law, which called me a chattel, a non-person, the thing without soul, and I was suspended in that vacuum of no identity. . . .[1]

A similar bafflement must have afflicted Charles Etienne Saint-Valery Bon after he was told of his Negro blood, for

> "one of them, Clytie of Judith, found hidden beneath his mattress the shard of broken mirror: and who to know what hours of amazed and tearless grief he might have spent before it, examining himself . . . with quiet and incredulous incomprehension."[2]

Another aspect of this same "no identity" is the contradiction between the Southern Negro's intuition of his own humanity and the white expectation that he behave like the "nigger" he appears to be. The Southern Negro is required to conform to the pattern of conventions which the white community holds about his race: the nigger's irresponsibility, his cowardice, his propensity to violence, his simple, fun-loving nature, his natural humility or servility, his deference to white persons, his promiscuous sexuality and lust for white women, and so on. He cannot be "Negro," much less simply "man"; he must be "nigger." Gavin Stevens alludes to this convention when he analyzes Mr. Lilley's readiness to help lynch Lucas Beauchamp in Intruder in the Dust:

> "He has nothing against what he calls niggers. . . . All he requires is that they act like niggers. Which is exactly what Lucas is doing: blew his top and murdered a white man—which Mr Lilley is probably convinced all Negroes want to do—and now the white people will take him out and burn him, . . . themselves acting exactly as he is

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[1]Ibid., pp. 53-54. [2]Absalom, p. 199.

> convinced Lucas would wish them to act: like white folks; both of them observing implicitly the rules: the nigger acting like a nigger and the white folks acting like white folks and no real hard feelings on either side. . . ."[1]

It is Joe Christmas' nonchalance, his refusal to act his role, which enrages the white community of Mottstown:

> "That was what made folks so mad. For him to be a murderer and all dressed up and walking the town like he dared them to touch him, when he ought to have been skulking and hiding in the woods. . . . It was like he never even knew he was a murderer, let alone a nigger too."[2]

But Negroes are of course aware of the discrepancy between this conventional "Sambo" role and their human nature. Sometimes they adapt the fatuous white convention to their own uses, as when Lucas Beauchamp reports his prospective son-in-law's moonshine operation to Roth Edmonds:

> Without changing the inflection of his voice and apparently without effort or even design Lucas became not Negro but nigger, not secret so much as impenetrable. . . . "He's running a kettle in that gully behind the Old West field. . . ."[3]

Sometimes, asserting their humanity, they articulate their protest against both white indignities and white smugness about the "nigger," as when the same Lucas confronts Zack Edmonds and demands the return of Molly Beauchamp because "'I'm a nigger. . . . But I'm a man too.'"[4] Yet, even in a Lucas Beauchamp at heart and alone, there remain the old frustration and confusion created by the role of "nigger": "'How to God,' he said, 'can a black man ask a white man to please not lay down with his black wife? And even if he could ask it, how to God can the white man promise he wont?'"[5]

There is also of course an actual physical threat to the Negro's

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[1] Intruder, pp. 38-39.

[2] Light in August, pp. 306-307.

[3] Moses, pp. 59-60.

[4] Ibid., p. 47.

[5] Ibid., p. 59.

existence involved in his inferior status and conventional role. If a crime has been committed, a handy Negro is the readiest suspect; in fact, with certain types of crime the generic Negro may be suspected even before a particular one is implicated. Thus the bystanders at Joanna Burden's burning house and mutilated body "believed aloud that it was an anonymous negro crime committed not by a negro but by Negro and . . . knew, believed, and hoped that she had been ravished too: at least once before her throat was cut and at least once afterward."[1] Some Negro is usually available as a personal or communal scapegoat for the white man's crimes. Thus in Night Rider a likely Negro suspect is "discovered," and later hanged, after the white murderer's trial has already begun, and in At Heaven's Gate an educated Negro chauffeur is jailed and nearly lynched after the actual white killer is questioned perfunctorily and released. Also, the entire Negro community feels itself jeopardized when any Negro is incriminated in certain heinous offenses. So, when the lynching of Lucas Beauchamp is pending, the Negroes in and around Jefferson stay indoors,

> acting exactly as Negroes and whites both would have expected Negroes to act at such a time . . . black men and women and children breathing and waiting inside their barred and shuttered houses, not crouching cringing shirking, not in anger and not quite in fear: just waiting . . . just keeping out of sight and out of the way. . . .[2]

Yet, notwithstanding the menace of physical violence (and it diminishes annually), and notwithstanding also the other public, large-scale injustices which the Negro suffers (the suppression of voting privileges, economic and educational inequities, and so on), it is probably the daily affronts to his human dignity that have the sharpest and most

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[1] Light in August, p. 251. [2] Intruder, pp. 74-75.

durable psychic impact. Rubin summarizes the relative force of these injustices as follows:

> My own conviction is that though Negroes have suffered for want of decent educational, health, and economic and political treatment, their main grievance is not primarily based on these things. Rather, it is the insult to their pride that most rankles. It is the hundred little things, mass humiliations, that are intended to remind "Them" that they are Inferior.[1]

It is the necessity to "mister" the white man and doff his hat, to sit in theater balconies and eat out of restaurant backdoors, always, in brief, to be a "nigger," which most consistently and thoroughly traumatizes the Negro in the Southern regional novel.

As regards this facet of Southern life, however, the regional novel does not focus upon the Negro's situation in itself, but upon the white Southerner's apprehension of that situation and his interior conflicts bred thereby. It is significant that there are no regional novels of the South which have been written by Negroes; none whose protagonists are full-blooded Negroes; and only two or three (Band of Angels, Go Down, Moses, Intruder in the Dust) which have even mulattoes as central characters. Probably the reason is that the Negro's inner experience and the perspective associated with traditionalist regionalism are irreconcilable, for, as Faulkner said, "you can't write sympathetically about a condition when it's a constant outrage to you. . . . You've got to be objective about it."[2] At any rate, it is the effect upon the white Southerner of the South's bi-racial system upon which the regional novel centers.

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[1] "An Image of the South," Lasting South, p. 11.

[2] Faulkner in the University, p. 54.

That effect is well-summarized in an observation by David Cohn, a native of the Mississippi Delta region:

> There has never been a free white man in the South--as there is in Vermont--because his entire life and ways of living individually and institutionally are conditioned by the presence of multitudes of Negroes . . . and consequently no one knows precisely what a Deep Southerner is since he functions in an environment of which he is a prisoner.[1]

"No one knows precisely what a Deep Southerner is," especially the Southerner himself: that is the principal result of the South's bi-racial society and its history.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this uncertainty is the feeling of guilt which the Negro inspires in the white Southerner. In "The Search for Southern Identity" C. Vann Woodward remarks as distinctively Southern the "sense of guilt" which the Southerner experiences because of "a great social evil and its aftermath," slavery and the subsequent degradation of the Negro.[2] In Richard Weaver's opinion, the "curse of slavery" should have been, and should be felt as "the common guilt of the nation,"[3] and this brotherhood in guilt is stated explicitly in Joanna Burden's oft-cited words on the curse of the Negro, "a shadow in which I lived, we lived, all white people, all other people."[4] Nevertheless, mainly by its loss of the Civil War, the South was saddled with the onus of guilt, while the North by its victory achieved the illusion of innocence and acquired what Robert Penn Warren calls "the Treasury of Virtue,"

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[1] "The Deep South: An Editorial," Saturday Review of Literature, XXV (Sept. 19, 1942), 3.

[2] Virginia Quarterly Review, XXXIV (Summer, 1958), 334.

[3] "The South and the American Union," Lasting South, p. 56.

[4] Light in August, p. 221.

by which the North's past and future sins against the Negro were remitted.[1] That is one reason why the sense of guilt for the Negro's lot is peculiarly Southern.

This sense of guilt is instilled in the individual Southerner primarily by the molding forces of family and community. As we have seen, the Southerner is deeply influenced by these institutions: he is of them, they are in and through him, in an organic relationship. When the Southerner discovers, therefore, the sins of these institutions against the Negro, both in the past and continuing into the present, he is simultaneously discovering his own participation in these sins. This accounts for Charles Mallison's anguished reflection, after exposing the innocence of Lucas Beauchamp, "that he was responsible for having brought into the light and glare of day something shocking and shameful out of the whole white foundation of the county which he himself must partake of too since he too was bred of it. . . ."[2] It is also the reason for Quentin Compson's increasing paralysis toward the end of the bizarre Sutpen story, and for his thinking "'Nevermore of peace. Nevermore of peace. Nevermore Nevermore Nevermore.'"[3]

When his own family is gravely implicated in the Negro's debasement, the Southerner's torment is intensified. He cannot escape his family bonds, but a family history of coercive miscegenation, perhaps compounded with incest, brings on an excruciating ambivalence toward both ancestral family and self. Such an ambivalence Isaac McCaslin feels at the moment of his "repudiation,"

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[1]"A Mark Deep on a Nation's Soul," Life, L (Mar. 17, 1961), 82-89.

[2]Intruder, p. 106.

[3]Absalom, p. 373.

> . . . that which to him too, even in the act of escaping . . . was heresy: so that even in escaping he was taking with him more of that evil and unregenerate old man who could summon, because she was his property, a human being . . . to his widower's house and get a child on her and then dismiss her because she was of an inferior race . . . than even he had feared.[1]

The situation of a Southerner like Isaac McCaslin or Roth Edmonds or Henry Sutpen is worsened when he finds that his mulatto kinsman, whom by social fiat he should contemn, is a better man than he himself, and perhaps even better than their common ancestor. Concerning Lucas Beauchamp, for example, Roth Edmonds first recognizes Lucas's superiority to his own, the Edmonds, distaff branch of the family: "Edmonds. Even a nigger McCaslin is a better man, better than all of us."[2] Later Roth realizes "with amazement and something very like horror" that in a way Lucas surpasses even old Carothers McCaslin, their common progenitor: "He's more like old Carothers than all the rest of us put together, including old Carothers. He is both heir and prototype simultaneously. . . ."[3]

The bi-racial situation displays for some Southerners still another aspect which could be called a "familial" complication. It is not uncommon for a Negress to serve as a wet-nurse for the white infant, and for a "mammy" to raise the white child or children amongst her own and almost as her own, and therefore for the white to grow up intimately with black children as playmates and black adults as mentors—a kind of surrogate family. Yet there comes a time, usually around puberty but sometimes earlier, when the preservation of racial "purity" requires a severance of these intimate relations and the re-assertion of conventional caste relations. At this point the white child is likely to experience a heart-

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[1] Moses, p. 294. [2] Ibid., pp. 115-16. [3] Ibid., p. 118.

wrenching sensation of shame and betrayal from which he never wholly recovers. In Faulkner this amounts to the white boy's "coming into his heritage," and a good case in point is the experience of Roth Edmonds, who grows to seven accepting Molly Beauchamp for his mother and Henry for his foster brother, until "one day the old curse of his fathers, the old haughty ancestral pride . . . descended to him,"[1] and he rejects the sleeping-companionship of Henry, only to find himself "lying in a rigid fury of grief he could not explain, the shame he would not admit."[2] Similar cases with variant patterns involve Judith Sutpen, Charles Mallison (Intruder in the Dust), Bayard Sartoris (The Unvanquished), the Compson children (The Sound and the Fury) in Faulkner's work; Amantha Starr in Band of Angels, Chester Hurry in Come in at the Door, and many others.

Yet another form of "imprisonment" which the bi-racial system may impose on the Southern white is the kind of spurious identity always available when an inferior caste exists by which to identify oneself negatively. Thus when Nancy affirms her lowliness with "I aint nothing but a nigger," and has that opinion confirmed by Mrs. Compson's words and actions, Jason Compson at three can conclude, "I aint a nigger," which by false implication makes him something substantial.[3] A related form of self-delusion is the achievement of false innocence by using the Negro as scapegoat, a practice which obscures the white's perception of his own involvement in evil, and hence of his own humanity. So the Gowries' assumption of Lucas Beauchamp's guilt blinds them to the fratricide which

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[1]Ibid., p. 111. [2]Ibid., p. 112.

[3]"That Evening Sun," Collected Stories of William Faulkner (New York: Random House, 1950), p. 297.

is in their midst and whose exposure is an intolerable, shameful outrage.

But the Negre, source in many ways of the white Southerner's self-deceptions, also frequently acts as their corrective. At the extreme his very "crucifixion" may restore a sense of complicity in evil to the white individual or community. Such a restoration, with its concomitants of humility and faith, is the purpose of Nancy Mannigoe's sacrifice in Requiem for a Nun, as it is the unintended effect on the witnesses to Joe Christmas' lynching and emasculation in Light in August. Normally, however, it is simply that the Negro's humble virtues expose the pretensions and vices of the white man, as Quentin Compson sees in The Sound and the Fury:

> O Benjamin. Dilsey said it was Mother was too proud for him. They come into white people's lives like that in sudden sharp black trickles that isolate white facts for an instant in unarguable truth like under a microscope. . . .[1]

Isaac McCaslin, too, senses the superiority of Negroes to whites on the moral plane: "Because they will endure. They are better than we are. Stronger than we are," followed by a recitation of Negro virtues in which the white man is deficient, "endurance . . . and pity and tolerance and forbearance and fidelity and love of children."[2]

Somewhat athwart of the moral plane is the role of the Negro as natural symbol to the white Southerner. Because of his relative nearness to cultural primitivism, his more immediate, intimate, and constant contact with nature, and his comparative freedom from institutional restraints, the Negro often appears to the white to represent the natural qualities of wildness, freedom, spontaneity, vitality, fertility, and mystery. Such

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[1] P. 189.

[2] Moses, pp. 293-94.

qualities, especially spontaneity and a kind of wild savagery, Gavin Stevins associates with "black blood" when he speaks of Joe Christmas' flight and his final actions in Hightower's house: "It was the black blood which swept him by his own desire beyond the aid of any man, swept him up into that ecstasy out of a black jungle where life has already ceased before the heart stops and death is desire and fulfillment."[1] The Negroes of Delta Wedding, which has no explicitly moral dimension, are yet more illustrative of this natural role. There the Negroes are associated with the fields of the Fairchild estate, and like the fields they represent the substantial vitality, lushness, fertility, and wonder of life upon which the Fairchild edifice of mannered civilization is built and from which it perennially draws its sustenance. Typical figures are Pinchy, a young Negress who is "coming through" (some form of sexual initiation or maturation) and whose activities on a primitive level parallel the civilized ritual of the novel's title; Partheny, who is a kind of auguress-sorceress and who makes efficacious love-cakes ("'Got a little white dove blood in it, dove heart, blood of a snake--things'"[2]); and Aunt Studney, who always "'ain't studyin' you'" and who carries a mysterious sack symbolical of life's secret origins ("'Me, I think that's where Mama gets all her babies,'" says Roy Fairchild of Aunt Studney's sack[3]).

The sixth distinguishing feature of the South is that it has been, and is still to a greater extent than the rest of the United States, a hierarchical society on the older European order, consisting of rather

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[1] Light in August, p. 393.

[2] Delta Wedding, p. 131.

[3] Ibid., p. 173

well-differentiated social classes perpetuated through familial inheritance. This characteristic is very closely related to the South's biracialism, its agrarianism, and especially the prominence of family-clan among its institutions, since only through family is stable hierarchy transmittable. In fact, not only are traditional social classes and institutional families interdependent, they also resemble each other in structure and effect. Contrasting the hierarchical with the egalitarian society, Richard Weaver observes:

> The comity of peoples in groups large or small rests not upon this chimerical notion of equality but upon fraternity. . . . The ancient feeling of brotherhood carries obligations of which equality knows nothing. It calls for respect and protection, for brotherhood is status in family, and family is by nature hierarchical. It demands patience with little brother, and it may sternly exact duty of big brother.[1]

Because of the many parallels between family and social hierarchy—a common sentiment and common goals uniting parts that are distinct, the sense of duty and allegiance to the organism necessitating the suppression of personal motivations, the sense of protection afforded by the organism, and others—the effects of social hierarchy on the individual duplicate on a larger scale the effects of family, and need not be reiterated in detail. Certain effects, however, are not exactly coincident with familial dynamics and require notation.

First we must distinguish between the ante- and post-bellum social orders in the South, each having its strengths and weaknesses. Prior to the Civil War, the South was unmistakably feudal and aristocratic. About 1860 the Southern social order comprised four fairly distinct elements: the planter-aristocrats, their slaves (the human base of the

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[1] Ideas Have Consequences, pp. 41-42.

planters' wealth and power), the yeomanry (free, white, subsistence farmers), and the townsmen.[1] Now the planters' wealth might have been inherited or self-acquired; in the lower and western South the latter was far more common than the former. In any case, wealth was the foundation of the Southern aristocracy, for as John Peale Bishop says, "An aristocratic class arises from wealth; descent has nothing to do with it at the start, though later the qualities of breeding begin to count and in the long run an aristocracy serves powerfully to mitigate the pure influence of money."[2]

However, wealth is not the only prerequisite of aristocracy, even in its initial stages; there must also be willing and responsible rule. So the aristocracy in the South was "a class which, having the wealth, also took on the power and responsibility of rule,"[3] and rule, furthermore, which was not entirely selfish--though the factor of self-interest cannot be gainsaid--but also in the service of a social vision encompassing the best interests of all white elements in society. The vision was of something like a Greek democracy, liberally admixed with Latinate and chivalric ingredients, based upon fraternity among the homogeneous white population and solidarity against or above the servile Negro, and administered by the planters. The yeomanry for the most part acceded to this vision because it set them apart socially from the Negro and also because it afforded opportunity for self-elevation into the aristocracy. Moreover, the aristocratic leadership and vision promoted "faith in the

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[1]This is a common analysis of Southern society at this period. A particular source is Andrew Lytle, "The Hind Tit," I'll Take My Stand, p. 208.

[2]Collected Essays, p. 7. [3]Ibid.

worthwhileness of some intangible values,"[1] such as courage, honor, loyalty, courtesy, and duty, which tended to displace material wealth as the sign of the aristocrat, and thus in a sense to democratize aristocracy. Herbert Marshall McLuhan says of the ante-bellum South, "In such a society, uniformly agrarian, possessing homogeneity of education and population, the aristocratic idea was democratic."[2] For if it is true, as Ellington White says, "that aristocracy is a state of the mind, a morality, the conditions of which are sacrifice and obligation and a concern for the welfare of others,"[3] then it was possible for the poor Southern yeoman to be in this sense as aristocratic as his wealthy neighbor.

Instances of the effects of the Old South aristocracy upon the individual white Southerner are plentiful and varied in those regional novels dealing with this period. The more idyllic aspects of the establishment are portrayed in the first parts of Penhally, None Shall Look Back, The Fathers, and So Red the Rose (1934), where we see in varying detail and emphasis not only the well-ordered graceful life of the aristocratic class, but also the generally amicable--if paternalistic--relations between aristocrats and their inferiors, both white and Negro. Examples in None Shall Look Back are the joyous dance at Music Hall before the young men's departure for Forrest's Rangers and old Fontaine Allard's protective intervention between his slaves and their efficient but brutal overseer.

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[1]Stringfellow Barr, "The Uncultured South," Virginia Quarterly Review, V (April, 1929), 198.

[2]"The Southern Quality," p. 369.

[3]"The View from the Window," Lasting South, p. 170.

However, not all is paradisical in such portraits. Aristocratic noblesse oblige was already in conflict with destructive forces within the individual and the class. In The Fathers, for instance, noblesse oblige is served, not by any notion of abstract justice, but by "honor and dignity for their own sake since all proper men knew what honor was and could recognize dignity; but nobody knew what human nature was or could presume to mete out justice to others."[1] Acting from his own honor and dignity, Lewis Buchan, principal exponent of the old order, tries to manumit a slave family he owns, but his son-in-law George Posey instead sells the slaves for practical reasons; and not only sells them, but finds justification for doing so within the Buchan family: "Semmes always justified George by saying that if papa realized that the Negroes were uselessly eating away his substance, it was better to sell a few than to drift into bankruptcy, which would compel him to sell them all under the hammer."[2] Indeed George Posey personifies some of the forces--passionate egocentrism, pragmatism, animal vitality and magnetism in search of an outlet--which eventually helped to destroy the old establishment, with "its piety, its order, its elaborate rigamarole"[3] from within. Against such forces and men as George Posey, aristocratic principles of duty and responsibility at their best could not stand.

In addition to such directly antagonistic forces, there were deficiencies within the aristocratic system which worked to erode its substance and bring on its downfall. Power and its responsible use should have coincided, but particular Southern aristocrats often abused their possession of power flagrantly, and disregarded their responsibilities

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[1]Tate, p. 210. [2]Ibid., p. 132. [3]Ibid., p. 180.

The outstanding effect of this corruption was to deprive the lower white orders (not to speak of the slaves) of their own sense of dignity, and thus to create bitter resentment of the aristocracy. This resentment could result in utter repudiation of the aristocracy and direct action against it, such as we find in Wash Jones's repudiation and murder of Thomas Sutpen:

> "'Brave! Better if narra one of them had ever rid back in '65' thinking Better if his kind and mine too had never drawn the breath of life on this earth. Better that all who remain of us be blasted from the face of it than that another Wash Jones should see his whole life shredded from him and shrivel away like a dried shuck thrown onto the fire. . . ."[1]

On the other hand, the resentment often took the more insidious form of imitating the debased aristocratic ways which had created the resentment in the first place, thus perpetuating and aggravating the evils. Thomas Sutpen's own dynastic "design" is simply a more pernicious version of the aristocratic arrogance and contempt for humanity that inspired it. Similarly, in Warren's World Enough and Time (1950), Jeremiah Beaumont's aspirations to the chivalric ideal and his coercion of Rachel Jordan into a martyr's role are at least partly traceable, through a psychical inversion, to his grandfather Marcher's disinheritance of Hettie Marcher when she married Jasper Beaumont, "'that rascal from God knows where,'"[2] and to the old man's haughty demand that Jeremiah, in return for a restored inheritance, surrender his paternal identity, "'that I should take his name and be Jeremiah Marcher.'"[3] As regards the theme of identity,

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[1] Absalom, pp. 290-91.

[2] Robert Penn Warren, World Enough and Time (New York: New American Library, 1952), p. 29.

[3] Ibid.

then, the dispossession of the Southerner's identity by aristocratic abuses frequently led to his development of a specious sense of worth based on his own despoiling of others' identities: a gravescent, spiraling evil.

Of course to the Negro slave in the Old South was attributed, at least theoretically and legally, no status as a human being at all, whatever the Negro's own feelings on the subject. Yet the hierarchical system could produce some anomalous consequences for those feelings. First, along with the general obliteration of identity wrought by chattel slavery, the slave of a particularly wealthy and prestigious aristocrat might feel distinctly superior to the class of poor whites, to the point even of ridiculing them openly. Thus "the Sutpen niggers" during the War would often taunt Wash Jones, "and they would ask him why he wasn't at the war, and he would say, 'Git outen my road, nigger!' and then it would be the outright laughing, asking one another . . . 'Who him, calling us niggers?' . . ."[1] Second, miscegenation between aristocrats and Negroes sometimes produced the slave or freedman with pride in his ancestry and condescension approaching contempt toward whites of lesser blood (examples are Sutpen's Clytie and, in later years, Carothers McCaslin's Lucas Beauchamp); sometimes it produced the supposed aristocrat, like Amantha Starr or St.-Valery Bon, who had to descend into the social abyss when he learned of his tainted blood.

In short, then, the hierarchical society of the ante-bellum South possessed both strengths and weaknesses, virtues and vices, and no novel which represents only one side, or which heavily favors one side against

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[1]Absalom, pp. 290-91.

the other, offers an adequate portrait of that society. The regionalist truth requires recognition of the generally efficient, well-intentioned, and in fact well-ordered rule by the aristocracy, and at the same time realization that aristocratic virtues and power often did not repose in the same hands, with the result that the inferior classes of both races were increasingly exploited and hence restive and discontented.

During the years 1860-1865 the constituents of Southern society, including a large element of the slave population, were united as never before or since in the face of a common enemy, but defeat and Reconstruction were a cataclysm that revolutionized that society. First in importance was the emancipation of slaves, some of whose consequences have been hitherto described. In addition, this liberation simply erased a huge portion of the planters' wealth, at the same time that it left the freedmen economically dependent on the class whose impoverishment their emancipation had helped bring on; the freedman, in other words, was still a mouth to be fed, but he no longer had negotiable value, nor could he be legally coerced as in the old days. From this dilemma arose the abortive, makeshift system of sharecropping, or tenant farming, which has characterized the Southern agrarian economy since the War and whose inherently inefficient structure has been immeasurably complicated by the new economic competition between poor whites and Negroes.

Of second, if not equal, importance were the ruination of the old ruling class and its replacement by a new type of leadership with different and less trustworthy power-bases: sheer wealth and mass voting appeal. Clifford Dowdey describes the change in this way:

> The destruction by arms and exploitation by the army of occupation caused far more than physical damage. The whole order of the

> South's ruling class was destroyed. This destruction opened the way for the Southern demagogues. . . .
>
> The rise of the lower classes after the war's destruction turned loose in power those who removed from the traditional Southern life its style--its graciousness and high sense of personal honor.[1]

Thus in the post-bellum South we find a continuation of hierarchical society, but a hierarchy whose lines of authority are attenuated and confused by these complicating factors.

One confusion results from the bifurcation of power and the sense of responsibility. The lingering prestige of aristocratic name and social station may invest a Southerner with responsibility, both in his own and in the public eyes, which he has not the power to execute, while the actual wielders of power evade their obligations and even exploit the victims of this ironical situation. In The Garden of Adonis, for instance, old Ben Allard is trapped between the nearly anonymous but omnipotent bankers--"it had got to the point nowadays where they felt that if they lent you money they had a right to tell you how to run your farm"[2]--and his tenants, toward whom he feels an inherited sense of obligation but whose supplications he is quite powerless to subscribe. The result is a mounting experience of frustration and impotence on the parts of both Allard and tenants, until finally Ote Mortimer kills the old man.

A related frustration is caused by the old conflict between aristocratic duty and personal desire, rendered more baffling now by the individual's powerlessness to pursue either course satisfactorily. That is to say, in the old days if the call to duty triumphed over private motivations, some compensation might lie in the tangible results the aristocratic

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[1]"The Case for the Confederacy," Lasting South, p. 40.

[2]Gordon, pp. 14-15.

Southerner might achieve by submitting to noblesse oblige; or, conversely, he might dissipate his resources in the pursuit of personal pleasure on something like the grand scale. Now, however, the impoverished Southern aristocrat lacks the means either to fulfill himself personally or to effect any noticeable improvments in his estate. Like Ed Ruffin of The Plantation or Miss Willy Lewis, he is first denied personal realization by the imperatives of family and class duty, and then forced to ravel out his years watching over an unyielding, dwindling estate.

The phenomena described in the last two paragraphs presuppose reasonably well-intentioned, inwardly healthy vestiges of the old aristocracy. But a much more salient feature of the recent Southern aristocracy is its inner decay, and ever-widening chasm between whatever prestige it still enjoys and its real corruption as evidenced by the selfishness, dissipation, pettiness, cruelty, bigotry, and, withal, arrogance of its members. Furthermore, if it was once true that "the aristocratic mind is the mind least of all conscious of class because it is least of all afraid of losing its place in society,"[1] it is no longer true of the general run of Southern aristocrats, for, as their status grows more precarious because of changing external conditions and their own failures, they are likely to insist more and more urgently upon their identities as aristocrats. Thus Gowan Stevens is described by Horace Benbow in Sanctuary as

> "the Virginia gentleman one, who told us at supper that night about how they had taught him to drink like a gentleman. Put a beetle in alcohol, and you have a scarab; put a Mississippian in alcohol, and you have a gentleman—"[2]

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[1]White, "The View from the Window," Lasting South, p. 170.

[2]P. 18.

Drinking is indeed about the only connection Gowan makes with the gentility of which he boasts, and his inability to hold his liquor shames him into abandoning Temple Drake.

Such examples could be multiplied almost endlessly from the regional novel, but a glance at the life of Robert Hurry (Come in at the Door) will serve to typify the decay of Southern aristocracy. He was the last of a family whose gentility had worn it out.

> His mother . . . had planned since his early childhood that he go to college and study law, and by pinching and saving she had finally made it possible to do that. He consented to her plans because he had no strength to oppose her, but he had no aptitude for books. . . . He spent his time lounging in pool rooms or drinking . . . in cheap undercover saloons. . . .[1]

Thus he drifts through college and takes his degree.

> After graduation he returned home. The place was even shabbier and more forlorn than he remembered it, but he returned to it with a sense of relief. He knew even then that he would not leave it again.[2]

His mother tries to spur him on by telling him "of the past glories of the family: of the generals, the bishop and the governor which had come out of it; vigorous people who could manage not only their own destinies but the destinies of others."[3] But it is no use. He marries casually, loses his wife at the birth of their son, abandons that son to be raised by in-laws, openly takes his Negress housekeeper as his mistress, and upon his death bequeaths to his son his own mistress, six mulatto children, and a mansion turned chicken house: ". . . the great living room, which had once been so magnificent with carpets and chandeliers, was bare now

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[1] Re-titled Desire and Damnation (New York: Lion Library, 1956), pp. 21-22.

[2] Ibid., p. 22

[3] Ibid.

of all furniture. The floor had been painted white and it was lined with a series of incubators and brooders."[1] In varying degrees, to such has a considerable portion of the Southern aristocracy come.

Nevertheless, this husk of an aristocracy still largely sets the tone of and defines the South's social life, and hence still arouses resentment among the lower orders, the more so as it protests too imperiously its own superiority. In At Heaven's Gate Jerry Calhoun's club-footed Uncle Lew has been so soured by his deformity, his life-long poverty, his exposure to domination by the superior classes that, reading of plutocrat-aristocrat Sue Murdock's apparent murder by a Murdock Negro, he bursts out with venomous glee, "'By God, by God, them Murdocks, oh, they can't have no common nigger, oh, they are high-stepping, they got to have educated niggers . . . and it serves 'em right, by God!'"[2] The reaction of Lew, himself an overbearing sadist, illustrates another point about the effect of aristocratic hierarchy on the lower orders. Middle-class and poor whites, as well as Negroes, find imposed upon themselves the generally inadequate standards of personal worth set by the gentility, and sometimes, just by the act of rebelling against such standards, the subordinate classes unconsciously adopt those standards of self-definition and imitate the manners of their supposed betters. There then ensues the ludicrous and pathetic spectacle of poor white lording it over poorer white, poor white over Negro, Negro over Negro, and sometimes Negro over poor white, on the basis of family name, blood, length of lineage, and so on. Intruder in the Dust contains this comical but ominous exchange between an anonymous

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[1] Ibid., p. 266.

[2] Warren, p. 366.

white and Lucas Beauchamp:

> "You goddamn biggity stiff-necked stinking burrheaded Edmonds sonofabitch". . . .
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> "I aint a Edmonds. I dont belong to these new folks. I belongs to the old lot. I'm a McCaslin."
>
> "Keep on walking around here with that look on your face and what you'll be is crowbait," the white man said. . . .
>
> "Yes, I heard that idea before. And I notices that the folks that brings it up ain't even Edmondses". . . .[1]

Thus social hierarchy—issues of lineage, power, and station—complicates the question and defense of one's identity in the regional novel.

Issuing from the importance of families, from its bi-racialism, and from its hierarchical society is the Southern mystique of blood, which also, by its reference to something fundamental in the human constitution, is related to the South's agrarianism and the sense of the elemental associated therewith. The mystique of blood is a belief which Southerners hold toward certain institutional and personal relationships and phenomena, and which therefore informs those aspects of Southern life. In brief, "blood" is, on one level, a metaphor for the genetics of family, class, and race and for the character traits potential within these categories; on another level, which yet often interwinds with the first, "blood" and the heart represent a range of human faculties—intuition, feeling, sensibility, passion, sexual appetite—which have in common their elemental, non-rational character.

In its simplest and commonest usage, as in "blood-kin," "blood" denotes the fact of consanguinity and the Southern belief in certain ramifications of that fact. The intricate mechanism of genetics produces physical and temperamental similarities, and these similarities

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[1]Pp. 16-17.

symbolize familial bonds, both privileges and responsibilities, which are in turn represented by the idea of blood relationship. We have already explored some of the implications of the Southern family; "blood" in the present sense is just the linguistic way of signifying those implications. Thus Mink Snopes regrets having had to kill Jack Houston "at a time when the only person who had the power to save him and would have had to save him whether he wanted to or not because of the ancient immutable laws of simple blood kinship, was a thousand miles away. . . ."[1] Later Montgomery Ward Snopes thinks for "jest a fraction of a moment" "that Flem too in the last analysis wasn't immune neither to the strong and simple call of blood kinship."[2] And Isaac McCaslin, confronted by Lucas Beauchamp, considers his own abdication of familial responsibility as blood-betrayal: "He thought, Fifty dollars a month. He knows that's all. That I reneged, sold my birth-right, betrayed my blood for what he too calls not peace but obliteration, and a little food."[3]

Then, at one remove from the physical reality of consanguinity, but still based upon that fact, is the sense of blood as hereditary class quality. By a questionable analogy with animal breeding, it is assumed that intermarriage among aristocrats, for example, produces offspring with "good blood," that is, equipped by inheritance with the aristocratic qualities of courage, honor, refinement, responsibility, and the like. This notion of inherited class traits is the sense of blood intended by the mother of Alec Hinks (or "Hamish Bond") when, according to his account,

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[1] Mansion, p. 5.

[2] Ibid., p. 61.

[3] Moses, p. 109.

she reacts contemptuously to his decision to become a sailor:

> "Then she said: 'A common laborer—my son!' She said how she was gently nurtured. She said she once had a thousand slaves and they all loved her. She said how blood would tell, and I was my father's son. . . ."[1]

And it is in this same sense that Faulkner intended The Sound and the Fury to be "a story of blood gone bad."[2] To clarify the distinction between the first two senses of "blood," we can observe that the first sense is basically neutral, asserting the existence of familial relationships without evaluation, whereas the second sense is always evaluative, appraising these relationships in terms of hierarchical status.

The third meaning of "blood" on this level refers to race. Like the second, this sense is based partly on fact, partly on supposition. The factual portion is the genetic transmission of physical characteristics of race; the supposititious portion is the belief that moral characteristics are likewise transmitted. Gavin Stevens is expressing the latter when he "explains" Joe Christmas' actions: "'Because the black blood drove him first to the Negro cabin. And then the white blood drove him out of there, as it was the black blood which snatched up the pistol and the white blood which would not let him fire it.'"[3] In Band of Angels Colonel Morton expresses the same belief when he explains that Tobias Sears's brave Negro soldiers are not really "niggers" but "Louisiana gens de couleur libres": "'what I mean is,' the Colonel said, 'it's blood that counts, and damn it, a lot of that gang hasn't got a spoonful of nigger.'"[4]

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[1] Band of Angels, p. 154.

[2] Cynthia Grenier, "The Art of Fiction: An Interview with William Faulkner," Accent, XVI (Summer, 1956), 173.

[3] Light in August, p. 393.

[4] Warren, p. 206.

We should pause here to notice how these aspects of the concept of blood may affect the individual Southerner. Their factual basis is inescapable and heavily detrminative: a man cannot help being born into his own family, class, and race, nor can he, except by total flight, escape altogether the consequences of these facts in the minds and actions of other Southerners, for even in the act of rebelling against these consequences he is being determined by them. What is more ambiguous is the effect of "blood" on his own mind: the extent to which he himself accepts these secondary significations of "blood" and acts willfully in partial or whole accordance with them or passively allows himself to be dominated by them. The gamut of possible responses runs all the way from a complete acceptance of the supposed consequences of blood, which amounts to a self-willed determinism, to the other extreme, which is not rebellion but indifference. An instance of the former is Percy Grimm's "belief that the white race is superior to any and all other races and that the American is superior to all other white races," a belief which renders his life "uncomplex and inescapable as a barren corridor, completely freed now of ever again having to think or decide. . . ."[1] Grimm's counterpart and appropriate victim is Joe Christmas, whose life is also a "corridor" or "street" and who "believed with calm paradox that he was the volitionless servant of the fatality in which he believed that he did not believe."[2] At the other extreme, that of true freedom from blood, is Lucas Beauchamp:

> Yet it was not that Lucas made capital of his white or even his McCaslin blood, but the contrary. It was as if he were not only impervious to that blood, he was indifferent to it. He didn't even need

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[1] Light in August, p. 395.

[2] Ibid., pp. 244-45.

> to strive with it. He didn't even have to bother to defy it. He resisted it simply by being the composite of the two races which made him, simply by possessing it. Instead of being at once the battleground and victim of the two strains, he was a vessel. . . .[1]

Thus while one's blood is partly constitutive, the individual Southerner is himself largely responsible for the way it affects his sense of identity and freedom.

The cases of Joe Christmas and Lucas Beauchamp point to another frequent outcome of the Southern belief in blood: the possible confusion when the various kinds of blood are mixed in the same person. Lucas Beauchamp probably represents the ultimate of such possible confusion: he is linked by consanguinity with both aristocratic whites and slave Negroes. Yet, as we just saw, he surmounts the obstacles which these contradictions propose to a sense of personality. A figure almost identically situated in his possession of mixed blood is Yellow Jim, half-brother to George Posey in The Fathers, and Jim's aristocratic Posey blood ruins him, as Lacy Buchan ruminates:

> He was the most refined negro, a gentleman in every instinct. But he was a negro, and I am not sure that he would have been as good as he was if his white blood, which everybody knew about, had not been good. But . . . I had better say that white blood may have ruined poor Yellow Jim in the end. He knew what his blood was. . . . He had conscience and pride. . . .[2]

Therefore, when his white half-brother sells him because he is "liquid capital," Jim feels humiliated and betrayed.

> I think he felt about it as I should have: suppose papa were dead, and brother Semmes had acted towards me in some grievous way, as if I were not a brother or even a member of the family? Yellow Jim had been in the full sense a member of the Posey family. . . .[3]

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[1] Moses, p. 104.

[2] Fathers, p. 205.

[3] Ibid., p. 206.

Acting out of his sense of betrayal and degradation, Jim commits an assault on Jane Posey and is lynched by Semmes Buchan. Jim's case is more typical than Lucas Beauchamp's of the Southerner who is conscious of contradictions in his "blood."

So far, all of the meanings of "blood" have been related to three other lineaments of the Southern image as metaphoric vehicle to tenor. On the second level, however, "blood" has a meaning proper to itself, although it is still frequently associated with family, race, and class. Very broadly, "blood" on this level means what it does in Allen Tate's "Sonnets of the Blood," as described by Cleanth Brooks: "the blood is a symbol of the non-rational concrete stuff of man which resists abstract classification."[1]

Sometimes blood, with its central organ the heart, is imagined as a faculty or source of extra-sensory knowledge, such as intuition, clairvoyance, prerecognition, or valid, non-rational faith. It may be the kind of knowledge meant by Pascal when he said, "the heart has its reasons, which the reason knows nothing about,"[2] and echoed by Tate in "Ode to the Confederate Dead," "What shall we say who have knowledge/ Carried to the heart?"[3] Flannery O'Connor makes this meaning of blood explicit in Wise Blood (a Southern, but not a regional novel in the full sense) in her description of Enoch Emery: "Enoch's brain was divided into two parts. The part in communication with his blood did the figuring

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[1]Modern Poetry, p. 103.

[2]The Thoughts, Letters, and Opuscules of Blaise Pascal, trans. O. W. Wright (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1866), p. 236.

[3]Kimon Friar and John Malcolm Brinnin (eds.), Modern Poetry (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1951), p. 271.

but it never said anything in words. The other part was stocked up with all kinds of words and phrases."[1] Or again,

> What was going to happen to him had started to happen when he showed what was in the case to Haze Motes. That was a mystery beyond his understanding, but he knew that what was going to be expected of him was something awful. His blood was more sensitive than any other part of him; it wrote doom all through him, except possibly in his brain, and the result was that his tongue . . . knew more than he did.[2]

The blood's intuition of mystery, its foreknowledge of the future, its contact with the primitive, elemental, ineradicable--all are prominent motives in the regional novel.

Contact with the elemental is especially associated with sexuality and the blood's role in sexual intercourse. The physical agitation of the blood in the ritual of passionate mating is often conveyed by the idea of "wild" or "terrible" blood. Thus Addie Bundren recalls her interlude with Rev. Whitfield, "I would think of the sin as garments which we would remove in order to shape and coerce the terrible blood to the forlorn echo of the dead word high in the air."[3] And afterwards, "My children were of me alone, of the wild blood boiling along the earth, of me and of all that lived; of none and of all."[4] As I Lay Dying illustrates also the merging of the blood's meaning on this level (as personal faculty or state or temperament) with that on the first level (as genetic strain), for Addie's psychical attitude at the time of conceiving each of her five children passes into the natures of those children. The half-savage Jewel is conceived under the aegis of "wild" blood, but

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[1]Flannery O'Connor, Wise Blood (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1952), p. 87.

[2]Ibid., p. 129.

[3]As I Lay Dying, p. 466.

[4]Ibid., p. 467.

> with Jewel . . . the wild blood boiled away and the sound of it ceased. Then there was only the milk, warm and calm, and I lying calm in the slow silence, getting ready to clean my house.[1]

"Cleaning her house" involves Addie's giving Anse "Dewey Dell to negative Jewel" and "Vardaman to replace the child I had robbed him of,"[2] and her negativism is reflected in the characters of these latter children. The double reference of "blood" to sexuality and some kind of personal vitality is likewise stated in Charles Mallison's speculation about his uncle Gavin's flight from Linda Kohl Snopes:

> . . . the spider love wise enough with age . . . to sense, anticipate, that initial tender caressing probe of the proboscis . . . or whatever it is his gal uses to empty him of his blood too while all he thinks he is risking is his semen; and leap, fling himself free, losing of course the semen and most of the rest of his insides too in the same what he thought at first was just peaceful orgasm, but at least keeping his husk, his sac, his life.[3]

Finally, the function of blood in the male reproductive organ (during a pivotal seduction scene in The Velvet Horn, "The girl's hand reached for and clasped the blood's true shape"[4]) gives rise to several possible metaphoric ironies, as "the blood's true shape," perfecting physical communion between male and female, also produces future estrangements by creating "tainted" blood, "betrayed" blood, "mixed" blood, and so on.

The consciousness of Southerners is also saturated with "blood" because of the South's bloody and violent history, but that history is reserved for separate discussion shortly. As a last note on the Southern mystique of blood here, we should remark how the literal and metaphoric meanings of "blood" can be confused to give ambiguous and even humorous situations. For example, in The Velvet Horn the following

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Mansion, p. 360.

[4] Lytle, p. 229.

dialogue between John Greer and Lucius Cree occurs shortly after the latter has learned of his own bastardy:

> "Mr. Lucius, you loss blood? Your face don't show none."
> "Half of it."
> "Nobody aint cut you?"
> "You can lose blood, and not spill a drop."[1]

Or in Carson McCullers' Clock Without Hands, which like Wise Blood is Southern but not in the full regionalist sense, J. T. Malone's "slight" illness has just been diagnosed as leukemia, and he has asked Judge Fox Clane, an old-time aristocratic Southern politician, to draw up his will:

> ". . . Seems I have a blood disease."
> "A blood disease! Why, that's ridiculous—you have some of the best blood in this state. . . . I well remember your father. . . . And your mother I remember, too--she was a Wheelwright. You have the best blood in this state in your veins, J. T., and never forget that."[2]

Miss McCullers' tone here is lightly satirical, as the true regional novel almost never is; nevertheless the passage indicates the linguistic and psychological ironies available because of the Southern mystique of blood.

The special role of woman in the South is related to the mystique of blood and derives from the South's agrarianism, its religious fundamentalism, its hierarchical society, and the prominence of family. The special role of woman displays two outstanding aspects: the cult of the lady, which in the United States is peculiar to the South, and an insistence upon generic differentiae between male and female, which was once traditional in Western civilization but has become attenuated in the modern age.

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[1] p. 325.

[2] (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1963), p. 13.

The importance of woman and, by its refinement through hierarchical structuring, the cult of the lady developed from the Southern family's symbiotic attachment to the land. In a static, agrarian society like the South, the woman's part in the basic socio-economic unit is more clearly defined, stable, and vital than in a commercial, sea-board society like New England, where, as Andrew Lytle points out, "the sea takes only men; and so the communion between husband and wife was interrupted and for long periods of time."[1] Further,

> In the South, because of the prevailing sense of the family, the matriarch becomes the defining image. The earlier insistence on purity, an ideal not always a fact, was not chivalric romanticism but a matter of family integrity, with the very practical aim of keeping the blood lines sure and the inheritance meaningful.[2]

But from this eminence of womanhood and "insistence on purity" to "chivalric romanticism" and the aristocratic lady is an easy step, given the establishment of the hierarchical principle by the early Southeastern--especially Virginian and South Carolinian--gentility. Thus arose

> a cult of feminine beauty and elegance. A feeling for the formal, civilizing power of the passionate apprehension of a stylized feminine elegance, so obvious in Southern life and letters, . . . is inseparable from the courtly concept of life.[3]

Besides gentle blood, specific attributes in the ideal of the Southern lady varied originally from portion to portion of the region. In the older East, refinement and graciousness of manners were more highly esteemed and accessible than in the newer, rawer Deep South and West, where the more practical virtues, such as hardiness, prudence, and

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[1]Foreword to A Novel, pp. xvii-xviii.

[2]Ibid., p. xviii.

[3]McLuhan, "The Southern Quality," p. 383.

efficient household management were demanded by the more or less frontier conditions. Sometimes, indeed, this contrast between styles of ladyship proved an irritant in social intercourse, as in the case of Maria Hopeby Jordan, who "had been born in Virginia, in the Tidewater, into a family of some aristocratic pretensions but no great wealth,"[1] but who moved to Kentucky with her husband, found that their "fat barns, the elegant silver and furniture, and the shadow of the Tidewater names made him great in the new country," and consequently "took what satisfaction she could in life by queening it over the ladies of her own neighborhood."[2] In the main, however, the ideal virtues and values of the generic Southern lady were fairly definite and consonant with one another: "good breeding," in the senses both of blood and of training, with consequent good manners; chastity; responsibility to inferiors and dependents; and a kind of ritualism, or confidence in and insistence on the preservation of forms and ceremonies. The regional novel contains a gallery of ladies possessed, in their varying individual ways, of such qualities: from "Aunt Jenny" du Pre, who arrives in Mississippi from South Carolina "holding a lace parasol" and bearing "a hamper basket containing two bottles of old sherry and two jasmine cuttings . . . and the panes of colored glass which she had salvaged from the Carolina house"[3] to Maureen Fairchild Laws ("Aunt Mac"), who washes and irons the payroll money because "'she hates for them [the bank] to give anything but new bills to a lady, the way they do nowadays. So she washes it.'"[4]

The Civil War and subsequent developments altered the character

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[1] World Enough and Time, p. 55.

[2] Ibid., p. 56.

[3] Unvanquished, p. 148.

[4] Delta Wedding, p. 96.

of the Southern lady significantly. For one thing, and quite ironically, her very principles as a lady, beset by the pressures of the War and Reconstruction, compelled her into "unladylike" modes of behavior from which she never thoroughly recovered. We see this process at work in The Unvanquished, where Rosa Millard's instinct for social forms (including the institution of property) and her sense of responsibility for dependents drive her into a violation of those forms and of her dependents' security; as Andrew Lytle points out,

> The success of her mission [to recover the stolen property] sows the seed for her destruction. . . . Gradually she is forced to violate her moral code out of the ambiguity of her situation, and except for her last act for the better reason. This contradiction between means and ends finally brings her to her death.[1]

In general, her effort to fulfill her responsibilities to family and society, especially as a war-caused widow or spinster, led to a hardening and perhaps a coarsening of the Southern lady. In addition, she suffered along with the aristocratic gentleman a loss of substance, with much the same effects on her identity that we noticed in the case of the aristocracy at large.

The exalted status of the Southern lady was and is important not only for her own character, but also for its effects on the character of the Southern male--gentleman or otherwise. Exaltation of this sort entails a corresponding attitude of veneration or obeisance on the part of the male, with several possible effects. Where the exaltation is substantiated by personal worthiness, as is true of the Fairchild ladies, Rosa Millard, Jenny du Pre, Mrs. Habersham (in both The Unvanquished and Intruder in the Dust), May Munn (Night Rider), and many others, it may educe

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[1]"The Son of Man," p. 131.

the best qualities of the male—or measure his deficiencies. On the other hand, where the designation "lady" is not supported by personal excellence, the Southern man may experience a conflict between the public duty of formal devotion and his inner revulsion, producing a tormented figure like Quentin Compson, for whom his father's final argument "no compson has ever disappointed a lady"[1] can be no ultimate justification for continued existence; or a world-weary skeptic like that same father, who thus describes a Southern lady and her parasitic dependence upon relatives:

> Because that's what a Southern lady is. . . . it is as though she were living on the actual blood itself, like a vampire, not with insatiability . . . but with a serene and idle splendor of flowers abrogating [sic] to herself, because it fills her veins also, nourishment from the old blood that crossed uncharted seas and continents and battled . . . lurking circumstances and fatalities.[2]

Yet the male's responsibility is not dissolved when he realizes the lady's unworthiness; his obligation remains, as Mr. Compson points out:

> "Years ago we in the South made our women into ladies. Then the War came and made the ladies into ghosts. So what else can we do, being gentlemen, but listen to them being ghosts?"[3]

So appears in modern times, in regard to the lady, that same discrepancy between reality and form or public acceptance that we have noticed in other features of the Southern scene.

The mystique of female purity is an aspect of the cult of the lady which deserves special mention because of its prominence in the Southern mind. Although the "earlier insistence on purity" may actually have been "a matter of family integrity, with the very practical aim of keeping the blood lines sure and the inheritance meaningful," it later became

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[1]Fury, p. 97. [2]Absalom, p. 86. [3]Ibid., p. 12.

a thing-in-itself, upon which were predicated several dubious facets of Southern identity. The mystique has always operated ambiguously for both women and men. Consider the Southern woman: the Southern lady appropriated to herself (or had attributed to her) the states of pre-marital virginity and post-marital chastity, yet these states are innately available to all women, thus allowing a vertical distribution of "ladyship" which adulterates its strict designation of social class. A low-born woman can think of herself--and claim masculine treatment for herself--as a lady because of her purity (the anonymous wife of the salesman at the end of Light in August admonishes him, in the privacy of their bed-chamber, "Aint you shamed? . . . Talking that way before a lady"[1]); conversely, an aristocratic lady like Caddie Compson can become an outcast by notorious impurity. The effect of this transection of class differences on identity is complicated by the fact that female purity, except in its extreme violations, is not a condition which is publicly ascertainable; hence a lady may still be considered a lady publicly, yet know herself fallen, or a lady like Drusilla Hawk may be considered fallen because of circumstantial evidence, yet know herself pure. Finally, no one knows for sure how much Southern woman really believes in the ideal of purity. Mr. Compson thinks she doesn't: "Because it means less to women, Father said. He said it was men invented virginity not women."[2] Gavin Stevens thinks she does, at least collectively, ascribing to her "'that damned female instinct for uxorious and rigid respectability which is the backbone of any culture not yet decadent. . . ."[3]

As Mr. Compson says indirectly, female purity appears to mean

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[1]p. 435. [2]Fury, p. 97. [3]Town, p. 182.

even more to Southern man than to Southern woman. Sometimes he acts as though his entire identity as a man were contingent upon female purity and its vindication. Thus Jeremiah Beaumont stakes not just his life but the utter meaning of his life on avenging Colonel Fort's "betrayal" of Rachel Jordan. Similarly, according to Faulkner, Andrew Jackson set above the nation's well-being, the White House, and his political party "not his wife's honor but the principle that honor must be defended whether it was or not because defended it was whether or not."[1] The fragility of such honor, and hence of any sense of identity supported by it, is indicated in Mr. Compson's description of Henry Sutpen:

> Henry was the provincial . . . who may have been conscious that his fierce provincial's pride in his sister's virginity was a false quantity which must incorporate in itself an inability to endure in order to be precious, to exist, and so must depend upon its loss, absence, to have existed at all.[2]

When an individual's identity and honor have been invested in such a precarious state, its suddenly diminished significance reveals to him a world and a self such as Quentin Compson once awoke to, "where all stable things had become shadowy paradoxical all I had done shadows all I had felt suffered taking visible form antic and perverse mocking without relevance inherent themselves with the denial of the significance they should have affirmed thinking I was I was not who was not was not who."[3]

Additional complications in the man's obsession with female purity are the woman's own ambiguous attitude toward the condition and the double standard. As to the former, we need ask only how Quentin Compson can be expected to maintain the consistent, rigorous attitude toward

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[1]Appendix to Fury, p. 4. [2]Absalom, p. 96.

[3]Fury, p. 188.

female purity and masculine honor, bred in him by his mother ("I was taught that there is no halfway ground that a lady is either a lady or not . . ."[1] his mother's voice runs on), when his sister Caddy treats sexual indulgence so casually--or so fatalistically? Then there is the confusing double standard: "In the South you are ashamed of being a virgin. Boys. Men."[2] Gerald Bland, with Mrs. Bland's encouragement ("telling us about Gerald's women in a . . . tone of smug approbation"[3]) practices the double standard and boasts of his sexual conquests. But Quentin Compson is in a position to appreciate with peculiar force the viciousness of the double standard: that for every "unvirgin" Southern man's experience there must be a corresponding unvirgin female for that same man to ostracize and call "bitch"; hence Quentin's repeated cry, "Did you ever have a sister?" and his abortive assaults on Dalton Ames and Gerald Bland. Quentin is in this way defending not just the reputation of Southern woman, particularly his sister, but the basis of his whole sense of identity, to which the double standard is a threat, for "if it was that simple to do it wouldnt be anything and if it wasnt anything what was I. . . ."[4]

Within the United States the cult of the lady has been uniquely Southern. Within Western civilization there have always been, until modern times, a recognition of sexual and psychical differentiae between man and woman, and an apportionment of privileges and responsibilities based on those differences. But the forces of modernism tend to efface the conventional differentiae in a now-familiar pattern: industrialism

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[1] Ibid., p. 122.

[2] Ibid., p. 97.

[3] Ibid., p. 124.

[4] Ibid., p. 166.

and urbanization break up the family, depriving the woman of her natural domain and driving her into the economic world, where she must develop masculine skills and psychical habits in order to compete with men, and so on. The economic causes are also reinforced by a philosophy of egalitarianism, according to which the only differences between man and woman are the accidental physical ones; essentially, so the philosophy goes, man and woman are not only equal but identical, and should share equally the burdens and rewards of life in every sphere of activity.

It is quite otherwise in the South. There, the recognition of traditional distinctions lingers on tenaciously, and the distinctions themselves are observed with great punctiliousness. This fact can be attributed to several causes: agrarianism, with its norm of nature and its retained importance of woman as home-manager and bearer of future laborers; religious fundamentalism, with its insistence upon the subordination of woman to man according to Scripture; the mystique of blood and the cult of the lady, and the other interrelated factors. Whatever the exact contribution of the several causes, the significant point is the traditional demarcation between man and woman which the Southerner assumes not as an ideal but as a fact of life.

Since it is the woman's status or condition which has changed more in the modern world, and the man's less, it is the Southern woman, rather than the man, who seems strange to the outsider. He finds it strange, for example, that the Southern woman should still accept her traditional subordination to husband, evinced publicly by her uncomplaining submissiveness to his will and caprice. Among the lower orders this subordination obtains as almost an inversion of the lady's exaltation, and

often shows as a slight but identifiable trick of manners, such as the woman's following instead of preceding the man in public. Thus in The Velvet Horn, when Lucius Cree and his new, hill-billy wife leave the inn, "the clerk's leer spitted him between the shoulder blades as they walked the long lobby, Ada Belle behind him like a mountain woman."[1] It shows also in more flagrant spectacles, such as Henry Armstid's abuse of his wife in The Hamlet, and her passive acceptance of that abuse: ". . . and the husband turned and struck her with the coiled rope. 'Why didn't you head him?' he said, 'why didn't you?' He struck her again; she did not move, not even to fend the rope with a raised arm."[2]

Far more important than the inferior relationship of wife to husband, however, is the special range of faculties and functions assigned the Southern woman in the regional novel. Regional novelists agree with Western tradition in differentiating woman from man on the basis not only of physical peculiarities but of functional and temperamental characteristics which issue in part from those physical traits. In general, man tends to be active, rational, idealistic, and vocal. Woman, on the other hand, is passive and receptive, emotional and intuitive, practical, and silent. In her sexual and procreative aspect, woman is the vehicle, the vessel, the receptacle: man sows, the woman bears, and from this ancient analogy with the land derive other qualities of woman: pliability, tractability, durability, inexhaustible strength, energy, patience, and mystery.

It is not possible or desirable to enumerate and exemplify all the traits associated with woman by Southern novelists; moreover,

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[1]P. 350. [2]Pp. 299-300.

contradictions within and among individual authors are not infrequent, the reason being that woman herself is inconsistent and enigmatic like the land. The validity of the foregoing outline of woman, however, is demonstrable from a few typical passages. Of woman's practicality and fatalism V. K. Ratliff speculates, "Or maybe it's women that dont need reasons, for the simple reason that they never heard of a reason and wouldn't recognise it face to face, since they dont function from reasons but from necessities that couldn't nobody help nohow and that dont nobody but a fool man want to help in the second place, because he dont know no better. . . ."[1] And Gavin Stevens agrees: "Because women are not interested in romance or morals or sin and its punishment, but only in facts, the immutable facts necessary to the living of life while you are in it. . . ."[2] The comparison of woman to land is explicit in Labove's prevision of Eula Varner's fate:

> He could almost see the husband which she would someday have. He would be a dwarf, a gnome, without glands or desire. . . . the crippled Vulcan to that Venus, who would not possess her but merely own her . . . as he might own . . . a field, say. He saw it: the fine land rich and fecund and foul and eternal and impervious to him who claimed title to it. . . .[3]

And the woman, like the land, receives and nurtures man's seed, as Gail Hightower reflects: "The woman. Woman . . . the Passive and Anonymous whom God had created to be not alone the recipient and receptacle of the seed of his body but of his spirit too. . . ."[4]

The woman also possesses a kind of knowledge, or faculty for knowledge, normally unavailable to man. It is usually the type of knowledge associated with the second level of "blood"—instinct, intuition,

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[1] Mansion, p. 117.

[2] Town, p. 293.

[3] Hamlet, p. 119.

[4] Light in August, p. 409.

faith, and the like. Just what woman intuits varies according to the author and particular situation. Mr. Compson thinks it is evil:

> Women are like that they don't acquire knowledge of people . . . they are just born with a practical fertility of suspicion that makes a crop every so often and usually right they have an affinity for evil for supplying whatever the evil lacks in itself for drawing it about them instinctively. . . .[1]

For Eudora Welty it is the spirit illuminating the physical surface and gesture which woman, at her best, apprehends. In Miss Welty's novels men do and act; women characteristically see, but this allotment of faculties becomes apparent not so much by explicit exposition as by her use of women as point-of-view characters. Thus the action in Delta Wedding is presented altogether through a series of alternating female observers, and the climax is Ellen Fairchild's vision of the real George Fairchild, her brother-in-law:

> As he looked in her direction, all at once she saw into his mind as if he had come dancing out of it leaving it unlocked, laughingly inviting her to the unexpected intimacy. She saw his mind--as if it too were inversely lighted up by the failing paper lanterns--lucid and tortuous. . . .[2]

Some such feminine sensibility or instinct, whatever its specific character, almost always distinguishes the Southern woman when her faculties have been allowed to develop along their natural lines.

When, however, her natural disposition has been warped by conditioning, trauma, or coercive circumstances, the Southern woman is likely to assume masculine characteristics and may become a kind of grotesque parody of both sexes. She develops the man's hard, inflexible will; she becomes preoccupied, like him, with the fanatical pursuit of ideas, ideals, principles; she becomes obsessed with words and talk. Frequently,

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[1]Fury, p. 115. [2]P. 221.

she is unmarried, badly married, or early widowed, and thus is denied the child-bearing and -rearing function which is so vital to realization and fulfillment of woman's nature. Familiar instances from Faulkner's work are Joanna Burden, Rosa Coldfield, Judith Sutpen, and Virginia du Pre. From other regional novelists we have Miss Lucy Burnham (Night Rider), twice-widowed Amelie Cropleigh (The Velvet Horn), Susan Buchan Posey (The Fathers), and Miss Willy Lewis (The Women on the Porch). In Miss Welty's novels the distortion of woman's nature is sometimes a technique as well as a theme, giving us compulsive talkers and manipulators like Edna Earle Ponder and the community women of The Golden Apples, who have developed so in large measure by default of their men.

Another distinguishing feature of the South has been its code of manners--the existence of traditional forms and conventions which play an important role in the conduct of life. The code of manners developed coevally with the aristocracy, although it has never been restricted to that class but has permeated the entire Southern culture. Its development, general nature, and diffusion are described by Marshall McLuhan as follows:

> One main condition of aristocratic life was present in the South and not in the North--personal responsibility to other human beings for education and material welfare. . . . Perhaps even more decisive. . . . in the creation of the aristocracy is absence of private life. To live always in the presence of family and family servants changes the most average of beings. Formality becomes a condition of survival. Moreover, to represent one's family first and oneself second in all social intercourse confers a special impersonal character on human manners and actions. And where there is a code, all classes will share and interpret it for themselves. . . .[1]

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[1]"The Southern Quality," pp. 369-70.

McLuhan's description is valuable, not only for emphasizing the interrelationship of manners with other aspects of Southern life--the family, bi-racialism, and hierarchy--but also for emphasizing the practical origin and use of a "social code."

Perhaps too often the merely ornamental, aesthetic, and even otiose side of manners is stressed, and it is overlooked that a social code originates in utility and belief. A statement by Andrew Lytle, cited earlier, recalls the relationship of belief to institutions and conventions: "The structure [of society] is in its institutions. The institution is defined by conventions. Belief, the life of the state, functions through its conventions." By this interpretation a particular form of manners, such as the code of honor or the ritualistic courtship of woman, should be viewed not as an idle form practiced for its elegance or aesthetic value alone, though such a value may certainly appertain, but as the expression of a belief in personal integrity or in the dignity of woman.

Likewise, as McLuhan suggests, the utility of formal manners is an important consideration in estimating their nature and value. Their utility lies in distancing, depersonalizing, and therefore facilitating public, social intercourse, which otherwise would be disrupted by the intrusion of personal, private motivations. This prohibitory, "facilitating" function of manners among individuals is recognized by Walter Sullivan:

> In a world where trouble enough is expected, good manners help people to avoid misunderstandings and unnecessary and unintended slights. Thus the Southern world is seriously concerned with the task of palliating the difficulty, of making a sometimes hard life a little easier.[1]

More generally, Andrew Lytle interprets the mass movement of the "uprooted

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[1] "The City and the Old Vision," Lasting South, p. 123.

slaves" in The Unvanquished as

> the loosing of chaos, all those elemental forces which an ordered society keeps in place by ethics, a code of morals and manners. Society can solve none of the repetitive involvements which are man's plight and inheritance. It can only hold in abeyance the most destructive aspects of these forces by rules and orders, accepted habits and the convention of property. The animal nature of man is transformed by form into what is called civilized behavior.[1]

But the inhibiting function of manners has also a positive aspect if, as John Peale Bishop thinks, "what we ask is not repression of passion, but a discipline that will in controlling it also conserve it." The Old South had such a discipline.

> For theirs was a civilization of manners, and it is only through that unconscious instruction which we appropriately call being well-bred that the discipline of which I speak can be imposed. The sense of the earth was strong in them, so that they could not cultivate many illusions as to the ultimate improvement of mankind. But in the meantime, their manners gave them assurance and, because they knew that the use of civilities is to keep others at a distance, they preserved integrity.[2]

The existence of a viable code of manners means the presence in society of traditional, prescribed rituals, infused in the individual through "unconscious instruction," for the performance of recurring acts, from the most casual and trivial to the most profoundly significant deeds of the human being. In addition to allowing the easy execution of tasks and duties without formal instruction, such rituals have the effect of establishing the individual in a known, secure, familiar world, extending before and after him. This effect is illustrated in Lacy Buchan's description of his sister:

To Susan the life around her in her childhood had been final; there

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[1] "The Son of Man," pp. 130-31.

[2] Collected Essays, p. 11.

> could be no other, there never had been any other way of life—which is, I suppose, a way of saying that people living in formal societies, lacking the historical imagination, can imagine for themselves only a timeless existence: they themselves never had any origin and they can have no end, but will go on forever.[1]

Lacy then recollects a typical minor ritual from his own childhood—his mother's meticulous washing of the "good china" after dinner each day—and speculates,

> If this little ritual of utility—not very old to be sure but to my mother immemorial—had been discredited or even questioned, she would have felt that the purity of womanhood was in danger . . . and that the infidels had wickedly asserted that the State of Virginia (by which she meant her friends and kin) was not the direct legatee of the civilization of Greece and Rome.[2]

Thus the Southerner's daily existence is both lightened and substantiated by the minor rituals of his formal society.

Moreover, major ceremonial forms attend the deeply significant events—birth, maturation, courtship, marriage, death—of the Southerner's life and enhance their significance, at the same time that the rituals help absorb the trauma of these events. The rituals are a public possession and remind the individual of his continuity with mankind and of the social importance of the ritualistic events; simultaneously they remind him that his experience is not unique but has been undergone a myriad times before. Something of the elevating and sustaining powers of major ritual, at least formerly, is explained to Lucius Cree by Jack Cropleigh:

> "I'm speaking of marriage. . . . The time was when man made a little progress towards the recovery of what he had lost. . . . That is, mankind had come to accept coupling as not entirely a private matter but a neighborhood affair first of all, and the bride and groom were brought to bed . . . in a fairly public way. At night, it's true, because of our fallen state, but only after the long day's ceremony . . . just so the burning couple, once they were behind the locked door, would remember in between times that it had been done before, when

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[1] The Fathers, p. 183. [2] Ibid., p. 184.

they would be tempted to say this is ours and nobody else's."[1] At its best, then, Southern formalism has served a manifold practical, expressive, and aesthetic function, and has done much to alleviate, yet hypostatize, the onerous course of existence.

However, a social code also engenders a certain vulnerability in its creatures. Restrained by and seemingly secure in his meshwork of forms, the traditional Southerner can be victimized and exploited by the highly personal, unscrupulous, or merely uninformed man who recognizes no sanctioned limits to the realization of his drives. The "sheltered" Susan Buchan is thus seduced into a disastrous marriage with George Posey: "There can be no question but that Susan had been fascinated by George's mysterious power, by his secrecy and his violence. . . . She could not have known that George was outside life, or had a secret of life that no one had heard of at Pleasant Hill."[2] Against such "mysterious power" as Posey's and Thomas Sutpen's, the Buchans and the Coldfields and the Compsons are not exactly helpless, but they are seriously disadvantaged. And in their discomposure the frustrated traditionalists sometimes fall into the ways of their antagonists, as do Susan Buchan Posey, Rosa Millard, and the Coldfield sisters, thus betraying their society and themselves.

Nor are the traditionalists solely the victims in this kind of encounter. The Posey-Sutpen species typifies the modern "innocent" of good faith (in that he <u>intends</u> no harm), whose difficulty is that he does not know the "rules" of a formal society, or at least what the rules mean; he knows only his personal desires and needs, often not too well, and he

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[1] <u>Velvet Horn</u>, pp. 354-55.

[2] <u>Fathers</u>, p. 183.

is mystified and driven to further extremities of action by the resistance of the forms and formalists to his onslaught. Lacy Buchan's analysis of George Posey illustrates the tragedy of the type:

> George Posey was a man without people or place; he had strong relationships, and he was capable of passionate feeling, but it was all personal. . . . In a world in which all people were like him, George would not have suffered—and he did suffer—the shock of communion with a world that he could not recover; while that world existed, its piety, its order, its elaborate rigamarole—his forfeited heritage—teased him like a nightmare. . . . All violent people secretly desire to be curbed by something that they respect, so that they may become known to themselves.[1]

Another type of subversive, however, deliberately and viciously exploits the social code and its adherents to his own aggrandizement. The prototype of this species is Flem Snopes, but his spiritual brethren are scattered throughout the regional novel—for example Wilkie Barron of World Enough and Time, who, to further his own political ambition, cynically manipulates Jeremiah Beaumont's romantic concept of the code of honor. Another example is Jason Compson IV, who utilizes his mother's aristocratic pretensions, expressed in her ritualistic burning of "Caddy's check" each month, to amass his private treasure. The ascendancy from lowliness to respectability of the arch-enemy, Flem Snopes himself, can be largely ascribed to his successful playing off of personal and communal weakness against communal formalism. Now, it is a mistake to view the Snopes-community struggle as a villain-victim contest. The traditional community possesses the usual vices of man, and is in fact the Snopeses' mentor in the lessons of rapacity and greed; but these forces are, as Lytle said, "held in abeyance" by the social code: Will Varner dare go only so far in the practice of his rapacity. It is Flem Snopes's genius

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[1] Ibid., pp. 179-80.

to exploit the weakness through the form, as when he barters his name to "cover" Eula Varner's original indiscretion, and later uses the familial forms to parlay Eula's adultery into the presidency of Colonel Sartoris' bank.

The case of Flem Snopes and his like illustrates a related complication of the social code. Being external, manners and forms are available for imitation by all and are therefore no reliable index of a person's station, let alone his character. Societal confidence in forms probably entails an element of ambiguity about the real nature of any particular person. A veneer of impeccable manners may conceal a real scoundrel like Senator Tolliver in Night Rider or Bogan Murdock in At Heaven's Gate. Or the availability of manners may allow a low-born person to "pass" as a gentleman—or a lady, as Miss Idell candidly explains to Amantha in Band of Angels:

> "I was a barmaid, but I caught on quick. I got the right kind of a dress. I'd go stand in a lobby at the big hotel and watch how ladies did, and I'd practice it, and shucks, darling, there's nothing to it, anybody can do a lady's tricks. . . . And you never guessed I wasn't a lady, did you, darling?"[1]

Such dissimulation has done no little to discredit formal behavior.

Moreover, with the passage of time and the erosion of substance, forms have tended to become empty in themselves. When general belief in the purity and exalted status of woman declines, for example, such gestures of gallantry as Quentin Compson's attack upon Gerald Bland can inspire only ironic comment: "'Oh,' Spoade said, 'the champion of dames. Bud, you excite not only admiration, but horror.' He looked at me, cold and quizzical. 'Good God,' he said."[2] Still, the modern South is pervaded

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[1]p. 244.

[2]Fury, p. 185.

by the remnants of manners, and the contrast between the compulsive, vestigial form and its meaninglessness is often an occasion for humor. So Charles Mallison must hurry to properly escort self-sufficient Linda Snopes Kohl to her door, "who perhaps had left the South too young too long ago to have formed the Southern female habit-rite of a cavalier's unflagging constancy," though "still not so far dissevered from her Southern heritage but to recall that he, Charles, dared not risk some casual passerby reporting to his uncle that his nephew permitted the female he was seeing home to walk at least forty feet unaccompanied to her front door."[1]

The most prominent and significant lineament of the Southern image, in my opinion, is the <u>importance of the past</u>. Temporal extension into the past exists, however, as a dimension of the several, more readily definable institutions and economies previously described; it is not, like the family, one of the cells or sub-structures in the Southern organism, but is a proportion of the whole organism, and hence of all the cells. This fact has become evident in the necessary allusions to the past, to change, and to the present in the foregoing discussions, and it cannot be too much emphasized that the past in the South is important, not as any kind of separate entity, but as a function of the institutions which transmit it and which also acquire additional significance by their instrumentality in this respect.

Nevertheless, the role of the past in the Southern culture deserves special attention because of its massive presence and therefore

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[1]<u>Mansion</u>, pp. 358-59.

potent effect on the Southern character, and also because of certain aspects which cannot be easily distributed to institutional agencies. Rubin summarizes these aspects in his declaration, "More than any other region of the United States, the South tends to think about its history, and to live with less regard for the future than for the immediate present, and to do things in certain ways because that is the way such things have always been done before."[1] Reversing the order, we can call these aspects the general role of the past and the South's particular history, especially its defeat in the Civil War.

We have seen in Chapter II the general nature of tradition in any regional society, and we have seen in this chapter some of the particular characteristics of tradition in the Southern society. We are concerned here with the general effect of the past and tradition on the Southern character. For, regardless of the particular agency of transmission and the specific content of tradition, the mere presence of voluminous tradition exerts a powerful determinative force upon the individual, with both beneficial and adverse results.

Generally, the impingement of the past on the present through traditional forms produces in the individual a constant awareness of the past which is foreign to modernism. In its orientation toward time, modernism is characterized by "provincialism," as Allen Tate calls it, or Richard Weaver's "presentism," an immersion in the sensations of the present, fleeting moment:

> Indeed, modernism is in essence a provincialism, since it declines to look beyond the horizon of the moment. . . . it involves impairment of the memory. . . . It is apparent, moreover, that those who

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[1]"An Image of the South," Lasting South, p. 1.

> are in rebellion against memory are the ones who wish to live without knowledge; and we can, in fact, tell from their conduct that they act more than others on instinct and sensation.[1]

A pathetic example of "presentism" is Perse Munn's old cousin, Miss Ianthe Sprague, who can listen to nothing but the advertisements and casual stories from a newspaper:

> She could not listen to the long, consecutive articles in the newspaper. But the fragmentary, the irrelevant, the meaningless, such things she could receive and draw her special nourishment from. Automatically, she rejected everything else. . . .
>
> And she did not like to talk of the past, and avoided his questions. Indeed, she had little memory of the past. That, too, she had rejected, for out of memory rises the notion of a positive and purposive future, the revision of the past.[2]

By contrast, the traditional mind possesses a continuous, sometimes excessive awareness of the past and its bearing on the present. If the traditional Southerner is able "to live with less regard for the future than for the immediate present," that present is not the fragmentary, discrete point in time inhabited by Miss Sprague, but a present secure in and continuous with the past. The interpenetrative relationship of past and present to the traditionalist, as well as the possible import of that relationship for his sense of identity, is indicated by William Faulkner:

> . . . to me, no man is himself, he is the sum of his past. There is no such thing really as was because the past is. It is a part of every man, every woman, and every moment. All of his and her ancestry, background, is all part of himself and herself at any moment.[3]

The same incidence of past upon present is the theme of Jack Cropleigh's meditations during the wake for Joe Cree: "Unravel the past: weave the present. To what pattern? A pattern to keep Lucius from being undone

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[1] Ideas Have Consequences, pp. 67-68.

[2] Night Rider, p. 212.

[3] Faulkner in the University, p. 84.

by the knowledge this fresh death will bring up, for open the ground as you will the WAS jumps up as the NOW goes in. . . ."[1]

As we have seen, this presentness of the past, especially to the extent that "no man is himself, he is the sum of his past," can have peculiar consequences for the Southerner's sense of himself, depending in part upon the past of which he feels him to be the sum and in part upon his own ability to escape total domination by that past by mastering it and assimilating it to present needs and circumstances. Jack Cropleigh himself is a figure who exhibits this type of mastery: awed by the mystery of time, he yet is able more or less effectively to "unravel the past: weave the present," although he dies a sacrificial death in the interests of his "pattern." Captain Todd of Night Rider is another who has transformed his personal and traditional past into a "deep, inner certainty of self,"[2] an awareness of "a ripe, secret security that he could count on, out of the swirl and reach of the general excitement."[3] And the Fairchilds of Delta Wedding have reached such an accommodation with the past--perhaps because they continue it so perfectly--that they can forget it: "They were never too busy for anything, they were generously and almost seriously of the moment: the past . . . was a private, dull matter that would be forgotten except by aunts."[4]

On the other hand, when the past of which the Southerner is the sum is too confusing, too morally repugnant, or simply too overpoweringly energetic for him to assimilate, he becomes its victim and loses himself. So with Quentin Compson and the "interchangeable and almost myriad"

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[1]Velvet Horn, p. 201.

[2]Night Rider, p. 43.

[3]Ibid., p. 44.

[4]P. 15.

names from the Jefferson past at the beginning of Absalom, Absalom!, before he has even heard the entire Sutpen story: "His childhood was full of them; his very body was an empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names; he was not a being, an entity, he was a commonwealth."[1] And the past seems to dwarf the present for Mr. Compson, too, who thinks of the older Southerners as

> people too as we are, and victims too as we are, but victims of a different circumstance, simpler and therefore, integer for integer, larger, more heroic and the figures therefore more heroic too, not dwarfed and involved but distinct, uncomplex who had the gift of loving once or dying once instead of being diffused and scattered creatures drawn blindly limb from limb from a grab bag and assembled.[2]

This passage illustrates a function of tradition implicit in the Southerner's intense awareness of his past: its agency as a measure of change and the present. The past is apparently stable and secure, and by reference to it from the present one may estimate collective or personal improvement or deterioration. Mr. Compson measures his own and Quentin's generations against the simpler, more heroic image of their predecessors and arrives at a disparagement of contemporaneity, thus illustrating the point of Allen Tate's remark, "The South has had reverses that permit her people to imagine what they might have been (And only thus can people discover what they are.)"[3] A similar concept of the past's use in ascertaining the direction of development is indicated in Jack Burden's philosophy of "contextualism":

> Reality is not a function of the event as event, but of the relationship of that event to past, and future, events. . . . But this only affirms what we must affirm: that direction is all. And only as we realize this do we live, for our own identity is dependent upon this principle.[4]

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[1] Absalom, p. 12.

[2] Ibid., p. 89.

[3] Limits of Poetry, p. 269.

[4] All the King's Men, p. 407.

Jefferson's jail, in Requiem for a Nun, is another relic from the past which testifies to both change and continuity. The original jail, with its "old ineradicable bones, the old ineradicable remembering: the old logs immured intact and lightless between the tiered symmetric bricks and the whitewashed plaster,"[1] witnesses Jefferson's "mutation and change from a halting-place: to a community: to a settlement: to a village: to a town"[2]; and its very persistence recognizes and reflects the unchanging "gross and simple lusts and yearnings" of man's "gross and simple heart"[3] which the main story of Temple Drake Stevens and Nancy Mannigoe dramatizes. Gavin Stevens draws together the communal and personal themes of Requiem, and also epitomizes the general role of the past in the South, in his statement, "'The past is never dead. It's not even past.'"[4]

But the South's public past, its history, is of course quite specific, and it is the specific content of this omnipresent past which fashions the contours of the Southerner's unique character. We have already noted some effects of the South's bi-racial history. At this point we are concerned with the momentous consequences of the South's involvement and defeat in the Civil War, and its aftermath.

A good many commentators on Southern regionalism regard this as the Southern subject. Allen Tate, for example, discussing differences between "traditionalists" and "sociologists" of fiction, writes as follows: "If the Southern subject is the destruction by war and the later

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[1]William Faulkner, Requiem for a Nun (New York: Random House, 1951), p. 224.

[2]Ibid., p. 214. [3]Ibid. [4]Ibid., p. 92.

degradation of the South by carpetbaggers and scalawags, and a consequent lack of moral force and imagination in the cynical materialism of the New South, then the sociologists of fiction and the so-called traditionalists are trying to talk about the same thing."[1] Irving Howe writes of the Southern "myth" that, "like any other myth, it is a story or cluster of stories that expresses the deepest attitudes and reflects the most fundamental experiences of a people. And its subject . . . is the fate of a ruined homeland."[2] And by Robert Penn Warren's interpretation of history, while the Civil War claimed the South for the Union irrevocably, it also immortalized the separate identity of the South:

> But in claiming the Confederate states the War made them, paradoxically enough, more southern--with all the mystique of a prideful "difference." There had been disintegrating tensions within the Confederacy, but once the War was over the Confederacy became a City of the Soul. . . . We can say that only at the moment when Lee signed the document of surrender was the Confederacy born. At the moment of its death it entered upon its immortality. . . .[3]

This last point, the establishment of Southern identity in the Civil War, bears emphasis. Less metaphysically than Warren, Richard Barksdale Harwell yet agrees essentially that "the Confederacy achieved a unanimity of thought and action the section had never known before," in other words that the South achieved its purest moment of selfhood in and through the Civil War. Now, since the Southerner, more than others, identifies himself with his "land," and since that land realized itself most fully at a moment in the past, the Southerner in a very large measure has his own identity located <u>behind</u> him in literal time. After the War, the

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[1] <u>Limits of Poetry</u>, p. 291.

[2] "The Southern Myth and William Faulkner," <u>American Quarterly</u>, III (Winter, 1951), 360.

[3] "A Mark Deep on a Nation's Soul," p. 83.

Northerner could relegate it to a forgotten past and proceed confidently to future triumphs, whereas the Southerner's finest hour was already in the past.

> The North had the wealth and the power to move on. For long the South could honor itself only in defiance and remembrance. The past of the South, for sixty years, became centered in recollection of the War.[1]

This fact accounts for the almost unbearable tension which we sometimes find in Southern characters' thinking of the past: there is the feeling of the presentness of the past, in the mode described above, and yet there is at the same time a covert recognition that, in a literal sense, the past has irremediably passed and taken with it the peak of life. This tension appears in Gavin Stevens' explanation of Southern time to his nephew:

> "It's all now you see. Yesterday wont be over until tomorrow and tomorrow began ten thousand years ago. For every Southern boy fourteen years old . . . there is the instant when it's still not yet two oclock on that July afternoon in 1863 . . . and it's all in the balance, it hasn't happened yet . . . there is still time for it not to begin against that position and those circumstances . . . yet it's going to begin, we all know that . . . and that moment doesn't need even a fourteen-year-old boy to think This time. Maybe this time with all this much to lose and all this much to gain: Pennsylvania, Maryland, the world, the golden dome of Washington itself. . . .[2]

"It hasn't even begun yet . . . yet it's going to begin": the high tide of the Confederacy and its ebbing--these are the two warring qualities of Southern time implicit in the Confederacy's achievement of greatness, and their tension is poignantly felt by the Southerner.

Historically, Pickett's charge did begin, and after it came "the destruction by war and the later degradation of the South by carpetbaggers

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[1]Richard Barksdale Harwell, "The Confederate Heritage," Lasting South, p. 19.

[2]Intruder, pp. 148-49.

and scalawags."

> What is different in the history of the South, what distinguishes it from the history of the rest of the United States, is that it is a history of defeat. The South was beaten in war and occupied by enemy troops; alone of American regions, the South has a Lost Cause.[1]

The material loss in the Civil War and "the nightmare of Reconstruction" was immense, and "there was no Marshall Plan for the Southern States."[2] Beyond and graver than this, however, was the incalculable effect on the Southern psyche, as Richard Weaver points out:

> In the course of the Civil War the South suffered not only great physical destruction, but also severe traumatic shock. There can be no doubt that the latter was the greater injury by far. For thirty years the atmosphere was so suffused with the sense of tragedy and frustration that it was almost impossible for a Southern man to take a "normal" view of anything.[3]

On the positive side, the public history of defeat has given the Southerner a tragic view, or at least a familiarity with failure, which is more in accord with the average lot of mankind than the more successful experience of the nation at large. The Southerner is the "only involuntary tenant of the American union" as a result of the fact

> that a supreme act of his will was frustrated, and that as a consequence of that defeat he had to accommodate himself to an unwanted circumstance. And that, of course, is the meaning of failure. Therefore in the national legend the typical American owes his position to a virtuous and effective act of his will; but the Southerner owes his to the fact that his will was denied. . . .[4]

In this respect, says Walter Sullivan, the individual's private experience

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[1]Rubin, "An Image of the South," Lasting South, p. 7.

[2]Weaver, "The South and the American Union," ibid., p. 63.

[3]"Agrarianism in Exile," Sewanee Review, LVIII (Autumn, 1950), 587.

[4]Richard Weaver, "Aspects of the Southern Philosophy," Southern Renascence, pp. 24-25.

of radical contingency and ultimate failure, which we noticed as corollaries of the Southerner's religious fundamentalism and agrarianism, is corroborated by regional history, enhancing the identification of the Southerner with his region:

> Thus the public, sectional experience confirms the private experience of the individual citizen. The personal philosophy bears extension until it is applicable to the region as a whole. The result is a spiritually integrated, philosophically homogeneous society in which public and private feeling, public and private duty coincide.[1]

Such an "education" in defeat and tragedy enables the Southerner better than the innocent, "typical American" to cope with the nature of life, since "nothing else can bring home so forcibly the truth of the proverb that time and chance happen to us all."[2]

In specific connection with the Civil War and Reconstruction, motives and images of defeat, destruction, suffering, yet withal endurance, pervade the Southern regional novel. To both the actors in the historical drama and their descendants, it is a source of pride, of intransigent defiance, of fatalistic resignation, sometimes of outraged unbelief, that the South and Southerners could endure so much. Jackson, Mississippi, "knew General Pemberton . . . and Joseph Johnston: and Sherman: and fire: and nothing remained, a City of Chimneys . . . ruled over by a general of the United States army while the new blood poured in . . . But endured. . . ."[3] According to the imaginings of Shreve and Quentin, Charles Bon lists the conventional supports lost to the Confederates--God, food, clothes, shelter, even honor and pride--yet still

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[1] "The City and the Old Vision," Lasting South, p. 122.

[2] Weaver, "Aspects of the Southern Philosophy," Southern Renascence, pp. 24-25.

[3] Requiem, pp. 108-109.

finds a faculty to endure: "'Only there is something in you that doesn't care about honor and pride yet that lives, that even walks backward for a whole year just to live . . . the old mindless sentient undreaming meat that doesn't even know any difference between despair and victory, Henry.'"[1] Gail Hightower's father is singular in his adjustment to peacetime: "And when the war was lost and the other men returned home with their eyes stubbornly reverted toward what they refused to believe was dead, he looked forward and made what he could of defeat by making practical use of that which he had learned in it."[2] And Charles Mallison shows the typical Southerner's attitude toward the North, with its "rich teeming never-ravaged land of glittering undefiled cities and unburned towns and unwasted farms": "not north but North, outland and circumscribing and not even a geographical place but an emotional idea, a condition of which he had fed from his mother's milk to be ever and constant on the alert not at all to fear and not actually anymore to hate but just . . . to defy."[3] Wash Jones's "'Well, Kernel, they kilt us but they aint whipped us yit, air they?'"[4] might be the motto of this theme.

Although Southern man suffered physically the more, Southern woman endured the greater spiritual travail, as a result of which her will hardened more than the man's. Of course she experienced physical hardship too. It is probably true that the invalidism of Gail Hightower's mother "was the result of the food which she had had to subsist on during the last year of the Civil War."[5] Concerning a neighborwoman's hands

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[1] Absalom, p. 349.

[2] Light in August, p. 415.

[3] Intruder, p. 117.

[4] Absalom, p. 184.

[5] Light in August, p. 409.

"stiff and swollen from dishwater and picking up stovewood," Lucius Cree wonders, "Did Sherman make those hands, when he said he would bring every southern woman to the washboard?"[1] But it was the spiritual shock more than physical hardship alone that changed Southern woman in the way we have previously seen. It was the loss of beloved men and the resultant vacuum of authority, the loss of status, the affront to her dream and denial of her will--all these hardened and masculinized Southern woman. The holocaustal war temporarily projects for Drusilla Hawks the "highest destiny of a Southern woman--to be the bride-widow of a lost cause--,"[2] and it estranges the Jefferson men and women "for the reason that the men had given in and admitted that they belonged to the United States but the women had never surrendered."[3] The Southern woman assumed the dominance vacated by the death or moral defection (in her eyes) of the Southern man, for example in the case of Frankie Dunbaugh's control over her husband: "'And Appomattox has more to do with it than you think. You let a man be whipped . . . the next morning he will find the woman trying on his breeches."[4] No finer illustration of Southern woman's indomitable flesh and spirit can be adduced than Aunt Mac and Aunt Shannon, "with the brothers and husbands every man killed in the end":

> [Aunt Mac] and her sister Shannon had brought up all James's and Laura Allen's children . . . from Dehis aged twelve to George aged three, after their dreadful trouble; were glad to do it--widows! And though Shannon drifted away sometimes in her mind and would forget where she was . . . she, Mac, had never let go, never asked relenting from the present hour, and if anything should, God prevent it, happen to Ellen now, she was prepared to do it again, start in with young Battle's children, and bring them up.[5]

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[1] Velvet Horn, p. 215.

[2] Unvanquished, p. 121.

[3] Ibid., p. 119.

[4] Velvet Horn, p. 54.

[5] Delta Wedding, pp. 118-19.

Altogether, such phenomena may be reckoned with the beneficent side of defeat.

On the other hand, the history of defeat has also had its unquestionably harmful effects on the Southern character, many of which have already been described in connection with other aspects of the South. R. B. Harwell points out that, because "the past of the South . . . became centered in recollection of the War,"

> men who had been rollicking, roistering soldiers became, in retrospect, knights of a vanished Southern chivalry. Demagogues whose most positive accomplishments had been spitting tobacco juice and shouting became statesmen of the Old South. Filiopietism replaced patriotism. Apology replaced history. The Confederate heritage had full sway.[1]

To these we should add such additional traits--not ascribable altogether to Southern history but certainly confirmed and enlarged by that history--as the Southern disposition to militarism, excessive pugnacity and violence; an inordinate suspicion of and animosity toward outlanders ("Yankees"); the use of the Negro as scapegoat; and, covering these and other deficiencies, the "Great Alibi" complex, by which "the South explains, condones and transmutes everything": "By the great alibi the Southerner makes his Big Medicine. He turns defeat into victory, defects into virtues. Even more pathetically, he turns his great virtues into absurdities--sometimes vicious absurdities."[2]

The romanticization of the past to the degradation of the present, an inability even to <u>see</u> the present clearly because of the splendor and poignancy of the past--this is the moral and cognitive infirmity

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[1] "The Confederate Heritage," <u>Lasting South</u>, p. 19

[2] Warren, "A Mark Deep on a Nation's Soul," p. 85.

to which the South's history all too frequently contributes. The pattern is illustratable throughout the Southern regional novel; it is, in fact, the principal form of false innocence through mythicization to which the Southerner is subject. Robert Penn Warren's night riders justify their increasingly violent depravities partly in terms of their "Confederate heritage" of violence, and Lem Murdock is exonerated for murdering Moxby Goodpasture when the latter impugns his Confederate record and later source of wealth. In a lighter vein, Aunt Shannon Miles is immune to the reality of recent Fairchild family history, and hence implores a long-dead brother-in-law to dispose of a living in-law of whom she disapproves: "'Duncan, dearie, there's a scrap of nuisance around here ought to be shot. . . . Pinck Summers, he calls himself. Coming courting here.'"[1] More somberly again, we have seen how, on the domestic level, Gail Hightower victimizes his wife by his infatuation with his grandfather; but on the communal level, too, terrorists like Percy Grimm can flourish only because religious leaders like Hightower have abdicated their responsibility, "offering instead of the crucified shape of pity and love, a swaggering and unchastened bravo killed with a shotgun in a peaceful henhouse, in a temporary hiatus of his own avocation of killing."[2] Thus on every side, the South's past threatens to dominate its present as Colonel Sartoris has dominated the lives of his descendants, and as his statue, which serves well to symbolize the nature and eminence of the regional past, continues to dominate the graves in the Sartoris plot:

His head was lifted a little in that gesture of haughty pride which

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[1] Delta Wedding, p. 119.

[2] Light in August, p. 428.

> repeated itself generation after generation with a fateful fidelity, his back to the world and his carven eyes gazing out across the valley . . . and the blue changeless hills beyond, and beyond that, the ramparts of infinity itself.[1]

Finally, the interplay between past and present occurs not only as subject and theme but also as technique in the Southern regional novel. One version of the class, which might be called the "historical" novel and which includes The Long Night, None Shall Look Back, The Unvanquished, and Band of Angels, is laid entirely in the distinctively Southern past but contains previsions of the Southern present. Another technique utilizing the temporal dimension is the panoramic chronicle from past to present with frequent reversions and anticipations; instances are Penhally, Jordan County, The Golden Apples, and Go Down, Moses. In still another approach—the most common—the main action is centered in the present but with frequent incursions from the past, with more or less coherence depending upon the rational and volitional control of the narrative authority. Whatever the particular manner, the point is that in the Southern regional novel the interrelationship of past and present is very often communicated technically by flashback, flash-forward, and almost inextricable mingling of past and present.

Another Southern trait articulated both thematically and technically in the regional novel is the oral tradition, comprising the related traditions of public rhetoric and tale-telling. Malcolm Cowley observes,

> A striking feature of Southern life is that it is much more conversational than life in the North. . . . Southerners as a type are good talkers. They became good talkers by practice and social custom, but

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[1]William Faulkner, Sartoris (New York: New American Library, 1953), p. 313.

> also by necessity. Until quite recent years the rural South had very few commercial amusements, and its people had to entertain themselves. They fished and hunted . . . but their principal amusement and folk art was talking.[1]

Gavin Stevens' attitude toward talk, remarked by Charles Mallison on a rare occasion of his uncle's reticence, typifies the outlook: "It was like he didn't have time any more to concentrate on talk in order to raise it to conversation, art, like he believed was everyone's duty."[2] Practice, social custom, and necessity have given rise to "talk" of two species: public rhetoric and folk-narration. "The South has always been blessed and cursed by a fondness for public rhetoric. . . . This rhetoric is also the style of the folk-tale, the story told and re-told, filled out by hazard and by guess. . . ."[3]

For, not only is there more talk in the South, but that talk is of a different nature than elsewhere, certainly at least in the United States: it is rhetoric, both in public speeches and in folk-tales. Richard Weaver distinguishes between the dialectical and the rhetorical uses of language, and indicates why the Southern mode is rhetorical. The word, he says, can be used for analysis, as in dialectic, but it is basically a synthesizing instrumentality, and "in rhetoric words make use of things already dialectically established in a further and final expression which has to do with matters of policy and value."[4] In other words, rhetoric does not use language to arrive at truth, but to express the

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[1]Introduction to Great Tales of the Deep South, p. viii.

[2]Town, p. 51.

[3]"The Southern Revival: A Land and its Interpreters," p. 16.

[4]"Aspects of the Southern Philosophy," Southern Renascence, p. 18.

possible application of truths already assumed and to elaborate larger configurations of truth. Therefore rhetoric is possible only in a stable society like the South. "The very stability of its institutions makes possible a vocabulary which does not exist . . . where things are characterized by distracting change."[1] In the South, furthermore, the identity of words with what they represent obstructs the development of verbal skepticism and moral nihilism.

> Verbal skepticism is the beginning of moral nihilism, and it is just this belief that words are among the fixed things which has kept the South conservative. . . . Just as soon as men begin to point out that the word is one thing and the object it represents is another, there sets in a temptation to do one thing with the word and another or different thing with the object. . . .[2]

Now, although he acknowledges certain disadvantages to the reign of rhetoric, such as the tendency to venerate anyone who can speak well, in general Weaver approves Southern rhetoric and its enabling conditions. It seems clear, however, that in the present Southern world, as represented in the regional novel, the equivocation of rhetoric is far more fundamental than Weaver here indicates, and that it points to a perennial, universal fissure in man's nature: his inability to harmonize ideality with reality. Many a regional novel deals explicitly with the theme that rhetoric does not coincide with actuality, that the word does <u>not</u> represent the object adequately--and never can, and that dialectic or "verbal skepticism" is a necessary counterpoint to rhetoric when the postulation of identity between word and object is found to be erroneous, or partly so. In fact, since language is the novel's medium and must represent all the social forces we have been discussing, from one point of view it can

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[1]<u>Ibid</u>.

[2]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 19.

be asserted that the tension between rhetoric and dialectic is the basic tension in the Southern regional novel. It is a tension revealed at its extreme in Addie Bundren's thought, "how words go straight up in a thin line, quick and harmless, and how terribly doing goes along the earth, clinging to it, so that after a while the two lines are too far apart for the same person to straddle from one to the other."[1]

A corollary aspect of the Southern rhetorical tradition which contributes to this tension is the speaker-auditor situation. Allen Tate's perceptive essay on Southern rhetoric, "A Southern Mode of the Imagination," contains the following comment on this situation:

> The traditional Southern mode of discourse presupposes somebody at the other end silently listening: it is the rhetorical mode. . . . The Southerner always talks to somebody else, and this somebody else, after varying intervals, is given his turn; but the conversation is always among rhetoricians; that is to say, the typical Southern conversation is not going anywhere; it is not about anything. It is about the people who are talking. . . .[2]

The pattern of this situation, wherein no exchange and resolution of contrasting ideas occur, holds true all the way from "official" rhetoric (orator addressing audience) down to casual tale-telling, for

> the old Southern rhetor, the speaker who was eloquent before the audience but silent in himself, had always had at his disposal a less formal version of the rhetorical mode of discourse than the political oration. . . . The tall tale was the staple of Southern conversation.[3]

Again Gavin Stevens is a first-rate exemplar of our point; according to V. K. Ratliff, if Stevens ever comes to talk about a certain event, the telling will not be very revelatory, "because when Lawyer come to tell

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[1] As I Lay Dying, p. 465.

[2] Collected Essays (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1959), p. 560.

[3] Ibid., p. 566.

it, he wouldn't be having to tell what happened: he would be having to tell, to say, it wouldn't much matter what, to somebody, anybody listening, it wouldn't much matter who."[1]

We find in this oral pattern several possible traps for the Southerner, all of which are often developed in the regional novel. One is the unbalancing of the theoretically contrapuntal arrangement, so that one voice runs on and on while the other is silenced. For the predominant voice it can mean a loss of self in a spate of words, such as we see in Rosa Coldfield, Uncle Daniel and Edna Earle Ponder, and, occasionally, Willie Stark and Gavin Stevens. For the silenced voice--silenced by awe or bafflement or sheer shock--it can mean a feeling of suffocation such as Quentin Compson experiences, who cannot escape his father's voice even in Massachusetts with a Canadian, "thinking Yes, too much, too long. I didn't need to listen then but I had to hear it and now I am having to hear it all over again because he sounds just like father. . . ."[2] Again, the fact that a Southern conversation "is not about anything" but "the people who are talking" can be extraordinarily frustrating to the listener who, in an unrhetorical fashion, is striving to get at the reality of a matter. So Quentin finds it next to impossible to extract the true Sutpen story from the motley fabric woven from his father's and Rosa's subjectively colored accounts.

Another tension-building fact of Southern rhetoric is its relationship to mythopoeia in both habit of mind and technique. As we saw in Chapter II, the mythopoeic faculty is disposed to locate the sum of value in particular, representative figures or images. So with the

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[1] Town, p. 99. [2] Absalom, p. 211.

Southern rhetorical mind and expression in its "public phase," according to Allen Tate's explanation of the South's public image of itself which compelled figures like Lee to choose local community over the abstractions of union and abolition:

> For the rhetorical mode is related to the myth-making faculty, and the mythopoeic mind assumes that certain great typical actions embody human truth. . . . The Southern public persona was supported by what W. J. Cash called . . . the "proto-Dorian" myth. This persona was that of the agrarian patriot, a composite image of Cincinnatus dropping the plough for the sword, and of Cicero leaving his rhetorical studies to apply them patriotically to the prosecution of Catiline. . . . The South was an aggregate of farms and plantations, presided over by our composite agrarian hero, Cicero-Cincinnatus.[1]

The point is that the habit of mind shown in the popularity of this image, which has been promulgated endlessly in Southern political rhetoric, is cousin-german to the mythical habit of mind.

Moreover, the techniques of rhetoric and myth resemble each other in their attempts to express a synthetic, rather than analytic, view of objects. Both modes of discourse tend to elaborate the fullness of an individual object, rather than to establish rational connections between objects. A passage cited fragmentarily before goes on to describe the nature of Southern rhetoric as follows:

> The South has always been blessed and cursed by a fondness for public rhetoric. But this rhetoric is not merely one of public demonstration; it has become a style, a manner of making the language reveal its secrets elaborately, of torturing the syntax of human thought. . . . To make a half-truth whole, one must reveal its subrational nature, persist along the path to the source of its wholeness, reveal it in as many of its human and natural ambiguities and paradoxes as the language can hold.
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> This rhetoric is also the style of the folk-tale, the story told and re-told, filled out by hazard and by guess. . . .[2]

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[1] Collected Essays, p. 560.

[2] "The Southern Revival: A Land and Its Interpreters," p. 16. My italics.

With this description of rhetoric, especially the parts I have emphasized, should be compared Ernst Cassirer's descriptions of mythical insight and its linguistic expression introduced in Chapter III.

With respect to this habit of mind and expression, rhetoric, like myth (if indeed the two can be regarded as discrete), is truly both a blessing and a curse to the Southerner. It undoubtedly answers to real needs in human nature. It provides aesthetic satisfaction by furnishing non-utilitarian "precious objects" for contemplation, in a style which appeals to man's deep yearning for wholeness or unity of being. It also provides concrete images such as the "Cicero Cincinnatus" persona, and a style of life, the unconscious imitation of which allows the Southerner to meet the challenges of experience with conviction and security. These salutary functions of rhetoric can be seen in the nature and effect of the long story-telling sessions between old Will Falls and Bayard Sartoris in Sartoris, or in the repeated legends of the Fairchild brothers' heroism and self-sacrifice in Delta Wedding, or in the confidence and hope with which a downcast audience can be inspired by a public rhetorician like Senator Tolliver, "a real orator--no ranting and bellowing, but perfect composure and ardent gesture as the moment demanded, and always that flowing, full, compelling voice moving out over the lifted faces."[1]

On the other hand, and very often at the same time, the mythical aspect of rhetoric possesses a considerable demoralizing potentiality--the "curse" of rhetoric--insofar as spurious images and excessive faith in words hinder the prudent, efficient conduct of daily life, and perhaps even lure the individual into unnecessary, foolish, and perilous

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[1]Night Rider, p. 23.

adventures for which he is unequipped. Rhetoric, in other words, can betray as well as fulfill, and frequently betrays in the act of fulfilling. George Fairchild is thus in a sense betrayed by the appealing legends of his dead brother, Denis. Ellen "wondered whether, if it had never been for Denis, George might not have been completely the hero to his family--instead of sometimes almost its hero and sometimes almost its sacrificial beast"[1]; it is George's "being in himself all that Denis no longer was, a human being and a complex man,"[2] that is overshadowed by the stories of the superlative Denis endlessly recited by the legend's unofficial proprietress, Aunt Tempe. George's wife, Robbie, feels that George is driven by these stories to heedless risks such as defying a train on a trestle:

> But oh, when all the golden persuasions of the Fairchilds focused upon him, he would vaunt himself again. . . . Sometimes she thought when he was out of reach . . . that she could blame everything on some old story. . . . For he evidently felt that old stories, family stories, Mississippi stories, were the same as very holy or very passionate. . . . He looked out at the world, at her, sometimes . . . as if an old story had taken hold of him--entered his flesh.[3]

And to see the obverse effect of another kind of rhetoric, we could follow the destiny of the people mesmerized by Senator Tolliver, as they are led down the path of gravescent bigotry, violence, self-betrayal, and general degradation, after being actuated by the spell-binding Senator's promise that "the Association would give them justice."[4]

Whatever form it takes, the primacy of language, of the spoken word, is the general consequence of the South's oral tradition. It is a society in which the word and its effective user are venerated. A paradigm of this veneration is Sugar-Boy's eulogy of Willie Stark: "'He

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[1] Delta Wedding, p. 63.

[2] Ibid., p. 64.

[3] Ibid., p. 191.

[4] Night Rider, p. 23.

could t-t-talk so good,' he half-mumbled with his stuttering. 'The B-B-Boss could. Couldn't nobody t-t-talk like him.'"[1] From the peculiar status and dignity of word and speaker in the South flow all of the variations on the theme of language in the regional novel. Briefly, three clusters of linguistic themes are discernible: the danger of overconfidence in language, the worse danger of radical skepticism of language, and the shifting, ambiguous relationship of language to reality.

Where so much social faith is reposed in the power of language, some Southerners are bound to exalt language to a status equal or superior to reality itself. Instead of a vehicle for the expression of conceptual reality, language becomes reified itself, even when it runs counter to observable, phenomenal reality. Or, if it is not the reification of language alone, it is the reification of language as the vessel of the will, or belief, or dream--what one wants to be true, as against factual truth. The typical pattern is described by Quentin Compson as he listens to three boys planning the expenditure of a bonus reward for catching (they hope) an old trout, in spite of the fact that they no longer even try seriously to catch the fish:

> Then they talked about what they would do with twenty-five dollars. They all talked at once, their voices insistent and contradictory and impatient, making of unreality a possibility, then a probability, then an uncontrovertible fact, as people will when their desires become words.[2]

Now this kind of rhetorical fantasy is natural and harmless enough among boys, but it can be ruinous when indulged by grown men. When subjective, linguistic reality diverges appreciably from objective reality and is pursued to the neglect of the latter, objective reality, acting like nemesis,

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[1] All the King's Men, p. 446. [2] Fury, p. 136. My italics.

has a way of striking back retributively at the subjective rhetorician. Illustrative is the case of Labove, the iron-willed, ambitious schoolmaster in The Hamlet. His "was a forensic face, the face of invincible conviction in the power of words as a principle worth dying for if necessary," and he suppresses "his own fierce and unappeasable natural appetites"[1] in the single-minded prosecution of his ambition. But Labove is undone by those same suppressed appetites when Eula Varner's "kaleidoscopic convolution of mammalian ellipses"[2] drifts into his orbit, "tranquilly abrogating the whole long sum of human thinking and suffering which is called knowledge, education, wisdom"[3]; and when, driven quite mad and knowing it, Labove clumsily attacks her, the "attack" is largely rhetorical and ineffectual: "He held her loosely, still smiling, whispering his jumble of fragmentary Greek and Latin verse and American-Mississippi obscenity. . . ."[4]

On the other side lies the possibly worse danger of radical skepticism about language--the conviction that words are meaningless. It is the antithesis of excessive faith in language and results, usually, from witnessing the disjunction between rhetoric and empirical reality, and perhaps also from simple exhaustion by a torrential flow of words. The nature and degree of disenchantment with language range all the way from Jack Cropleigh's philosophical skepticism to Quentin Compson's unreasoning, profound cynicism. Cropleigh, who has been a great talker himself until he falls into an open grave, explains his new reticence this way:

The old story beginning over and over again, for there's only one,

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[1] Hamlet, p. 106.

[2] Ibid., p. 100.

[3] Ibid., p. 116.

[4] Ibid., p. 122.

> beginning with the words, Eritis sicut dii, not the Word, not the etymon but the multiplication of its derivatives. Put them in any combination you will, and I've tried them all, they never are; they only derive. That's why I'm done with words.[1]

Quentin Compson has not analyzed his condition, but he has reached the stage of automatically rejecting or denying the meaning of all spoken words, which are just dead sounds to him: ". . . because Harvard is such a fine sound. . . . a fine dead sound we will swap Benjy's pasture for a fine dead sound."[2] When his father tells him the truth, that "it's nature is hurting you not Caddy," Quentin replies "That's just words."[3] In a somewhat lighter vein, Quentin's skepticism is shared by Gavin Stevens, to whom naming a thing despoils it of its quality and endangers its very existence:

> You see? That was it: the very words reputation and good name. Merely to say them, speak them aloud, give their existence vocal recognition, would irrevocably soil and besmirch them, would destroy the immunity of what they represented, leaving them not just vulnerable but already doomed. . . .[4]

And Gavin finally reaches the point of conjecturing that Linda Kohl's deafness may be the ideal human situation, that "perhaps the entire dilemma of man's condition is because of the ceaseless gabble with which he has surrounded himself, insulated himself from the penalties of his own folly which otherwise . . . might have enabled him by now to have made his condition solvent, workable, successful."[5]

Utter skepticism about language poses a greater danger to the Southerner than overconfidence in language because of the third linguistic theme of the regional novel: the fact that language does have some

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[1] Velvet Horn, p. 357. [2] Fury, p. 193. [3] Ibid., p. 135.
[4] Town, p. 202. [5] Mansion, p. 236.

positive, expressive relationship, however shifting and uncertain, to reality. Therefore the individual who adopts the radically skeptical attitude toward language renders himself vulnerable to whatever reality lies concealed in language, if only that of the speaker's subjective biases. A citation in the last paragraph showed Quentin's linguistic skepticism blinding him to a truth which could certainly relieve some of his anguish. Another excellent case in point is that of Addie Bundren, who becomes so disillusioned about language that she discredits it altogether:

> [Anse] had a word, too. Love, he called it. But I had been used to words for a long time. I knew that that word was like the others: just a shape to fill a lack . . . and I would say, Let Anse use it, if he wants to. So that it was Anse or love; love or Anse: it didn't matter.[1]

However it does matter, and a great deal, because, however defective may be Anse's use of "love," there is adjunctive to that use a physical core of reality which is capable of affecting Addie vitally, as she partially sees when she finds she is pregnant with Darl:

> Then I found that I had Darl. At first I would not believe it. Then I believed that I would kill Anse. It was as though he had tricked me, hidden within a word like within a paper screen and struck me in the back through it.[2]

But Addie is self-deceived, and her self-delusion persists. She thinks "I would be I; I would let him be the shape and echo of his word"[3]; later, after her adulterous affair with Whitfield, she takes pride in tidying up relations by "giving" Anse the appropriate children: "And so I have cleaned my house."[4] But Anse's "word" to transport her body to Jefferson

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[1] As I Lay Dying, p. 463.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., pp. 465-66.

[4] Ibid., p. 467.

violates even the dead "I" of Addie Bundren, which undergoes a succession of quite untidy outrages and, furthermore, decomposes vicariously through the morbid thoughts and actions of her family. Thus does the word work its vengeance upon those who deny it validity.

The actual relationship of the word to reality cannot be generalized, except to say that there is such a relationship and that the search for its nature is one of the motivating impulses in the Southern regional novel. Since language is the principal form of human communication, the regional novelist is apt to be especially interested in the degree and quality of communication enabled by the Southern oral tradition. Occasionally we find the suggestion that the spoken word can express or effect real spiritual communion among persons, as does the broken, illiterate, but impassioned rhetoric of the Negro preacher in The Sound and the Fury, whose second, genuine voice stirs the congregation deeply, "sinking into their hearts and speaking there again when it had ceased in fading and cumulate echoes." Then:

> And the congregation seemed to watch with its own eyes while the voice consumed him, until he was nothing and they were nothing and there was not even a voice but instead their hearts were speaking to one another beyond the need for words. . . .[1]

Much more common, however, is the idea that language connects human beings only peripherally, while more vital communication awaits other measures, such as physical contact. Thus language is described by Grandfather Compson as "'that meager and fragile thread . . . by which the little surface corners and edges of men's secret and solitary lives may be joined for an instant now and then. . . .'"[2] And Addie Bundren too sees language as

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[1]Fury, p. 310. [2]Absalom, p. 251.

inadequate to a person's need for communion with others, and so explains her former disciplinary problems with her pupils: "I knew that it had been, not that they had dirty noses, but that we had had to use one another by words, like spiders dangling by their mouths from a beam, swinging and twisting and never touching, and that only through the blows of the switch could my blood and their blood flow as one stream."[1]

Finally, as a superlative and appropriate complication to this theme of linguistic reality, we find the paradox that words may belie facts, yet express a greater than factual truth. Insofar, that is, as words express or correspond to what the heart and the blood know or believe to be true, they convey a truth superior to that witnessed by the senses or inferred by the intellect. Thus Gavin Stevens distinguishes between poetic and factual truth:

> But, then, poets are almost always wrong about facts. That's because they are not really interested in facts: only in truth: which is why the truth they speak is so true that even those who hate poets by simple natural instinct are exalted and terrified by it.[2]

On this level of truth and language, the word is nearly identified with the Word, of whose accessibility through language Jack Cropleigh despaired; it is associated with man's dream, the will to believe, what should be true even if it is not actually existent. This association is made explicit in the following passage on Eula Varner and her meaning to the men of Frenchman's Bend:

> . . . a little lost village, nameless, without grace, forsaken, yet which . . . without tumescence conceived, and bore . . . a word, a single will to believe born of envy and old deathless regret . . . the word, the dream and wish of all males under the sun capable of harm . . . the word, with its implications of lost triumphs and defeats of unimaginable splendor—and which best: to have that word,

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[1] As I Lay Dying, p. 463. [2] Town, p. 88.

> that dream and hope for future, or to have had need to flee that word and dream, for past.[1]

Now, the complication wrought by this conception of linguistic truth is evident if we recollect a kind of linguistic falsity, previously considered, which also results from the will to believe: the "incontrovertible fact" which people make of unreality "when their desires become words." The question, as it is dramatically realized in the regional novel, is this: How does the Southerner discern the wish-word which is true from the wish-word which is false, since both are disjunct from factual reality? Or is it possible that, on this level, truth is altogether relative to the speaker—that, for example, the several, contradictory versions of George Fairchild's actions on the railroad trestle are equally true, to the extent that they express their speakers' dreams of truth? Isaac McCaslin would say "no":

> "And I know what you will say now: That if truth is one thing to me and another thing to you, how will we choose which is truth? You don't need to choose. The heart already knows. . . . there is only one truth and it covers all things that touch the heart."[2]

However, Isaac's argument is offset by McCaslin Edmonds' counter-argument, by the fact that Isaac got this notion from Edmonds in the first place,[3] and by the additional fact that Isaac's decision based on this idea is proved by later events to be a mistake. The point remains that picking his way among the various degrees and kinds of truth is an excruciatingly complex task for the Southerner because of his society's oral tradition.

At the beginning of the present discussion I said that the Southern oral tradition is articulated technically as well as thematically in

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[1] Hamlet, p. 149. [2] Moses, p. 260. [3] Ibid., p. 297.

the regional novel. It appears as technique in two overlapping modes: narrative figures and point of view. A minor use of the oral tradition in narrative structures involves public or quasi-public speeches in one form or another--what has been called "official" Southern rhetoric. The regional novel is heavily sprinkled with courtroom scenes, political meetings, church services, and other types of public gatherings, on most of which occasions a rhetorical voice is heard pronouncing the communal credo and, as a result, motivating the characters in diverse ways. The "quasi-public" speech occurs when a character such as Gavin Stevens or Willie Stark harangues one or two listeners in a private context; the style is the same as the public style, and its use in a private situation may suggest the speaker's fixation in a monomaniacal habit of thought.

A more important use of the oral tradition in narrative structures is that of the anecdotal or legendary form either to present the main action or a part of it, or to introduce digressive but thematically relevant material. Occasionally we find a whole novel, such as The Ponder Heart, presented in the form of a tale orally related, with the casual, backward and forward motions characteristic of the oral tale, to us, the captivated listeners. Far more often the tale or legend is interspersed with other forms of narration to provide important information from another, sometimes a communal, angle. Examples of the tale used in this way are the Fairchild legends in Delta Wedding, Sol Leatherbury's and Jack Cropleigh's stories in The Velvet Horn, Hamish Bond's story of his life in Band of Angels, Will Falls's and Jenny Du Pre's Civil War stories in Sartoris, Rosa Coldfield's Sutpen fable in Absalom, Absalom! and the many Ratliff and Ratliffesque tales recounted in The Hamlet, The Town,

and The Mansion. Finally, there is the kind of tale, such as Willie Proudfit's in Night Rider, which is a structural "digression" but which relates significantly to the ideas motivating the main line of action. These illustrations are meant to suggest the recurrence of the tale's form as a formal element in the regional novel, and therefore to stress the frequency with which the reader is directly exposed to the same linguistic considerations affecting the Southern character so complexly.

The technique of point of view in the regional novel also realizes with peculiar force and thematic bearing the Southern oral tradition. That tradition and its consequences both lend additional significance to conventional points of view and produce innovations in the technical category of narrative authority. First, the use of the oral tale as a structural element is one example of the extra dimension which the oral tradition gives to a conventional authoritative device. The introduction of such first-person tales in the structural progression is certainly not original with the Southern regional novel. What is original, I think, is the meaning and effect of that device. That is to say, temporarily, depending upon the length of the intercalation, the reader is subjected to the same stresses and questions as the auditors in the novel—the complex considerations described under the "thematic" aspect of Southern rhetoric. The reader experiences with the fictional auditors the tension between the objective truth of the events related (whose objectivity may be highly questionable) and their subjective truth for the tale-teller. The reader may also be captivated, like the fictional auditors, by the intrinsic interest of the tale's events and led astray from the bearing of those events on the main action and from pursuing the needs of that action

expeditiously. Or, in another version, the reader may share with both raconteur and audience a communal tension between the noncommittal, wry, humorous manner of the relation and the underlying gravity of its import, as is true of Ratliff's Snopes stories. Regardless of the specific situation, the use of the first-person point of view in the oral tale reproduces in the reader effects analogous to those experienced by the Southern characters.

And the same generalization applies to other kinds and uses of narrative authority, with particular variations according to particular situations. For example, two of Miss Welty's recurrent, interrelated themes are the paralysis and superficiality in personal relations engendered by loquacity, and the idea that in talk only the exterior outlines of self are revealed while the inner self, one's unique sensibility, recedes from view. Considered together, these themes are a version of the opinion that talk or rhetoric impedes vital communication among persons, although of course Miss Welty's themes are complex, subtle, and unique in their realization. And their realization consists in part in her manipulating point of view so that at times it is completely objective and auditive, when nothing is perceived but the spoken words of characters, to the extent even that the speakers' identities are effaced. At such times the characters tend to grow opaque and flat, and the reader slides with them along the surfaces of words, out of touch with the essences of things and people, in contrast to those still moments when, exterior silence prevailing, the reader and the observing character penetrate via the sensibility (exhibited by third-person, restricted exposition in a conjectural, exclamatory style) deep into the inner life of things.

There are other possible correlations between aspects of the Southern oral tradition and conventional points of view which can enrich the thematic and affective significance of the latter. In a society where nearly continuous, sociable conversation is the norm, extreme reticence indicative of introspection or introversion--at least withdrawal from the social current--can be symptomatic simultaneously of incapacitating personal disorder and of institutional breakdown. Southern novelists have often used the first-person point of view to dramatize both of these states. In The Fathers, for instance, the first-person narrator tells the story not so much to the reader as to himself, in a kind of reverie, and there is a fairly explicit contrast between him at the time of telling, "an unmarried old man, having nothing else to do, with a competence saved from the practice of medicine," and the first scene he recalls: "'I see figures on the lawn that morning at Pleasant Hill, I hear voices. Of that large company I remember the ordinary tone of the conversation, the hospitable anxiety of the nearer connection for the comfort of the more distant kin and friends. . . .'"[1] Furthermore, the effect of the contrast between "the ordinary tone of the conversation" and the narrator's lonely, reflective voice is sharpened by the fact that Lacy Buchan's half-acknowledged solipsism is the result of the events he relates, so that in a sense the content of the novel is responsible for its form.

Faulkner and Miss Welty utilize first-person narration to similar effects. In The Golden Apples Ran McLain's chaotic, anguished, first-person reverie is a telling counterpart to and consequence of other

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[1]p. 5.

sections dominated by the incessant, objectively rendered gabble of the Morgana women, and both extremes are contrasted with a more harmonious conjunction of interior and exterior perspectives achieved in certain passages related from the restricted, third-person point of view. Likewise, in several of Faulkner's novels (The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, the Snopes trilogy) first-person perspectives are used to represent psychical states variously disoriented with respect to objective reality, and it is often ironical that an excessively subjective orientation, such as Quentin Compson's, exhibits at the same time both a revulsion from Southern rhetoric and still an interior domination by that rhetoric, as voices from the past continue to disrupt consciousness of the present.

It is in this area of "voice" that Southern novelists, notably Faulkner and Lytle, have worked what I think is an innovation in the technique of point of view: it is the bardic or communal voice. Lytle describes its origin and nature as follows:

> At a family gathering . . . there would always be one voice more capable than another of dominating the conversation. It was a kind of bardic voice. This opened my eyes to a technical device about the point of view, what might be called the Hovering Bard. Everybody knows something about a happening; but nobody knows it all. The bard, by hovering above the action, to see it all, collects the segments. In the end, in the way he fits the parts together, the one story will finally get told.[1]

And again, of Faulkner's technique: "what is unique to him is a kind of Bardic quality and tone. . . . The bard tells the well-known story but known incompletely until he brings all the fragments into their true relationship, thus revealing the fuller truth in the mold created by his

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[1]Foreword to A Novel, p. xix.

greater talent and knowledge."[1]

In Lytle's own The Velvet Horn, Jack Cropleigh is the individualized bard, containing within himself the collective knowledge and wisdom of the community. There are however sizeable portions of material inaccessible to the personal Cropleigh, told from a kind of omniscience which we can assume to be Cropleigh's bardic extension or projection, much after the fashion of Darl's clairvoyant visions in the twelfth and seventeenth sections of As I Lay Dying. Faulkner's normal "bardic voice" appears in novels such as Light in August and the Snopes trilogy in the form either of lyrical omniscience, hardly distinguishable from conventional omniscience except for its communal, panoramic sweep and occasionally rhapsodic quality, or of first-person-plural authority. The latter, with its typical "And so we thought . . . And so we knew" authorization, incorporates technically both the communal and the rhetorical features of Southern life; the technique, like the substantive aspects of these features, operates equivocally, being wrong as often as right, or right as to fact and wrong as to motivation and meaning of fact. Of all these techniques, it should be noted that their special relevance derives from the Southern world they help to portray, where the spoken word has the peculiar status described in the first part of this section.

The twelfth and last feature of the Southern image to be considered here is the Southern tradition of violence. Southern violence is indirectly related to all of the other Southern traits, insofar as the tensions bred by them are apt to erupt into violence at any time, and it

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[1]"The Son of Man," p. 129.

is directly or causally related to the South's history, its agrarianism, its bi-racialism, and the cult of the lady and code of honor.

The South's publicly sanctioned use of force during the period 1860-1876, venerable as that period became in the Southern mind, established the tradition of violence as not only a permissible recourse but actually a civic duty under certain circumstances, such as unconventional behavior by Negroes or flagrant violations of communal mores by anyone. Southern vigilante justice, no matter how questionable the circumstances in which it is exercised, always hearkens back to the impeccable authority of the Confederate army and the first Ku Klux Klan. Thus when high-principled Captain Todd seeks to withdraw from the Association Board because of the worsening outrages of its auxiliary night riders, he is reminded of his Klan and Civil War records, the presumption being that his participation in the former violence justifies his support of the present. Captain Todd is one of the few who can discriminate between just and dubious uses of force:

> "I was in the war and in the Klan, all right. And I helped hang those men. I acted according to my lights, Mr. Sills. And I'm acting according to them now. I thought I knew who my people were then. . . . I just don't know as I can say who my people are now."[1]

But Captain Todd is rare; for perhaps the majority of Southern men, a coloring of respectability is sufficient to invoke the violent ghost of the "Confederate heritage."

The South's agrarian economy is another factor contributing to its predisposition to violence, for several reasons. First, the average Southerner's closeness to nature, with its concomitant sense of the

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[1] Night Rider, p. 179.

elemental, breeds in him an acceptance of violence as an inescapable part of life. Nature herself, in her weather and the competitive existence of her biological species, alternates violence with tranquillity and offers plentiful examples of savage combat, death, and cannibalism which came unconsciously to suffuse the world view of the onlooker. Again, in his own struggle with nature for survival, the farmer must employ varying kinds and degrees of violence, so that it becomes habitual with him. Clearing land, plowing recalcitrant soil, domesticating animals, hunting game to eke out his crop income, and killing natural predators--all these and other routine activities not only accustom the farmer to violent action, but also necessitate his possessing the instruments of violence--guns, knives, axes, scythes, rope, and so on--which are thereby available for use against his fellow man. Even a Mink Snopes can lay hold of an old shotgun and a few shells when the need for revenge grows too overpowering to be borne. Finally, the scattered population, natural environment affording shelter, and meager policing forces of rural communities render crime prevention and law enforcement extremely difficult, and thus tempt the passionate Southerner to indulge his taste for violence.

Then the Negro's presence and status, the cult of Southern womanhood, and the code of honor all interwork to produce an explosive complex which often breaks out into violence. Of course the Negro can be chastised for any transgression--or for none but being in the wrong place at the wrong time--, but the offense for which communal punishment is inescapable is any gesture, from flirtation to rape, toward breaking down blood lines--any offense against white Southern woman, in other words. The violent pattern is epitomized in Percy Grimm's emasculation of the

still-living Joe Christmas, with the moral, "'Now you'll let white women alone, even in hell.'"[1] But the Southerner's code of honor demands punishment for crimes against Southern women committed by white men, too, although usually not in the same degree of severity as that exercised toward the Negro. Although Lee Goodwin is roasted alive for his supposed ravishment of Temple Drake, his case is unusual; normally a white rapist is consigned to the more lenient hand of the law, while a white man who sullies white womanhood less extremely (by seduction, adultery, loose talk, and so on) is challenged to a duel or fist fight, flogged, tarred and feathered, or forced into a shotgun marriage. Nor is chivalric violence restricted to the defense of woman's purity; "satisfaction" is also demanded when one's name, honor, word, and family are impugned. Thus, after Moxby Goodpasture describes Major Lemuel Murdock as "'the son of his father, Angus Murdock, who got rich after the war by land speculation in this state in partnership with Mr. Herman Tilford of Cleveland, Ohio,'" Lem Murdock exacts violent retribution, even though Goodpasture's words are true:

> "He stood there in the station, waiting, while Moxby Goodpasture's hired band was playing, and when Moxby Goodpasture come up, with folks all around him, Lem Murdock bellered out 'Sir!' And he shot him."[2]

Although the code of honor seems to encourage violence, it can be argued that a system of manners as a whole works normally to smooth social intercourse and discourage the forcible settlement of differences, and that at least <u>modern</u> Southern violence is due in part to a breakdown of an older form of manners. Thus Allen Tate asserts that "in ages which suffer the decay of manners, religion, morals, codes, our

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[1] <u>Light in August</u>, p. 407. [2] <u>Heaven's Gate</u>, p. 87.

indestructible vitality demands expression in violence and chaos,"[1] and Herbert M. McLuhan ascribes modern violence to the Southern aristocrat's vulnerability before certain forces of modernism:

> In a world of private lives, sceptical ambitions, and cynical egotisms, the aristocrat or the man of passion is helpless. In a world of merely material appetites his role is to suffer. That is why the world portrayed in the novels of the South is one of violence, passion, and death.[2]

Tate's own creature, George Posey, is one of these whose "indestructible vitality demands expression in violence and chaos," and his opportunistic use and disregard of forms in the pursuit of his private life and skeptical ambition clearly anticipate the modern spirit. So at the beginning of First Manassas, when Southerners' private differences are presumably submerged in common cause against the invading Yankee army, Posey uses the code of honor to avenge a personal affront (after public insult by John Langton, "George raised the pistol and shot him in the face"[3]). The episode is highly significant and somewhat ambiguous. Considered by itself, it could be taken to illustrate the disruptive effect of a formalized violence; but, given the character of George Posey and the structural progress of the novel to this point, we recognize the scene as one of the last stages in the subversion of a formal society by the violent spirit which tolerates no containing form.

These are, I believe, the principal reasons for the prevalence of violence in the Southern world, although several other factors play contributing roles. Regardless of the exact incidence of the various

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[1] Limits of Poetry, p. 301.

[2] "The Southern Quality," p. 370.

[3] Fathers, p. 301.

causes, the South's tradition of violence can be considered under three interrelated headings: the general effect of a violent world on the Southern character; the particular effects according to the two different kinds of violence operative; and the meaning of violence to the parties involved in a violent act.

The prevalence of violence in the South entails its widespread acceptance as one of the facts of existence, with both wholesome and pernicious consequences for the Southern character. On the one hand, its acceptance produces a certain equanimity in the conduct of routine life and a stoicism in times of crisis which are unknown to inhabitants of more peaceful localities. Hardly any Southerner has not had a relative or friend removed violently from the world, or threatened with such removal; he knows it can happen to him, and this knowledge of his own contingency, having been faced, can be forgotten. This psychical habit accounts for that curious air of indifference, and sometimes even lightheartedness, which Southerners often exhibit in the face of imminent personal danger. For instance, on the evening of his own wedding rehearsal, Troy Flavin, "bathed and dressed in a stiff white suit," settles a fight among Negroes, shoots an ice pick out of a threatening Negro's hand, uses the pick to extract buckshot from a Negro's posterior, and, to Shelley Fairchild's protest "'I can't get past--there's blood on the door,'" replies, "'Then you'll have to jump over it, my darlin'' . . . singsong."[1]

On the other hand, this acquaintance with and inurement to violence can produce or symptomize a moral insensitivity to outrages

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[1]Delta Wedding, pp. 195-96.

perpetrated upon others and to the suffering caused thereby. There are times, after all, when one should be shocked by barbarism and savagery, or, as Gavin Stevens puts it, "'Yes. Some things you must always be unable to bear. Some things you must never stop refusing to bear. Injustice and outrage and dishonor and shame.'"[1] Yet, far from being unable to bear violent outrage, many Southerners take a positive satisfaction in it. Gail Hightower accurately characterizes this breed of Southerners,

> who can never take either pleasure or catastrophe or escape from either, without brawling over it. Pleasure, ecstasy, they cannot seem to bear: their escape from it is in violence, in drinking and fighting and praying; catastrophe too, the violence identical and apparently inescapable.[2]

And it is they, as Hightower recognizes, who will lynch--"crucify"--Joe Christmas:

> "And they will do it gladly. . . . Since to pity him would be to admit selfdoubt and to hope for and pity themselves. They will do it gladly, gladly. That's why it is so terrible, terrible, terrible."[3]

Much of the particular effect of a violent deed upon the performer depends upon the character of the performance--in brief, whether it is conceived and executed impersonally or personally. Charles R. Anderson has discerned these two types of violence in the novels of Robert Penn Warren,[4] but the distinction holds for other Southern regional novels. The personal or private deed of violence has a definite relationship to the performer and to a system of morality, however distorted, that is part of the self; it comes from moral awareness of self and has the mark of life and will. Neither the personality of the victim nor

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[1]Intruder, p. 157. [2]Light in August, p. 322. [3]Ibid.

[4]"Violence and Order in the Novels of Robert Penn Warren," Southern Renascence, pp. 207-24.

that of the culprit is effaced; on the contrary, both are heightened and intensified. Hence personal violence has a built-in limitation and can even portend psychological redemption. Impersonal violence, on the other hand, manifests the negation of personality in both actor and victim, both of which are reduced to things or abstractions in the actor's mind. This reduction allows impersonal violence to grow progressively worse, becoming an attraction to violence for its own sake and an escape from the tensions of personal consciousness and responsibility. Impersonal violence leads eventually to psychological and moral extinction. We can perhaps glimpse the difference between the effects of the two types of violence by an actual episode from World War II. Heinrich Himmler, who was the Nazi master-murderer by paper, that is impersonally, once ordered "an Einsatz detachment to execute a hundred inmates of the Minsk prison, so that he could see how it was done." According to an eye-witness,

> Himmler almost swooned when he saw the effect of the first volley from the firing squad. A few minutes later, when the shots failed to kill two Jewish women outright, the S.S. Fuehrer became hysterical. One result of this experience was an order from Himmler that henceforth the women and children should not be shot but dispatched in the gas vans.[1]

In other words, even to the incredible Himmler, the realization of the victims as suffering persons, instead of abstract integers on paper, had some slight, grim, humanizing effect.

So with violent persons in the Southern regional novel. To the extent that they identify themselves with impersonal forces, whether mobs or principles or sheer mechanistic action, they lose sight of themselves and their victims as persons and become increasingly dehumanized, become

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[1]William L. Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich (New York: Fawcett World Library, 1962), p. 1254.

dark and empty inside and strive the more frenziedly to find themselves through violent contact with the outside world. In Warren's work the classic case is that of Percy Munn, who from his first exhilarated identification with a political crowd progressively loses himself in forms of violent action--plant-bed scraping, flogging, vigilante killing, the raping of his wife, mass raiding and dynamiting, killing from ambush--until at the end he thinks he can find himself only by killing Senator Tolliver:

> "I'm nothing," he uttered distantly, and cocked the revolver, but did not point it. "But when I do it, I won't be nothing. It came to me, Do it, Do it, and you'll not be nothing. . . . and I came here. To kill you." He pointed the revolver. . . . "Not because you are filthy, but for myself."[1]

Other examples from Warren's novels are Sugar-Boy, who is perfectly sure of himself only when firing a gun or driving a car; Percival Skrogg, who translates his "pure idea" of the world into a masterful skill at duelling because "that was the moment when, after all, he was most fully himself. It was the moment of the pure idea"[2]; and Jeremiah Beaumont, who likewise seeks to live, at one stage, by the pure idea but finds his fulfillment in a fight when "I hit him in the face with all my force and felt a great burst of delight in the act, and the jar and the tingle up my arm filled me with joy."[3] These examples of violence are impersonal in the sense that the personality of the victim--his humanity--is obliterated in the name of an idea or the thrill of an emotion, and with that obliteration goes part of the violator's humanity.

Faulkner, too, stresses the degradation which accompanies

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[1] Night Rider, p. 457.

[2] World Enough and Time, p. 98.

[3] Ibid., p. 110.

impersonal violence, especially mob violence. In a mob one loses his identity, becomes part of a composite thing, and hence forfeits personal responsibility for his actions. So when Charles Mallison is running to intervene between Lucas Beauchamp and a mob, "he remembered again the faces myriad yet curiously identical in their lack of individual identity, their complete relinquishment of individual identity into one We not even impatient, not even hurryable, almost gala in its complete obliviousness of its own menace."[1] In these circumstances the victim becomes as anonymous to the members of the mob as they themselves are; he too becomes a dehumanized thing on whom any outrage can be perpetrated, since it is no longer outrage. That is the reason why it is good for members of a mob to get a close look at their handiwork; it can bring home to them the humanity of their victim and the extent of their crime. Thus the three-man vanguard of the mob led by Percy Grimm, himself acting the depersonalized pawn of a metaphysical Player, come in their "shameless savageness" face to face with their sacrificed victim, and what they see changes the "nigger" Christmas to "man" and constitutes for them the redemptive grace of the sacrifice:

> When they approached to see what he was about, they saw that the man was not dead yet, and when they saw what Grimm was doing one of the men gave a choked cry and stumbled back into the wall and began to vomit. . . . For a long moment [Christmas] looked up at them with peaceful and unfathomable and unbearable eyes. Then . . . from out the slashed garments about his hips and loins the pent black blood seemed to rush like a released breath. It seemed to rush out of his pale body like the rush of sparks from a rising rocket; upon that black blast the man seemed to rise soaring into their memories forever and ever. They are not to lose it. . . . It will be there, musing, quiet, steadfast, not fading and not particularly threatful, but of itself alone serene, of itself alone triumphant.[2]

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[1] Intruder, p. 105.

[2] Light in August, pp. 406-407.

This passage, which in its entirety is probably Faulkner's finest prose, shows us impersonal violence instantly transformed to personal, transformed by the access of the personal vision. It is hard to believe that these men, possibly excepting Grimm, would ever again figure in a lynch mob, not with Joe Christmas' blood "of itself alone triumphant" in their haggard memories.

For that--some sort of intimate communion between violator and victim--is the effect of personal violence in the Southern world, as it is also the subject of our third topic, the meaning of violence to the parties involved in a violent deed. Impersonal violence not only has the effects indicated above, but is essentially meaningless, at least to the perpetrator: if committed mechanically, no question of meaning occurs; if committed in a search for meaning, it is still meaningless because it erroneously postulates meaning in some absolute structure outside the self and in an infinite series of destructive acts. Personal violence, on the other hand, has the effect of welding the violator with the violated in some more or less permanent union of inner beings. It is meaningful because it expresses the intention of a person to communicate himself to another person in a limited act, and it is always successful to the extent that it is personal in this way.

These facets of personal violence can be illustrated handily in Mink Snopes's murder of Jack Houston. As we saw in the section on Southern agrarianism, Mink wishes to express by this act, which is very precise, limited, and concrete in nature, his existence as a man, "his feelings as a sentient creature," and he would if he could leave a placard declaring his identity and his reasons for the murder. Furthermore, Mink

wishes that he could convey these same points to Houston himself, as we learn in The Mansion:

> . . . thinking how if there had only been time, space, between the roar of the gun and the impact of the shot, for him to say to Houston and for Houston to have to hear it: "I ain't shooting you because of them thirty-seven and a half four-bit days. . . . That aint why I shot you. I killed you because of that-ere extry one-dollar fee."[1]

On his part, in the brief time available to him, Houston recognizes and reciprocates the personality of the deed, for his dying words are an execration of Snopes, so that the two are bonded together in irrevocable communion:

> . . . looking up out of the red roar, into the face which with his own was wedded and twinned forever now by the explosion of that ten-gauge shell--the dead who would carry the living into the ground with him; the living who must bear about the repudiating earth with him forever, the deathless slain--then, as the slanted barrels did not move: "God damn it, couldn't you even borrow two shells, you fumbling ragged--" and put the world away.[2]

A discussion of such personal violence appropriately follows a section on Southern rhetoric, because when and where so much confidence is placed in language, and it fails, recourse to violence as a means of personal communication seems, if not quite inevitable, at least very probable. We noticed this pattern in connection with Addie Bundren's revulsion from language: how words kept her and her pupils isolated, while whipping united them. Further in explanation,

> I would look forward to the times when they faulted, so I could whip them. When the switch fell I could feel it upon my flesh; when it welted and ridged it was my blood that ran, and I would think with each blow of the switch: Now you are aware of me! Now I am something in your secret and selfish life, who have marked your blood with my own forever and ever.[3]

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[1] p. 39.

[2] Hamlet, p. 221.

[3] As I Lay Dying, pp. 461-62.

Something of the same theme appears in Eudora Welty's novels, only with a different emphasis and by an inverse approach. Here, words typically establish a superficial, comforting solidarity among persons but stultify the inner life; the act of violence cuts through or breaks this solidarity and reveals at once the beauty and the terror of life, which are respectively the mystery of individual personality and the painful fact of its isolation or separateness. But only from this point of revelation can the inner life emerge and true communion, which is voiceless, proceed. In other words, violence prepares for and perhaps expresses, but is not itself, love. Delta Wedding, for example, actually revolves around the episode on the railroad trestle, for in that violent incident the revelation of personality and separateness causes Robbie Reid Fairchild to question her husband's allegiance, and Dabney and Troy to become engaged. Virgie Rainey expresses this paradoxical effect of violence mythically in The Golden Apples: "Cutting off the Medusa's head was the heroic act, perhaps, that made visible a horror in life, that was at once the horror in love, Virgie thought--the separateness."[1]

Finally, this discussion of personal violence also appropriately concludes our analysis of the Southern image. The tensions created by the ambiguous and complex operation of all these aspects of the Southern world, the difficulty of defining the self caused by the same aspects, the difficulty of communicating the self, which indeed is part of its definition, posed by the barriers of family, community, class, race, and language—all tend to personal violence as a short-cut solution. Rosa Coldfield expresses the ultimate rationale of this solution when she

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[1]p. 275.

recounts the way Clytie, her sister's mulatto half-daughter, once tried to deny her access to Ellen by first a word and then a touch on the arm, which is a form of violence to Rosa:

> Then she touched me, and then I did stop dead. . . . Because there is something in the touch of flesh with flesh which abrogates, cuts sharp and straight across the devious intricate channels of decorous ordering, which enemies as well as lovers know because it makes them both--touch and touch of that which is the citadel of the central I-Am's private own: not spirit, soul; the liquorish and ungirdled mind is anyone's to take in any darkened hallway of this earthly tenement. But let flesh touch with flesh, and watch the fall of all the eggshell shibboleth of caste and color too.[1]

III

This, then, is the image of the South which emerges from the Southern regional novel. It is, of course, an over-simplified outline, in which somewhat arbitrary categories hypostatize forces and institutions appearing interfused in the actual novel. Moreover, the ramifications of the various features can only be adumbrated in this type of general survey, while additional features which might justifiably be discussed, such as Southern legalism, have to be passed over because of their subordinate nature and the demands of economy. Nevertheless, even in outline the Southern image figures as an almost incredibly complex world in which, as reader or character, to make one's way.

A question which naturally arises at aboutthis juncture is the extent to which the image as outlined should be present in a given novel before it can properly be called a "regional novel of the South." This is not a question of mere labeling for the fun of it, or the self-satisfaction. Rather, it is a question of a minimal circumscription, within which a sufficiency of the Southern image is operatively present to

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[1]Absalom, p. 139.

produce the thematic effects characteristic of the typical regional novel, and outside of which the lineaments of the Southern image are replaced by, or shade into, a different type of enveloping action producing a different range of thematic effects. It is a question that neither can nor should be answered exactly, but there is a very general criterion for making the distinction, and its use can be illustrated copiously.

The criterion stipulates the working together in concert of some majority combination of these features and the more or less prominent functioning of certain specific features, which can be regarded as "cardinal" indices in the sense that their absence in a given novel would locate that novel in a different category. The "cardinal" features are those conventionally ascribed to the Southern world (the conventionality is important), whether disparagingly or approvingly: what is evoked when the proper noun "South" is mentioned. They are the family-clan ramifications; Southern agrarianism; bi-racialism; the weighty presence of the past, especially of the specifically Southern part; and, less importantly, the special role of woman and religious fundamentalism.

Southern regional novelists have written several novels which are non-regional by reason of the exclusion of one or more of these features. For example, in Faulkner's work, Soldier's Pay, Mosquitoes, Pylon, and The Wild Palms are set in the South, yet lack in varying degrees the historical, racial, agrarian, and familial dimensions which are peculiarly Southern. Warren's The Cave does not possess the typically regional temporal perspective; also it introduces the Jewish minority relationship in place of the Negro's, as does the same author's Wilderness (which is also formally non-regional). Caroline Gordon's The

Malefactors contains most of the Southern image except the bi-racial situation (which, to be sure, has never assumed prominence in her work), but that image is viewed largely in retrospect from an urban, cosmopolitan setting, and is also given a supra-regional construction by the novel's informing Catholic philosophy. In general, the more a novel tends to be located within the recognizable context of modernism, with its urbanization, industrialization, mass society, high mobility, deracination from the soil, disintegration of traditional institutions, and so on, the less likely it is to be regional, in the Southern or any other application.

The same generalization holds true of many non-regional novels written by other Southern authors: the context of modernism dissipates the likelihood of the regional effect. Without using precisely this terminology, Professors Rubin and Jacobs yet make the same point in contrasting the novels of William Styron and James Agee with those of "earlier writers" from the South, for whom "man as an individual does not exist apart from a social framework."[1]

> Yet, though the Styron and Agee novels are greatly different in form and attitude, they have several striking similarities to each other, and differences from the novels of the earlier writers. Both are built squarely upon the growing and finally complete isolation of the protagonists from their society. Also, in neither is there a vital historical sense—that is, measurement of the present by the standards of the past, or depiction of the present as being importantly determined by the past.[2]

For my part, I would extend this observation on Lie Down in Darkness, Set This House on Fire, and A Death in the Family to include other non-regional novels by certain "earlier writers" exempted by Rubin and Jacobs: Thomas Wolfe, for example, and Erskine Caldwell, Carson McCullers, and, a little later, Flannery O'Connor and Truman Capote. In all of these novelists,

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[1]Introduction to South, p. 12. [2]Ibid., p. 22.

it seems to me, the essential lineaments of the Southern image are so attenuated or effaced by a modernist enveloping action that we are confronted with a different species of fiction.

These comments, I hope it is understood, are merely descriptive, by no means evaluative. Very moving and satisfying effects, aesthetically speaking, issue from the novels of Wolfe, Mrs. McCullers, Miss O'Connor, Capote, Elizabeth Madox Roberts, and many other Southern novelists; only, they are effects proper to their kinds, not those of the Southern regional novel. The thematic effects of the Southern regional novel occur when a substantial portion of the recognizably Southern image has been dramatized and mythicized.

I call the entire ideational and emotive area of these effects—the novel's "thematic range," to use an earlier phrase—the "definition of innocence." "Innocence" has three related meanings, which may be present individually or collectively in any regional novel of the South. It means ignorance; it means the illusion of moral guiltlessness; and it means abstention from significant engagement, or participation in moral action. The "definition" of innocence means first the representation or portrayal of any or all of these kinds of innocence; but then, second, it also means the <u>limitation</u> of such innocence: the discovery of his innocence, and hence a movement toward self-knowledge and identity, by the character or reader, or both.

First there is innocence as mere ignorance. As a line from Rubin and Jacobs continues,

> . . . in the Southern novel man as an individual does not exist apart from a social framework. . . . he must always define himself in terms of the community in which he lives. This conflict—the individual within society, product of it and often as not its victim, yet at the

> same time a free agent with the responsibility for his actions--is present in every one of the Southern writers.[1]

But the several features of the Southern world, each one complex, ambiguous in meaning and validity, impinge by dramatisation and mythicisation on the character so that he does not know in what relationship he stands to society, does not know how much he is its product and victim, how much "a free agent with the responsibility of his actions." Or, in the division of his faculties, he may "think" one thing, "know" another, "believe" still another, and "do" yet another, in Faulkner's vocabulary. The innocent by ignorance may, like Percy Grimm, find it agreeable to believe that his life is arranged altogether in terms of his society's shibboleths because such belief makes his life "uncomplex and inescapable as a barren corridor." Or he may, like Gail Hightower and Isaac McCaslin and Jeremiah Beaumont at one stage, believe that he can free himself by an act of renunciation or flight, and thus accede to the condition of natural man, unlimited by other than the endowments of his nature and existing outside society, its mores, manners, taboos, and shaping patterns of action. Or, on the scale between these extremes, he may, like the Fairchild girls and a host of other Southern characters, be struggling to find out who he is, to "define himself in terms of the community in which he lives" although the terms are equivocal, indefinite, and confusing.

The definition of ignorant innocence proceeds by its representation to the point where the character, or possibly only the reader in one version of the pattern, discovers the extent of the former's determination by society, the ratio in which he is society's product yet also

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[1] Ibid., pp. 12-13.

a free agent. It is the kind of discovery made by Jack Burden in All the King's Men, Virgie Rainey in The Golden Apples, Dabney and Ellen Fairchild in Delta Wedding, and many others. The penetration of ignorance about one's relationship with society means the seizure of one's identity, as Robert Penn Warren explains:

> Only by knowledge does man achieve his identity. . . . knowledge gives him his identity because it gives him the image of himself. And the image of himself necessarily has a foreground and a background, for man is in the world not as a billiard ball placed on a table. . . . He is, rather, in the world with continual and intimate interpenetration, an inevitable osmosis of being, which in the end does not deny, but affirms, his identity. It affirms it, for out of a progressive understanding of this interpenetration, this texture of relations, man creates new perspectives, discovers new values--that is, a new self--and so the identity is continually emerging, an unfolding, a self-affirming and . . . a self-corrective creation.[1]

The definition of innocence on this level thus involves, in critical terms, a simultaneous complication and resolution of the action: as the "texture of relations" unfolds, bewildering and misleading the character, it is also becoming visible, available for scrutiny, "progressive understanding," and the consequent emergence of a new self out of the old innocence.

The second meaning of "innocence" is the more conventional one of guiltlessness, or rather the illusion of guiltlessness, since the typical regional novel is orthodox in affirming the universality of complicity in evil, whether by original or actual sin, or by simple fellowship in the guilty human race. Innocence on this level is also based on ignorance of one's relationship to society, but here it is the additional ignorance of one's moral relationship to society--of the extent to which

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[1]"Knowledge and the Image of Man," Sewanee Review, LXIII (Spring, 1955), 186-87.

one is responsible for his own crimes and also implicated in the crimes of others. Conceivably, innocence of the first type could be dissipated without one's apprehension of personal and communal responsibility for evil, as indeed happens to many of Miss Welty's characters, who dwell in a rather anomalous, amoral world. Generally, however, the recognition of one's true relationship with his fellow men produces simultaneously an acknowledgement of his share in their guilt, and of theirs in his.

Moral innocence is the peculiar province of the Southern regional novel because of the guilt-laden character of the Southern world, which affords plentiful opportunities for incurring guilty feelings, both genuine and spurious. The extensive network of obligations and taboos makes it difficult for the Southerner to act without betraying someone, some ideal, or some revered institution. Religious fundamentalism, the exalted status of woman, the mystique of blood, the code of honor, the pressure of the venerable past--all insure the ubiquity of occasions for guilt but augment the difficulty of assessing true guilt. Actually, therefore, with their weighty inheritance of guilt, few Southern characters manage to preserve an illusion of total innocence. It is rather that, from the hierarchy of offenses, they accuse themselves of the less serious and avoid confrontation of the graver, or else they justify the major offense by the necessity to avoid the minor, as Henry Sutpen justifies murder to preclude miscegenation. Or, again, like Gail Hightower, they may think they have "paid for" a minor offense, purchased immunity from the guilt-punishment pattern, only to find that their specious immunity is itself a crime.

The definition of moral innocence proceeds by the progressive revelation of the Southerner's community with his fellows in moral guilt.

As the contradictory, incriminatory features of the Southern image are laid out and pieced together, false innocence and superficial guilt are penetrated to disclose the degree of personal responsibility for evil. This revelation is a moral definition in the logical sense of relating the individual to what he has in common with others (his complicity in guilt) and at the same time of distinguishing his individuality, which enables personal moral responsibility. The case of Gail Hightower illustrates the paradox of this definition. Isolated and "immune," Hightower can perceive the guilt of others but not his own. But when he becomes involved in the Byron Bunch-Lena Grove-Joe Christmas complex of action, Hightower comes to see his share in the communal responsibility for Christmas's lynching (that is, his failure as a religious leader), and in turn his personal responsibility for his wife's death. The same case illustrates the technical or formal process of "definition" in the regional novel: the dramatic action defines by specific application the validity of attitudes assumed through the pictorialization of one's relationship to the Southern world. Thus Hightower's inadequate involvement in the Grove-Christmas lines of action unmasks the deficiency of his "innocent" immunity, arrived at through the mythicization of his grandfather. Similarly, in _All the King's Men_ Jack Burden's various "pictures" of his innocent relationship to the world are successively tested in action and revealed in their inadequacy as they progressively aggravate the evil consequences of the action.

The third meaning of "innocence" is abstention from active commitment to moral action. It is detachment, non-engagement, or rather, again, the _illusion_ of such, because in the sphere of moral action,

detachment is really a form of negative action, creating a vacuum apt to be filled by amoral or immoral forces. Here we must distinguish between the aesthetic attitude of innocence, which is desirable in its disinclination to use or exploit the "precious object," and the moral posture of detachment, which is defective in its refusal to essay the rectification of evil. This posture is the second in the "trinity of conscience" which Faulkner perceives in Moby Dick and his own A Fable:

> ". . . the three men in Moby Dick, who represent the trinity of conscience: knowing nothing, knowing but not caring, knowing and caring. The same trinity is represented in A Fable by the young Jewish pilot officer, who said, 'This is terrible. I refuse to accept it, even if I must refuse life to do so'; the old French Quartermaster General, who said, 'This is terrible, but we can weep and bear it'; and the English battalion runner, who said, 'This is terrible, I'm going to do something about it.'"[1]

When the innocence of ignorance and that of guiltlessness are dispelled, the Southerner has the option of maintaining the innocence of detachment, as do in their various ways Quentin Compson, Isaac McCaslin, and Jack Burden, or of intervening in the action to try to amend a vicious situation, as do Charles Mallison (in Intruder in the Dust), V. K. Ratliff, Gavin Stevens, and Private Porsum (in At Heaven's Gate). Because it entails the incurment of additional guilt, the latter course of entering "the awful responsibility of time"[2] is painful to undertake and pursue, and the moment of decision is often the climax of the regional novel. Technically, a shift from preponderant description, exposition, and desultory narrative to concentrated narrative and dramatic scenes often marks the passage from detached innocence to active involvement.

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[1]Malcolm Cowley (ed.), Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews (New York: The Viking Press, 1958), pp. 132-33.

[2]All the King's Men, p. 464.

These are some aspects of innocence in the characters as the theme emerges from the dramatization of the Southern image. In addition, the theme is reinforced by certain motions occurring within the reader as a result of the same fragmentary impingement of that image. In general, the reader's experience develops analogously with the character's: initial bewilderment at contradictory, ambiguous meanings and values from the Southern world, all competing for recognition and priority; captivation by the seemingly irrelevant, leading into devious byways that immediately confuse but later clarify the main development; progressive understanding of the society-self relationship; and an ultimate seizure of identity, which for the reader is probably constituted by the "key moment":

> Such a moment brings into focus all previous events and interprets all previous events. It is the moment of illumination for the whole story. It is the germ of the story, and contains in itself, by implication at least, the total meaning of the story.[1]

One very important variation from this analogous development of reader-character experiences is that species of the regional novel in which the characters undergo little or no enlightenment. Here only the reader experiences the development from and insight into innocence; as a result, he concludes the novel with a considerable ironic distance established between himself and the characters. This species frequently employs a fairly large cast of characters, shifting points of view, and parallel, tangential lines of action, in place of the close concentration upon a central character's developments. Examples of the species are The Sound and the Fury, At Heaven's Gate, The Golden Apples, and, in part, the Snopes trilogy.

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[1]Brooks and Warren, Understanding Fiction, p. 577.

There is, however, one momentous ingredient of the reader's expeience which lessens his advantage over the characters in any species of the Southern regional novel, but which enhances considerably the thematic definition of innocence. That is the reader's status, normally, as an outsider to the Southern world of the novel. He comes to the novel an "innocent," perhaps in his total ignorance, perhaps in his preconceptions and prejudgments. He possesses "outside" conventions about the South which he attempts to apply initially to the novel's situation, only to find that they won't work, as they should, to explain the characters and and their actions. The reader has usually heard of the Southern features discussed in this chapter, but he has construed them from one angle only, probably the disparaging one. For example, he knows about Southern religious fundamentalism, but he knows of it principally as narrow-minded, morally intolerant, bigoted hypocrisy--the H. L. Mencken version of Southern religion--, not the genuine, profound, and quite fundamentalist piety revealed in Ashby Wyndham and in the Negro preacher and congregation of The Sound and the Fury. Now, all the features of the Southern image operate equivocally, as their presentation here has tried to show. Therefore, the reader will find his preconceptions simultaneously or successively confirmed, undercut, and qualified, and will discover an ambivalent attitude toward the fictional Southern world emerging in himself much like the ambivalence of the Southern characters toward their own society. In short, the outside American reader, starting from his "Treasury of Virtue" stance, undergoes an education from his own innocence to the point where he recognizes his community with the Southern characters in the plight of all men, to be trapped in the complexities

of their environment and to still need to do something about it.

Finally, the definition, the meaning of true innocence emerges from the revelation, penetration, definition, and conquest of false innocence. True innocence is the discovery and acceptance of one's identity, both social and personal, and of his complicity in guilt; it implies, furthermore, at least the willingness to undertake moral action in spite of the inevitable contamination of ideals by action. There is also this much of aesthetic innocence in the cognitive and moral innocence defined by the Southern regional novel: it entails the acceptance of other persons on the same terms as oneself: as "precious objects," not to be exploited and manipulated and summarily judged, but loved for their unique and infinitely valuable selves in the human fraternity. The truly innocent restrict condemnation to the evil deed, and always reserve caritas for the human agent. The characters in the novel may or may not attain to true innocence; it is always present for the reader, either positively in the form of exemplars of innocence, or residually by way of eliminating false innocence, or both. The reader's final state thus answers to Warren's exhortation in "The Ballad of Billie Potts": "And our innocence needs, perhaps, a new definition."[1]

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[1]Selected Poems: 1923-1943 (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1944), p. 17.

CHAPTER V

THE SOUND AND THE FURY

I said in Chapter I that the idea of "motivation," considered in all its depth and dimensions, furnishes a sound basis for generic criticism, and that a valid generic study "should both potentially enrich the experience of any novel subsumed in the class, and at the same time relate coherently the class means and effects to those of other classes in terms of their common categorical properties." In Chapters III and IV we have seen that the prominence of dramatization and the presence of a dense social medium as enveloping action rank the Southern regional novel in the novelistic quarter of prose fiction, and we have occasionally noticed the relation of the class to other classes of fiction, both romantic and novelistic. It is now time to test whether the generic concept is capable of adding to our appreciation of particular novels, whether "when one turns back from the criticism to the novels these appear more intelligible and more delightful."

I say "novels," and indeed it would be eminently desirable to apply the generic concept to several novels by different Southern novelists, so as to note the range of accomplishments and thematic emphases within the class. In this way we could see how Robert Penn Warren's philosophical novels differ from Eudora Welty's novels of sensibility

and Faulkner's ironic epics, while all which dramatize the Southern enveloping action remain within the class boundaries. The limitation of space and the desirability of a fairly thorough demonstration, however, commend the second alternative of focusing on a single novel, and that a well-known one so that, some familiarity with the novel by the reader being assumed, the preliminary stages of explication may be forgone.

For primary explication and exposition by the generic method differ somewhat in their presentational strategies. In the former, the critic's ideal posture, I should think, is to act as though he knew nothing about the work under consideration until his first reading. And, actually, a generic concept such as the topic of this treatise arises gradually out of a series of such private explications. But, once the concept has been formed and formulated, the critic in his own presentation of the work can pass cursorily over the rudimentary phases of explication, and concentrate instead upon the additional light shed by the generic concept. Provided that concept has derived from technical and substantive factors which are truly central in novels of the class, an exposition from the generic level should render the novel "more intelligible and more delightful." We shall see if this is true.

II

William Faulkner is of course the prototype of Southern regional novelists by every significant criterion: temporal priority, number of regional novels, comprehensive utilization of Southern materials, range of formal methods, and magnitude of achievement. His is indeed the triumphant case of the Southern regional novelist who has time and again attained the proportions of universality through the medium of local

materials. Faulkner himself has often stressed the universal subject of his own and other writers' books: "that is what the writer is trying to do . . . to show man as he is in conflict with his own heart, with his fellows, and with his environment. That's all, in my opinion, any book or story is about."[1] And again,

> I feel that the verities which these people [his characters] suffer are universal verities--that is, that man, whether he's black or white or red or yellow still suffers the same anguishes, he has the same aspirations, his follies are the same follies, his triumphs are the same triumphs. . . . And in that sense there's no such thing as a regional writer, the writer simply uses the terms he is familiar with best because that saves him having to do research.[2]

Yet at the same time Faulkner has often affirmed the need and desirability of the writer to use "the terms he knows best" to express these verities: "Can a man write about ideas excepting in the provincial terms of his background?"[3] "I think the writer has got to write in terms of his environment. . . ."[4] "People are the same. . . . But of course the milieu, the background, the environment will change the terms of their behavior not the act."[5] Thus in Faulkner's novels the Southern image is the medium through which the "universal verities" of the human heart manifest themselves.

I use The Sound and the Fury to illustrate Faulkner's version of the Southern regional novel because it stands so high in Faulkner's own estimation, because I think it is his best novel, because it contains a full-scale Southern image rendered through a variety of techniques, and because, coming early as it does in the Faulkner canon, it shows us the

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[1] Faulkner in the University, p. 132.

[2] Ibid., p. 197.

[3] Ibid., p. 137.

[4] Ibid., p. 41.

[5] Ibid., p. 168.

Southern regional novel full-blown in nearly its first appearance, arrived at independently by Faulkner before the agitation for cultural and literary regionalism developed.

Now The Sound and the Fury can be interpreted by the purely explicative method with hardly a single reference to its Southern image, as Professor Olga Vickery's fine essay on this novel demonstrates in the best book to date on Faulkner's work.[1] By this approach, the dynamics of what we can now recognize as the Southern world are remarked individually as they appear in and affect characters, without reference to their cultural, organic interrelationships and without indication of their "centrifugal" allusiveness. For instance, Professor Vickery notices that "Quentin . . . has constructed for himself a private world to which Caddy is essential, a world which is treatened and finally destroyed by her involvement in circumstance,"[2] and that Jason's "preoccupation with social form partakes of the nature of a ritual with which Jason would charm away disorder and placate the Player."[3] These observations are quite accurate, as far as they go. But the generic approach enables us to supplement this limited accuracy with the recognition that Quentin's "private world" has not been constructed entirely or even largely by himself, nor is indeed really private, but has been built into him by the same societal forces which have developed Jason's ritualistic "preoccupation with social form." We recognize Quentin's concern for Compson honor, invested in Caddy's maidenhead, as one outgrowth of an enveloping social

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[1]Olga W. Vickery, The Novels of William Faulkner: A Critical Interpretation (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959).

[2]Ibid., p. 37. [3]Ibid., p. 44.

organism in which proclaimed values and their real bases have so diverged as to produce, in Jason, primarily a "modern" concern for external form, or respectability. This recognition serves at once to bring the two brothers closer together, for example humanizing Jason to some extent and rendering both less singular, and to accentuate their different responses to the influence of their milieu: it serves, in other words, to "thicken" or complicate this single aspect of the novel's potential experience. Finally, on this merely illustrative point, the centrifugal reference of the novel's cultural dynamics also enriches our experience, for example as our initial matching of Jason to the conventional stereotype of the Southern bigot is undercut and qualified by our growing insight into the ambiguous, paradoxical, tortuous influence of the world which has shaped him. In such a way does the generic concept of the Southern regional novel unify and add to the more discrete insights made available by the strictly explicative method.

For The Sound and the Fury is saturated with the terms of the Southern image in both obvious and less apparent ways, as I shall demonstrate by stressing the Southern features of the enveloping action before remarking their formal embodiment. First, I should agree in general with Professor Vickery's opinion that "the theme of The Sound and the Fury, as revealed by the structure, is the relation between the act and man's apprehension of the act, between the event and the interpretation."[1] But the "act" here, which is mainly the "fall" of Caddy and then of her daughter, and its ramifications in the lives of her family are thoroughly conditioned by the Southern world surrounding the Compsons. Caddy's

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[1]Ibid., p. 29.

strength of will itself should probably be taken as a natural datum, as should her overwhelming sexual appetite; they are aspects of her natural endowment which can not be explained by reference to her environment. But this endowment still assumes a behavioral pattern and produces consequences which are very largely determined by that environment. For example, the exalted status of the Compson family precludes any normal courtship of Caddy by the common run of boys, and she is driven to clandestine meetings with boys like "Charlie" and Dalton Ames. This secrecy in turn provokes Mrs. Compson to have Jason IV spy on Caddy and to harangue Jason III endlessly on the subjects of Compson bad blood, Bascomb ladies, and young Jason's poor prospects:

> . . . she is secretive you dont know her I know things she's done that I'd die before I'd have you know . . . I look at [Jason IV] every day dreading to see this Compson blood beginning to show in him at last with his sister slipping out to see . . . then have you ever laid eyes on him will you even let me try to find out who he is . . . it's for your sake to protect you but who can fight against bad blood you wont let me try we are to sit back with our hands folded while she not only drags your name in the dirt but corrupts the very air your children breathe. . . .[1]

Furthermore, Mrs. Compson's reactions to Caddy's first experiments ("like that time when she happened to see one of them kissing Caddy and all next day she went around the house in a black dress . . . saying her little daughter was dead,"[2]) help to build up in Caddy an exaggerated impression of her own "evil" and "degeneracy," as fragments from her talks with Quentin reveal: "dont cry Im bad anyway you cant help it"[3] "Dont touch me dont touch me"[4]; "I died last year I told you I had but I didnt know

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[1]Fury, pp. 122-23. Hereafter all page references are to The Sound and the Fury unless otherwise indicated.

[2]P. 247. [3]P. 176. [4]P. 131.

then what I meant. . . . But now I know Im dead I tell you"[1]; "There was something terrible in me sometimes at night I could see it grinning at me I could see it through them grinning at me through their faces it's gone now and I'm sick"[2]; "I've got to marry somebody."[3] Finally, this last sentiment, shared by Mrs. Compson and expressing the Southern emphasis on family honor and communal respectability, drives Caddy into a hasty marriage with a Yankee scoundrel and eventuates in her final, irretrievable loss to the family. In short, we can generalize that the loss or "lostness" of Faulkner's "heart's darling"[4] issues from the collision between Caddy's nature and the barriers of the Southern world in which it must seek expression.

This collision typifies Faulkner's selection and use of Southern materials, for Faulkner, like other regionalists, takes both sub-human and human nature as a minimal norm. (It is not clear to me, I should add, that he does not take nature also as an ultimate norm, since he often attributes to the "natural," instinctive, human heart those powers and habits which most writers would ascribe to social conditioning.[5] But Faulkner's statements on this point are ambiguous, and his reasoning is confused.) In Faulkner's work there are several natural norms--the land, the Negro, children, woman in a particularized form, the human heart in all persons--whose violation incurs guilt and obscures one's view of his own nature and identity. On the other hand, several institutions and conventions of the Southern scene lend themselves to the violation of

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[1]Pp. 142-43.

[2]P. 131.

[3]P. 134.

[4]Faulkner in the University, p. 6.

[5]See, for example, ibid., p. 78.

these norms and perpetuate guilt and lost identity; they are the dynastic family and the mystique of blood, the homogeneous white community, the hierarchical caste system, religious rigidity, the lure of the heroic past, and the exaltation of rhetoric. Now these features never work solely against the natural norms; the interrelationships of the norms and the institutions are far too intricate and ambiguous to be so simply generalized. Still, when a violation of nature occurs in a Faulkner novel, one or several of these features can usually be detected in the background, informing the violator and predisposing him to his violation, though not thereby acquitting him of personal responsibility. Thus, if Caddy's lostness in The Sound and the Fury is traceable to a clash between her nature and various Southern dynamics enacted around her, so are the additional losses suffered by other members of the Compson family.

In Benjy's section we see the pernicious effects of the Southern world on a creature incapable of understanding but still capable of suffering. Benjy, a "natural" as Dalton Ames identifies him,[1] represents on a simple, childlike or animalistic level the norm of nature violated by certain Southern dynamics. Benjy experiences the loss of Caddy as the loss of "tenderness and love though he could not have named them":

> He knew only that something was wrong, which left a vacuum in which he grieved. He tried to fill that vacuum. The only thing he had was one of Caddy's discarded slippers. The slipper was his tenderness and love which he could not have named, but he knew only that it was missing.[2]

Benjy's "grief" is intensified by another loss: the sale of his beloved pasture "to pay for Candace's wedding and to send Quentin to Harvard."[3]

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[1] Fury, p. 178.

[2] Cowley, Writers at Work, p. 131.

[3] Fury, p. 19.

Benjy's pasture has been converted into a golf course (an example of the modernization of Southern communities and, in Faulkner's view, another abuse of nature), and Benjy can hang on the fence to watch the golfers and hear them call, "here, caddie," which reminds him of his major loss. What were the urgent, ulterior reasons for selling the pasture? Because the daughter of an old, aristocratic, Southern family, however impoverished, must be given a "proper" wedding, and also because, as Mr. Compson tells Quentin, "for you to go to harvard has been your mothers dream since you were born and no compson has ever disappointed a lady."[1]

Benjy feels the effects of his Southern environment in somewhat less serious ways, all bearing on the theme of loss. There is his gelding, for example, which Jason has accomplished in order to preserve the family's respectability before the community, although Benjy apparently experiences the loss only when he sees himself: "I got undressed and I looked at myself, and I began to cry. Hush, Luster said. Looking for them aint going to do no good. They're gone."[2] Even while Caddy was present, Mrs. Compson's pride as a Southern lady was always threatening to come between Benjy and Caddy's "tenderness and love." Thus on the day of his name-changing, an expression of Mrs. Compson's pride which in itself bothers Benjy not at all, Mrs. Compson tried to diminish Caddy's solicitude for Benjy:

> "Bring him here." Mother said. "He's too big for you to carry. You must stop trying. You'll injure your back. All of our women have prided themselves on their carriage. Do you want to look like a washer-woman."[3]

With Mr. Compson, Caddy, and Quentin gone, Benjy is deprived of familial

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[1]Pp. 196-97. [2]P. 92. [3]P. 82.

love and turned over to the Compson Negroes who, except for Dilsey, have undergone a corruption rather like the Compsons'. Luster, for example, has learned his manners from white men like Jason and the golfers, and he passes his lessons on to Benjy through a series of petty tyrannies and sadistic acts. Thus after a white golfer has appropriated Luster's newly found golf ball, Luster begins to torment Benjy:

> Luster knocked the flowers over with his hand. "That's what they'll do to you at Jackson when you starts bellering."
> I tried to pick up the flowers. Luster picked them up, and they went away. I began to cry.
> "Beller." Luster said. "Beller. You want something to beller about. All right, then. Caddy." he whispered. "Caddy. Beller now. Caddy."[1]

And it is Luster who, in order to "'show dem niggers how quality does,'"[2] evokes Benjy's worst outcry by reversing normal, natural procedure and turning left at the square, exposing Benjy directly to the marble Confederate soldier instead of to the row of routine building fronts, "each in its ordered place."[3]

Faulkner opens <u>The Sound and the Fury</u> with Benjy because "it seemed to me that the book approached nearer the dream if the groundwork of it was laid by the idiot, who was incapable of relevancy. . . . He himself didn't know what he was seeing."[4] Therefore, much of the Southern world which has no immediate relationship to Benjy still emerges for the reader, who grasps its significance only later when it re-enters the action through the minds and behavior of other characters. For example, Caddy's indifference to the standards of a Southern white girl, premonitory of her later "fall," first becomes evident on the occasion of

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[1]Pp. 73-74. [2]P. 335. [3]P. 336.

[4]<u>Faulkner in the University</u>, pp. 63-64.

Damuddy's funeral, when Caddy, defying Quentin and displaying unladylike immodesty and strength of will, has the Negro boy unbutton her dress and disrobes publicly. This, the symbolical soilure of her drawers, and Mr. Compson's delegation of authority to Caddy constitute an early challenge to the picture of the world--of woman's modesty, of man's superior relationship to woman, of man's duty to defend woman's purity--which has been etched into Quentin's mind, especially by Mrs. Compson. We see Quentin already refusing to admit the facts of nature implied in this challenge, first by slapping Caddy, then by fleeing to the barn, later by turning his face to the wall when the children retire. Also on this occasion, the talk among Caddy, Frony, and Versh reveals that difference between white and Negro versions of natural reality which is to plague both Quentin and Jason in later sections:

> "Oh." Caddy said, "That's niggers. White folks dont have funerals."
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "I like to know why not." Frony said. "White folks dies too. Your grandmammy dead as any nigger can get, I reckon."[1]

Elsewhere in the section we see additional facets of the Southern world--not just the Compson world--which affect Benjy only obliquely but other characters more directly. Quentin is puzzled in his section by the meaning and nature of the Negro, who seems often to wear a mask before whites; but the Negroes speak openly before Benjy, since they know he can't understand them, and we get an objective view of their undissembled feelings toward whites. Here Luster and some anonymous chums discuss attending the carnival show:

> "Be enough niggers there without me. Was last night."

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[1] Fury, p. 52.

"Nigger's money good as white folks, I reckon."

"White folks gives nigger money because know first white man comes along with a band going to get it all back, so nigger can go to work for some more."

. . . . . .

"What you got against white folks."

"Aint got nothing against them. I goes my way and lets white folks go theirs. I aint studying that show."[1]

Incidentally, the third speaker's opinion here of the white man's alliance with other white men, even outsiders, to exploit the Negro contrasts sharply with the attitude of Jason, who later in the novel complains acidly about the Negroes' eagerness to donate their quarters to "a bunch of Yankees that come in and pay maybe ten dollars for the privilege"[2] and that will "pick up Saturday night and carry off at least a thousand dollars out of the county."[3]

Benjy is similarly an objective mirror in reflecting the exhibitions of aristocratic pride and decadence which occur in his presence. Benjy's name is changed from "Maury" because of Mrs. Compson's pride in the Bascomb name and its last bearer, brother Maury: "'You know how come you name Benjamin now.' Versh said. 'Your mamma too proud for you. What mammy say.'"[4] However, brother Maury, living parasitically off the Compsons and even Dilsey, uses Caddy and Benjy as go-betweens to carry on a shabby affair with a neighbor-woman, for which he gets his eye blacked by her husband. In spite of Mrs. Compson's protest, that "'my people are every bit as well born as yours,'"[5] Mr. Compson, hoisting his bourbon, takes some cynical satisfaction from Maury's degenerate behavior: "Father said, 'I admire Maury. He is invaluable to my own sense of racial superiority. I wouldn't swap Maury for a matched team.'"[6] Although this is

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[1] P. 35. [2] Pp. 247-48. [3] P. 248.

[4] P. 89. [5] P. 63. [6] P. 62.

meaningless to Benjy, Quentin is standing by to absorb these lessons in Southern gentility, so that Mr. Compson's voice on this occasion continues to run on in the next section,

> . . . but Father said why should Uncle Maury work if he father could support five or six niggers . . . he certainly could board and lodge Uncle Maury now and then and lend him a little money who kept his Father's belief in the celestial derivation of his own species at such a fine heat. . . .[1]

Respecting their relationships to society, Quentin's situation differs essentially from Benjy's. In a very real sense, Benjy is not in society at all, nor is it in him. Benjy is outside society--beyond, below, above society, depending on our estimation (in New Orleans Sketches, a Benjy-like "natural" with broken narcissus and eyes "clear and blue as corn-flowers" appears in a story called "The Kingdom of God"[2]). Benjy is completely passive, subject entirely to the will of others; hence the forces of society work on him, but not through his conscious, volitional agency. Quentin's situation, on the other hand, is that of the normal person in society, in whom the social dynamics appear as operative voices, values, habits, and images, competing for authority in the determination of thought and behavior. Now, let us emphasize that the Southern features operative in Quentin do not appear as "social dynamics"; they appear as particular voices, values, habits, and images. Quentin does not hear, in his memory, the Southern family or the Southern Negro; he hears Father and Mother and Caddy talking, or Dilsey and Versh and Uncle Louis Hatcher.

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[1] P. 194.

[2] New Orleans Sketches, ed. Ichiro Nishizaki (Japan: The Hokuseido Press, 1953), pp. 53-60.

Nevertheless, our concept of the Southern world in the regional novel enables us to recognize these particulars as Southern, and thus to generalize the relationship between Quentin and his Southern society.

Moreover, and this is of considerable importance to his predicament, Quentin himself has ascended to the level of generalization about that relationship. By his residence at Harvard, Quentin has been exposed to outside ways and to extra-regional views of his native culture, so that, unlike any other major character in the novel, he can identify certain traits in himself and others as "Southern." This self-consciousness has intensified Quentin's already excruciating sensitivity and complicated his problem of discovering who he is, for he now has to worry about being classified by Northerners with such odious Southerners as Gerald Bland. He also has to worry about acting the way he thinks Northerners expect him to act in some situations, and sometimes he finds that this behavioral mask expresses the way he really feels.

> I used to think that a Southerner had to be always conscious of niggers. I thought that Northerners would expect him to. When I first came East I kept thinking You've got to remember to think of them as coloured people not niggers. . . . I thought at first that I ought to miss having a lot of them around me because I thought that Northerners thought I did, but I didn't know that I really missed Roskus and Dilsey and them until that morning in Virginia.[1]

His extra-regional experience has taught Quentin to consciously appreciate certain features of the South, such as the Negro and the land:

> Only our country was not like this country. There was something about just walking through it. A kind of still and violent fecundity that satisfied ever bread-hunger like. Flowing around you, not brooding and nursing every niggard stone.[2]

Yet outsiders' comments like Shreve's on Gerald and Mrs. Bland have also

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[1] Fury, p. 105. [2] P. 132.

accentuated his skepticism of other Southern earmarks, such as the standards of Southern aristocracy:

> "Another band recital, I guess. Tumpty ta ta Gerald blah. 'A little louder on the drum, Quentin.' God, I'm glad I'm not a gentleman."[1]

In brief, Quentin's period at Harvard has led him to formulate in conscious terms some of his deep ambivalence toward his native environment, in addition to aggravating the tensions already rending him.

Quentin's basic conflict is between nature, including natural processes, natural changes, and time as measured by those processes and changes, and a complex of values, provided him by his Southern world, with which he has identified himself. Quentin has defined himself in terms of Compson honor, which in turn he has based on female purity, specifically Caddy's maidenhead: "Who loved not his sister's body but some concept of Compson honor precariously and (he knew well) only temporarily supported by the minute fragile membrane of her maidenhead. . . ."[2] With the loss of that maidenhead, which is guaranteed here by nature in general and Caddy's nature in particular (both seen by Quentin pre-eminently as sexual appetite and gratification), goes the loss of Compson honor, and with that the entity known as "I" or "Quentin Compson."

Actually, to be more precise, it is not just the maidenhead's loss that threatens Quentin's identity, but its loss without meaning or importance. If Caddy's loss of virginity could be something momentous, whose significance would endure, as by incest with him, then Quentin's identity would be secure. Instead, most of the evidence Quentin accumulates seems to deny the significance of this loss. Mr. Compson's

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[1] P. 120. [2] P. 9.

voice is probably central in this body of evidence.

> Because it means less to women, Father said. He said it was men invented virginity not women . . . and I said, But to believe it doesn't matter and he said, That's what's so sad about anything: not only virginity . . . nothing is even worth the changing of it. . . .[1]

What Quentin has witnessed or had related to him appears to confirm Mr. Compson's opinion: for instance, Gerald Bland's casual and frequent conquests, fully approved by Mrs. Bland, and Caddy's own extensive adventures:

> Have there been very many Caddy
> I dont know too many[2]

Therefore, with defloration emptied of its value, meaningless, Quentin's very being is called into question, for "if it was that simple to do it wouldnt be anything and if it wasnt anything, what was I."[3]

This question brings Quentin to his decision for suicide. For Quentin, time, which is "is" or "am," is identified with nature and endless, repetitious change: "Again. Sadder than was. Again. Saddest of all. Again."[4] Time means "temporary," that nothing lasts, not even his grief over Caddy's loss, which is why Quentin balks at "temporary" in the closing, remembered dialogue with his father on the subject of his proposed suicide:

> . . . you are still blind to what is in yourself to that part of general truth the sequence of natural events and their causes which shadows every mans brow even benjys you are not thinking of finitude you are contemplating an apotheosis in which a temporary state of mind will become symmetrical above the flesh . . . and I temporary and he you cannot bear to think that someday it will no longer hurt you like this . . . and i temporary . . .[5]

And Quentin can follow his father's rhetoric, truthful as much of it is, no further. To Quentin it seems that the only thing constant in time is

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[1]P. 97. [2]P. 134. [3]P. 166.
[4]P. 114. [5]Pp. 195-96.

change, which is effected and symbolized by sexuality. This constant flux is represented for Quentin on the one hand by the sea gull, whose fixed, up-slanted wings are imagistically associated with the clock's hands at 1:50 or 10:10,[1] and on the other hand, in the same imagistic pattern, by the flashing oars of Gerald Bland, who stands for the endless triumphant rhythm of sexuality:

> . . . and then I could hear my watch and the train dying away, as though it were running through another month or another summer somewhere, rushing away under the poised gull and all things rushing. Except Gerald. He would be sort of grand too, pulling in lonely state across the noon . . . mounting into a drowsing infinity where only he and the gull, the one terrifically motionless, the other in a steady and measured pull and recover that partook of inertia itself, the world punily beneath their shadows on the sun.[2]

So for Quentin time is "all things rushing" away, including himself, because of the Bland meaning of time. Quentin tries to halt the diminishing effect of time by imputing the horror of incest to Caddy's fall: "Because if it were just to hell; if that were all of it. Finished. If things just finished themselves."[3] But his father's is again the disillusioning voice: "That's sad too, people cannot do anything that dreadful they cannot do anything dreadful at all they cannot even remember tomorrow what seemed dreadful today. . . ."[4] Ahead of Quentin in time is only the prospect of continued diminution, fragmentation, and dispersal of his self. His solution, therefore, is to remove his "I" from time ("am") and thus locate it in the past ("was"), where it has security, substance, and meaning.

> A quarter hour yet. And then I'll not be. The peacefullest words. Peacefullest words. <u>Non</u> <u>fui</u>. <u>Sum</u>. <u>Fui</u>. <u>Non</u> <u>sum</u>. . . . I was. I am not.[5]

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[1]P. 104. [2]Pp. 139-40. [3]P. 98.
[4]P. 99. [5]P. 192.

In this way Quentin hopes not only to secure his identity but to lend importance to Caddy's loss, and also to confute his father, for whom "was" is "the saddest word of all there is nothing else in the world its not despair until time its not even time until it was."[1] But for Quentin time stops with "was," and the unadulterated "I" begins.

Considering Mr. Compson's skepticism of all values, where does Quentin get his beliefs in honor, purity, and other Southern values? There is the heroic past, with which Quentin has had contact through the person of Grandfather:

> It used to be I thought of death as a man something like Grandfather . . . I always thought of them as being together somewhere all the time waiting for old Colonel Sartoris to come down and sit with them waiting on a high place beyond cedar trees Colonel Sartoris was on a still higher place looking out across at something . . . Grandfather wore his uniform . . . they were always talking and Grandfather was always right.[2]

More important, however, than his grandfather Jason Lycurgus II, whom Quentin may not have known very well because he "passed most of the end of his days" as a recluse till his death in 1900,[3] is Mrs. Compson as the instrument of Southern tradition.

It is Caroline Compson's tiresome, tireless voice that drills into Quentin the conventional notions of Southern gentility, blood, purity, chivalry, and the like. Of course it is a vain, selfish, querulous voice, devoid of love to the extent that Quentin can wish, "<u>if I'd just had a mother so I could say Mother Mother</u>"[4]; still it is a value-laden voice of authority, in contrast to Mr. Compson's nihilism.

> . . . then Mother would cry and say that Father believed his people were better than hers that he was ridiculing Uncle Maury to teach us the same thing she couldnt see that Father was teaching us that all men are just accumulations dolls stuffed with sawdust swept up from

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[1]P. 197. [2]P. 194. [3]P. 7. [4]P. 190.

the trash heaps where all previous dolls had been thrown away. . . .[1]

Because of Mr. Compson's abandonment of parental responsibility, Quentin picks up his values from the only remaining source of importance, and they are invariably false values, distortions of the best in Southern tradition, as these fragments from her talk reveal:

> Country people poor things they never saw an auto before . . . of course there's the carriage but so often when I'd like to go out Mr Compson has the darkies doing something. . . .[2]
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> . . . . . .
>
> I thought that Benjamin was punishment enough for any sins I have committed I thought he was my punishment for putting aside my pride and marrying a man who held himself above me . . . I see now that I must pay for your sins as well as mine what have you done what sins have your high and mighty people visited upon me . . . I was only a Bascomb I was taught that there is no halfway ground that a woman is either a lady or not . . . but who can fight against bad blood . . . I'll go down on my knees and pray for the absolution of my sins. . . .[3]

Here we see the outlines of Quentin's system of values, for example of his "Presbyterian concept" of sin and punishment,[4] of aristocratic hierarchy, of female purity, of "blood," and of "Sambo" or "darky" racism. Finally, Quentin's yearning to substantiate his mother's values is shown by the way his own wish ("Finished. If things just finished themselves") is patterned after what he conceives to be Mrs. Compson's evaluation of the consequences of Caddy's act: "<u>Done in Mother's mind though. Finished. Finished.</u>"[5]

For that, to substantiate the husks of values bequeathed him by his mother, is Quentin's ulterior motive as revealed in his section, though it is inextricably connected with his quest for identity. From the welter of ambiguous, contradictory values which constitute his

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[1] P. 194. [2] P. 113. [3] Pp. 122-23.
[4] P. 9. [5] P. 121.

Southern heritage, he would select the worthy and make them real. The pattern discerned by Mr. Compson in Quentin's story of incest ("you wanted to sublimate a piece of natural human folly into a horror and then exorcise it with truth"[1]) applies in varying degrees to all of Quentin's actions in terms of his Southern environment. He would, for example, coerce Caddy into proper, aristocratic discrimination: "'It's not for kissing I slapped you. . . . It's for letting it be some darn town squirt I slapped you. . . .'"[2] Quentin is trying to enforce the same discrimination by discouraging Caddy from marrying Herbert, "not that blackguard Caddy"[3]; "A liar and a scoundrel Caddy was dropped from his club for cheating at cards got sent to Coventry caught cheating at midterm exams and expelled."[4] We see the same pattern in Quentin's efforts to embody the chivalric ideal by challenging Dalton Ames and to rectify the gentleman's double standard by attacking Gerald Bland, whose attitude toward women unhappily coincides with Dalton Ames's views preoccupying Quentin. We may also discern in this latter attack Quentin's more or less conscious desire to repudiate publicly the phony Southern quality represented by Mrs. Bland, with all her tales about "Gerald's horses and Gerald's niggers and Gerald's women."[5]

Had Quentin not already committed himself to these particular forms of his Southern heritage and to suicide as the ultimate mode of reifying them and himself, several sources of illumination are present which might show him a more harmonious relationship between nature and cultural forms, and hence provide him a genuine basis for his sense of

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[1]P. 195. [2]P. 152. [3]P. 130.
[4]P. 142. [5]P. 110.

identity. For example, there is Mr. Compson's insight into Quentin's problem ("It's nature is hurting you not Caddy"), which Quentin rejects because of his revulsion from rhetoric. There is Caddy's personal demonstration that "bad blood" is really only "wild" or "passionate" blood:

> she took my hand and held it flat against my throat
> now say his name
> Dalton Ames
> I felt the first surge of blood there in strong accelerating beats[1]

There is Spoade, a full-blooded Southern gentleman "having five names, including that of a present English ducal house,"[2] whose easy-going, ironical appraisal of Southern values ("'He ought to go back so they'll know he fights like a gentleman,' Spoade said. 'Gets licked like one, I mean.'"[3]) and leisurely accommodation of time and necessity ("It was his club's boast that he never ran for chapel and had never got there on time and had never been absent in four years"[4]) afford the best example in the novel of aristocratic adjustment to changed circumstances. There is the vast spectrum of nature itself, which, from the "violent fecundity" of his native place to his own bodily needs, should prepare Quentin to accept the inescapable grounding in nature of every mode of existence. Finally, there are Southern Negroes, with their adjustment to both nature and adverse cultural conditions,

> with that quality about them of shabby and timeless patience, of static serenity: that blending of childlike and ready incompetence and paradoxical reliability that tends and protects them it loves out of all reason and robs them steadily and evades responsibility . . . and is taken in theft and evasion with only that frank and spontaneous admiration for the victor which the gentleman feels for anyone who beats him in a fair contest, and withal a fond and

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[1] P. 195.

[2] Pp. 110-11.

[3] P. 185.

[4] P. 98.

unflagging tolerance for whitefolks' vagaries. . . .[1]

Now, all of these models or examples Quentin has witnessed, for they occur in his memory or to his sensory apparatus. Faulkner confirms Quentin's clarity of vision in response to a question on the big trout which occupies Quentin's attention momentarily:

> Well, it doesn't have any meaning by itself, but Quentin knows he is going to die and he sees things much more clearly than he would otherwise. He sees things that are more important to him since he doesn't have to worry about them now, and when he wants the old fish to live, it may represent his unconscious desire for endurance, both for himself and for his people.[2]

The trouble with Quentin is that he can not or will not consciously accept such salutary emblems as applicable to his own definition of himself; he can see but not believe. Quentin therefore occupies the first position in Faulkner's "trinity of conscience," that of "knowing nothing" or of saying "This is terrible. I refuse to accept it, even if I must refuse life to do so." In terms of innocence, Quentin belongs to the first order of innocence; he does not know his true relationship to his society--the extent of his determination by it and of his free agency. Anyway, by June 2, 1910, Quentin has put such questions behind him and does not consider a serious reopening of them, any more than of the bag which he has packed for final shipment home.

Jason Compson is far more innocent than Quentin, in that he has adopted a simplistic view of his world and himself which does not permit him to know either in its full complexity, or to know their interrelation-

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[1] Pp. 106-107.

[2] Faulkner in the University, p. 18. This "Session" is prefaced by the note, "Not recorded. Reconstructed from memory."

ships, and yet which provides him the illusion of knowing both. The Appendix describes Jason IV as "the first sane Compson since before Culloden and (a childless bachelor) hence the last. Logical rational contained and even a philosopher in the old stoic tradition. . . ."[1] The heavy irony in the description is supported by the content of Jason's section and by developments in the last section, for, as it gradually emerges, Jason is neither logical, rational, contained, nor philosophic, in the true senses of these terms, although Jason's actions and "thoughts" (which are almost always cast in the form of speech, "I says" standing for "I thought" as well as "I said") may give him the specious appearance of being so. In actuality, Jason is as thoroughly illogical and contradictory as his evaluation of money ("After all, like I say money has no value; it's just the way you spend it. It don't belong to anybody, so why try to hoard it. It just belongs to the man that can get it and keep it"[2]); only he is too innocent to know it.

Jason thinks that he has rejected or risen above the complex Compson world, which to him is all the world but himself, "since to him all the rest of the town and the world and the human race too except himself were Compsons, inexplicable yet quite predictable in that they were in no sense to be trusted."[3] He would have dispatched "the Great American Gelding" to Jackson at the time of his gelding, "but that would have been too simple for a Compson to think of. Not half complex enough."[4] Jason apparently thinks that he is self-sufficient and that he operates by the simple canons of practicality, financial profit and loss, self-aggrandisement, and cause-effect logic. In fact, however, Jason is enormously self-

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[1] Fury, p. 16 [2] P. 212. [3] P. 17. [4] P. 280.

deceived. His delusion of self-sufficiency both causes and conceals his nearly complete determination by the natural and cultural factors which he scorns. The irrational springs of his conduct are hidden from him, and his "logic," thus founded on false and inadequate premises, results in extraordinarily illogical and irrational thought and behavior.

The ultimate reasons for Jason's actions lie far back in his childhood, and perhaps even beyond that, according to Faulkner's sometimes problematical statements about inherited strengths and weaknesses (he speaks, for example, of "the basic failure Quentin inherited through his father, or beyond his father,"[1] and we learn from the Appendix that infallible Dilsey has been Jason's "sworn enemy since his birth,"[2] both of which and other statements suggest a moral determinism working within the dynastic, genetic process). At any rate, when we first see Jason at about five in Benjy's section, on the evening of Damuddy's funeral, he is already showing signs of his later character: telling on Caddy and Quentin and keeping his hands in his pockets[3] ("That was a mannerism . . . that presaged his future, something of greediness and grasping, selfishness"[4]). Later in the same section we find him maliciously cutting up Benjy's paper dolls and lying about it,[5] and in his own section Caddy is adult witness to Jason's lifelong coldness ("You never had a drop of warm blood in you"[6]) and treachery:

> "Dont you trust me?" I says
> "No." she says. "I know you. I grew up with you"[7]

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[1] Faulkner in the University, p. 3. [2] Fury, p. 16. [3] P. 43.
[4] Faulkner in the University, p. 263. [5] Fury, p. 84. [6] P. 226.
[7] P. 221.

Perhaps Jason's inhumanity is explicable partially by his early loss of Damuddy, apparently the only one whom Jason really loved and who loved him,[1] and partially by Mrs. Compson's nagging insistence that Jason is her only true Bascomb child,[2] so that a like mother-like son pattern develops. Certainly Jason takes after his mother in a number of significant ways, as we shall see.

Whatever the remote causes, the proximate determinants of Jason's behavior are the losses that he has suffered, he thinks, through Caddy: the loss of his inheritance, by the heavy expenses incurred for Caddy's wedding; the loss of the promising bank job offered him by Herbert; and the loss apparently occasioned by having to raise Caddy's bastard, Miss Quentin. Jason refers to these losses, especially the second, several times in his section, although usually they are recollections from the past. For example, upon the arrival of Quentin, Jason's response is, "Then when she sent Quentin home for me to feed too I says I guess that's right too, instead of me having to go way up north for a job they sent the job down here to me,"[3] and, after he has cheated Caddy on her contract for a surreptitious glimpse of Quentin, Jason's satisfaction manifests his vengeful purpose, as well as his delusion of self-sufficiency:

> After she was gone I felt better. I says I reckon you'll think twice before you deprive me of a job that was promised me. I was a kid then. I believed folks when they said they'd do things. I've learned better since. Besides, like I say I guess I dont need any man's help to get along I can stand on my own feet like I always have.[4]

By Jason's lights, then, Caddy's perverse conduct has cost him a pecuniary loss, for which the simple, logical remedy is to use the human result

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[1] P. 82.

[2] For example, p. 123.

[3] P. 214.

[4] P. 224.

of her misbehavior to pay himself (and incidentally Caddy) back. And this, we might add, has been the usual interpretation of Jason's motives, for example Olga Vickery's:

> He is not concerned with either Caddy or her daughter except as they enter into the pattern of loss and recompense and finally loss again. In short, his is a world reduced to calculation in which no subjective claims are tolerated and no margin for error allowed.[1]

Really this explanation does not account for Jason's eccentric actions, which are often highly emotional, contradictory, and extemporized. If Jason were interested in Miss Quentin primarily as an instrument of extortion, his most calculating and logical procedure would have been, from the very first, to placate her, to keep her as happy as possible, since the longer she stays around the more money he can mulct from Caddy. Instead, we find him tormenting her beyond measure, in a manner more suggestive of sadism than of fine calculation: "'Did you get a good piece of meat?' I says. 'If you didn't, I'll try to find you a better one.'"[2] Miss Quentin's complaint points to this perverseness in Jason's conduct:

> "Why does he treat me like this, Grandmother?" she says. "I never hurt him. . . . He won't let me alone. . . . If he doesn't want me here, why wont he let me go back to--"[3]

Jason is subject to fits of perfect rage in which, however calm he appears, inwardly he is far from "rational" and "contained": "It made me so mad for a minute it kind of blinded me"[4]; "I saw red. When I recognized that red tie, after all I had told her, I forgot about everything."[5] Moreover, we learn from the objective narrator in the next section that Jason is just as uninterested in his money, which supposedly preoccupies him, as

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[1]The Novels of Faulkner, p. 43. [2]Fury, p. 174.
[3]P. 276. [4]P. 206. [5]P. 255.

in his niece as a person:

> Of his niece he did not think at all, nor the arbitrary valuation of the money. Neither of them had had entity or individuality for him for ten years; together they merely symbolised the job in the bank of which he had been deprived before he ever got it.[1]

A fuller explanation of Jason's character and behavior, it seems to me, takes into account the clash between the rigid pattern of self-centeredness bred in Jason by his mother, the constant unpredictability of nature, and the confusing welter of forms and conventions which has been brought about by cultural change and which still both determines and exasperates the self-styled individualist like Jason. Jason, like Quentin, is considerably affected by his mother's false pride, but in a different way. Whereas Quentin sought to substantiate the principles contained in his mother's talk, Jason learns from the same source the more evident lesson of selfishness--of the irrelevance of principles to the thoroughly selfish person. For example, here is Mrs. Compson addressing Jason on the subject of familial obligation, or "flesh and blood":

> "It's not myself," she says. "I'd gladly take Caddy back, sins and all, because she is my flesh and blood. Its for Quentin's sake."
> . . . . . .
> "And yours," she says. "I know how you feel toward her."
> "Let her come back," I says, "far as I'm concerned."
> "No." she says. "I owe that to your father's memory."
> "When he was trying all the time to persuade you to let her come home when Herbert threw her out?" I says.
> "You don't understand," she says.[2]

But Jason does understand--understands instinctively, and takes unconsciously as his ordinance of life, the doctrine that family ties and other conventions are just words that can be juggled to suit one's selfish needs. Thus, regarding Miss Quentin, at one moment Jason can practically disavow the obligations of flesh and blood:

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[1]P. 321. [2]Pp. 237-38.

> "Remember she's your own flesh and blood," she says.
> "Sure," I says, "that's just what I'm thinking of--flesh. And a little blood too, if I had my way. When people act like niggers, no matter who they are the only thing to do is treat them like a nigger."[1]

Yet at another moment, when Jason's self needs shoring up, it comforts him to think of Miss Quentin's violation of familial duty and of his own fidelity to it:

> I kept thinking, Let's forget for awhile how I feel toward you and how you feel toward me: I just wouldn't do you this way. I wouldn't do you this way no matter what you had done to me. Because like I say blood is blood and you cant get around it. It's not playing a joke that any eight year old boy could have thought of, it's letting your own uncle be laughed at by a man that would wear a red tie.[2]

In short, all of Mrs. Compson's sighing, contradictory appeals to the precepts of Southern gentility, of which the rule of family duty is only one example, instruct Jason only in the transcendence of the "I" in all relationships. In contrast to Quentin's attempt to create an onjective structure of values that will support the "I," Jason's rigid scheme of egocentricity tries to adjust the external world of people, things, and values to itself.

In doing so, it runs athwart nature in its various forms and vagaries. In his own way, Jason is at war with nature, just as Quentin was in his different way. But whereas Quentin would exclude nature from his picture of the world, Jason wants nature always one way: accessible to his personal exploitation. Jason is not so much aggrieved by nature's apparent objective inconsistency, as Quentin was, but by the refusal of nature's inconstancy to conform to his own fluctuating demands. Jason is a violator of all the natural norms--woman, the land, the Negro, the human heart, children--, but his victims will not stay still for him;

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[1] P. 199. [2] P. 260.

they insist on pursuing courses perversely contrary to his own wavering plans.

It is thus, I believe, that we should view Jason's animus toward Caddy and Miss Quentin, whom Jason does not dislike as persons but as women, or rather woman, and even beyond that, as unpredictable nature, which has always been and is yet responsible for all his losses. Jason's animadversions on Caddy and Miss Quentin are so often followed by generalizations about woman that the sex emerges as the real target of his hatred. For example, after cheating Caddy Jason yet finds that she has the audacity to challenge him in the store:

> It never occurred to me she wouldn't keep her promise and take that train. But I didn't know much about them then; I didn't have any more sense than to believe what they said, because the next morning damn if she didn't walk right into the store. . . .[1]

Outwitted by Miss Quentin and her beau, Jason blames himself for forgetting woman's lack of character: "I don't know why it is I cant seem to learn that a woman'll do anything."[2] Urged by his mother to marry, Jason replies, "no thank you I have all the women I can take care of now if I married a wife she'd probably turn out to be a hophead or something."[3] And to Jason "good" women are no more reliable than "bitches" like Caddy and her daughter; in fact, the only reliable species of woman is the prostitute, whose mechanical responses are actuated by money's constant value:

> . . . I'd like to see the colour of the man's eyes that would speak disrespectful of any woman that was my friend it's these damn good women that do it I'd like to see the good, church-going woman that's half as square as Lorraine, whore or no whore.[4]

That woman ultimately represents unpredictable nature to Jason is shown by the similarity between his attitude toward woman and his

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[1]P. 223. [2]P. 260. [3]P. 264. [4]P. 263.

attitude toward the land and the people who farm it. Now Jason is no more interested in the land and its farmers as such than he is in particular women as persons. But Jason's speculation in the cotton market, which is a violation both of nature and of the Compson gambling tradition (because he uses "inside" information), makes him peculiarly interested in the productivity of Mississippi cotton land and farmers. Jason is at first a short seller, a "bear," and it is therefore to his financial advantage for the fields and the farmers to cooperate in the production of a large crop, which would drive prices down and enable him to buy back at a profit. This is partly the reason why, in chasing Quentin over the countryside, Jason is so disgusted to find the land unbroken and the tenants in town for the carnival:

> It's a good thing the Lord did something for this country; the folks that live on it never have. Friday afternoon, and from right here I could see three miles of land that hadn't even been broken, and every able bodied man in the county in town at that show.[1]

But the agrarian complex, like woman, is consistent only in running counter to Jason's changing needs, for when unbroken land would suit his personal comfort, he finds a plowed field:

> I parked and got out. And now I'd have to go way around and cross a plowed field, the only one I had seen since I had left town, with every step like somebody was walking along behind me, hitting me on the head with a club.[2]

When, still pursuing the elusive couple, Jason stumbles into uncleared land, he discovers that nature's perversity continues to exceed his preconceptions:

> I had gotten beggar lice and twigs and stuff all over me, inside my clothes and shoes and all, and then I happened to look around and I had my hand right on a bunch of poison oak. The only thing I

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[1] P. 256. [2] P. 257.

> couldn't understand was why it was just poison oak and not a snake or something.[1]

Finally, as a result of his observations, of being "closed out" in the market, and of a large drop in cotton prices, Jason turns into a market "bull," a buyer in the expectation of flood, a small crop, and high prices:

> Any fool . . . could tell the market was going up all the time, with the whole damn delta about to be flooded again and the cotton washed right out of the ground like it was last year. . . . Of course it'll overflow again, and then cotton'll be worth thirty cents a pound.[2]

When, therefore, in the last section a Negro tells Jason "'Look like hit gwine fair off, after all'" and Jason replies "'Fair off, hell . . . it'll be raining like hell by twelve oclock,'"[3] it is a certainty that Easter afternoon will be hot and dry (as it is), and a probability that Mississippi will enjoy a dry cotton season and produce a large crop. Thus do Jason and nature, whether woman or land or weather, Negro or idiot brother, ever fare at odds with each other.

The third, related, complicating factor in Jason's character is the welter of cultural forms and conventions which Jason for the most part thinks he has rejected or transcended but which are still determining him constantly, and all the more so because he is generally unaware of their operation. To a great extent Jason is both victim and cause of cultural change in his portion of the Southern world, a stage in which many venerable forms have lost their substance but still command public allegiance, and in which new modes of life compete with traditional forms for survival. Jason has been victimized by this process in that his formation was accomplished under wavering, contradictory standards unsupported by actual experience. Jason has heard a great deal about pride in family,

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[1]P. 258. [2]Pp. 251-52. [3]P. 320.

for example, from both his father and his mother, Compson against Bascomb. Yet, looking around him, he can discover no apparent basis for the pride, no personal example of high worthiness: on the Bascomb side, only a hypochondriacal, vain mother and a worthless parasitical uncle; on the Compson side, a dipsomaniacal father, an idiotic brother, a suicidal brother, and a nymphomaniacal sister. Jason's revulsion from the standard of familial pride is therefore at least understandable, if not exactly endearing in the way he expresses it:

> I haven't got much pride, I can't afford it with a kitchen full of niggers to feed and robbing the state asylum of its star freshman. Blood, I says, governors and generals. It's a damn good thing we never had any kings and presidents; we'd all be down there at Jackson chasing butterflies.[1]

Yet if Jason is a victim of cultural change, when the individual cannot discover substance for the forms drilled into him, he also contributes to and accelerates that process by such rejection as the last quotation discloses, by deliberately exploiting the older, largely meaningless forms, and by joining in the general debasement of traditional forms. In his devious channeling of Caddy's monthly check into his private coffer, Jason is exploiting not only Caddy's natural love for her daughter, but Mrs. Compson's pride as a Southern lady and a Bascomb, which is perfectly senseless in view of the family's decayed fortunes: still, "'We Bascombs need nobody's charity. Certainly not that of a fallen woman.'"[2] And there follows the ritualistic burning of the fraudulent check.

Many of the older ways have degenerated into a concern for appearance alone, or "respectability," and in this degeneration Jason

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[1]p. 247. [2]p. 237.

participates unreservedly. Quentin's and Jason's attitudes on the standard of female chastity provide an interesting and illuminating contrast here. Quentin was concerned with the reality of chastity, and if the substance was missing, the appearance was irrelevant to him: "Why wont you bring him to the house, Caddy? Why must you do like nigger women do in the pasture the ditches the dark woods hot hidden furious in the dark woods."[1] In contrast, Jason does not care whether Miss Quentin is chaste, or how promiscuous she is, so long as she preserves the appearance of chaste conduct. He says directly to Miss Quentin, "'I dont care what you do myself . . . But I've got a position in this town, and I'm not going to have any member of my family going on like a nigger wench.'"[2] And he thinks to himself,

> Like I say it's not that I object to so much; maybe she cant help that, it's because she hasn't even got enough consideration for her own family to have any discretion. I'm afraid all the time I'll run into them right in the middle of the street or under a wagon on the square, like a couple of dogs.[3]

Jason's anxiety about preserving appearances, maintaining respectability, runs all the way from the major to the trivial: from wishing brother Ben were in the asylum at Jackson ("I says God knows there's little enough room for pride in this family, but it don't take much pride to not like to see a thirty year old man playing around the yard with a nigger boy, running up and down the fence and lowing like a cow whenever they play golf over there"[4]) to regretting his own appearance in the street without a hat ("And there I was, without any hat, looking like I was crazy too. . . . All the time I could see them watching me like a hawk, waiting for a chance to say Well I'm not surprised I expected it all the

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[1]P. 111. [2]P. 207. [3]P. 257. [4]P. 239.

time the whole family's crazy"[1]). Jason's preoccupation with communal opinion, with "them watching me like a hawk," thus contributes a great deal to the further general corruption of faltering cultural forms and to his own violations of nature.

Moreover, it emphasises the extent to which Jason is a creature of his environment without knowing it. In contrast to his conviction that he has set himself apart from society, Jason is a ragbag of conventional motives which affect him incessantly and disconcertingly. For example, he thinks he has no Compson pride, yet he imagines or recollects a conversation in which he suppresses gossip by referring to the Compson aristocratic past: "I says my people owned slaves here when you all were running little shirt tail country stores and farming land no nigger would look at on shares."[2] He thinks he has escaped the determinism of blood, yet he spends most of his time fretting about and pursuing a girl who, according to his own interpretation, is a victim of blood fatalism: "Like I say blood always tells. If you've got blood like that in you, you'll do anything."[3] Sometimes he can partially articulate his determination by such societal forces as blood and name, though he never seems to understand it clearly:

> Me, without any hat, in the middle of the afternoon, having to chase up and down back alleys because of my mother's good name. Like I say you cant do anything with a woman like that, if she's got it in her. If it's in her blood, you cant do anything with her. The only thing you can do is to get rid of her, let her go on and live with her own sort.[4]

Jason does not recognize the several contradictions within this "thought" (for example, why chase the girl up and down back alleys if "you cant do

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[1]P. 250. [2]P. 256. [3]P. 256. [4]P. 250.

anything with her"?), any more than he seems to understand why he treasures his expensive but troublesome automobile so much (Quentin could have enlightened him, knowing "the first car in town a girl Girl that's what Jason couldn't bear smell of gasoline making him sick then got madder than ever because a girl Girl"[1]), or how much his own attitude toward the Compson Negroes ("'You ought to be working for me,' I says. 'Every other no-count nigger in town eats in my kitchen'"[2]) reproduces seriously his father's ironical sentiments on this subject, as revealed in Quentin's section ("Father said why should Uncle Maury work if he Father could support five or six niggers that did nothing at all but sit with their feet in the oven"[3]). Jason's "preoccupation with social form" is likewise confused and inconsistent. At times he indeed shows debased vestiges of an older formalism, as when he insists that the entire family be present for supper on Friday night and for Easter breakfast.[4] At other times, however, according to his whim or need, he scoffs at the very same form:

> I went straight to the kitchen and told Dilsey to hurry up with dinner.
>
> "Quentin aint come yit," she says.
>
> "What of that?" I says. "You'll be telling me next that Luster's not quite ready to eat yet. Quentin knows when meals are served in this house. Hurry up with it, now."[5]

Thus the bearing of the past on the present escapes Jason's attention, but he does not escape its control.

I have dwelled somewhat at length on Jason's character and situation because I feel that he and his relationship to society have been oversimplified by most interpreters of this novel, who tend to accept his own description, though not his evaluation, of himself. Jason is not at

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[1]P. 190. [2]P. 207. [3]P. 194.

[4]Pp. 273; 293-94. [5]P. 236.

all "simple," in the philosophical sense; in fact he is almost unintelligible, in the clutter and randomness of the motives which assail him. His domination by natural and societal forces is concealed from himself by his own delusion of independence, which allows those forces to act upon him with redoubled vigor. When the "I" thinks it has withdrawn from identification with objective substance, whether God or nature or society or all these, it has already lost any basis, any perspective, for perceiving, evaluating, and regulating the claims of these forces on itself, and therefore falls prey to whatever motive is temporarily ascendant. At least this is true of Jason. Jason expresses whatever societal scrap presents itself at the moment, because the expressing "I" is nothing in itself but the series of such presentations. Jason's greed does not challenge this generalization, because greed is by nature a self-centered motive, whose value shifts with the changing ephemeral self. Thus, as we have seen, Jason's greed is revealed in the fourth section to be only a mask for deeper-lying motives, primarily a sense of loss caused by nature and society.

Like Quentin, Jason has many sources of illumination available; but, unlike Quentin, who either heard but refused to heed or overlooked entirely, Jason hears but scorns and gets mad. The Negro is Jason's basic evaluator, but his contempt, hatred, and fear of Negroes precludes his serious consideration of such judgments as Dilsey's: "'You's a cold man, Jason, if man you is,' she says. 'I thank de Lawd I got mo heart dan dat, even ef hit is black.'"[1] And there is Job's incisive comment on Jason's self-imposed innocence, though Job would not call it "innocence":

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[1]P. 225.

"You's too smart fer me. Aint a man in dis town kin keep up wid you for smartness. You fools a man whut so smart he cant even keep up wid hisself," he says. . . .

"Who's that?" I says.

"Dat's Mr Jason Compson," he says. "Git up dar, Dan!"[1]

Of course the reader has these and additional materials from Sections One and Two by which to understand and evaluate Jason's innocence, but one image from Benjy's section stands out in my mind as epitomizing Jason's true relationship with the external world, as against the false relationship assumed by him in his rhetorical question, "'Do you think I need any man's help to stand on my feet?'"[2] It is a "recollection" by Benjy from the occasion of Damuddy's funeral, and shows by imagistic foreshadowing the extent of Jason's reliance on the outside world, even Negroes, as well as the reason for his inability to "stand on my feet":

"I'm hungry." Jason said. He passed us and ran on up the walk. He had his hands in his pockets and he fell down. Versh went and picked him up.

"If you keep them hands out your pockets, you could stay on your feet." Versh said. "You cant never get them out in time to catch yourself, fat as you is."[3]

In the fourth section we find, in Dilsey, one who has mastered the accidental circumstances of her environment and accommodated herself to its irremediable forces without losing her self-possession. In answer to the question whether Quentin Compson does not, in fact, "have the cards stacked against him," Faulkner ascribes to Dilsey the role of embodying his favorite theme, "that man will prevail":

True, and [Quentin's] mother wasn't much good and he had an idiot brother, and yet in that whole family there was Dilsey that held the whole thing together and would continue to hold the whole thing together for no reward, that the will of man to prevail will even take

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[1]P. 267. [2]P. 279. [3]P. 43.

> the nether channel of the black man, black race, before it will relinguish, succumb, be defeated.[1]

That Dilsey's triumph over circumstance is an expression of true human personality, and not just the function of some ingrained racial characteristic or other deterministic element, is further suggested by Faulkner's reply to the question "Do you believe in free will for your characters?"

> I would think I do, yes. But I think that man's free will functions against a Greek background of fate, that he has the free will to choose and the courage, the fortitude to die for his choice, is my conception of man, is why I believe that man will endure.[2]

In other words, Dilsey's point-by-point coping with circumstance, her effort "to hold the whole thing together," is a matter of deliberate, willed choice and shows a self-possession absent in the white Compsons, who in varying degrees and ways have surrendered to fate, relinguished their power to know and to choose. Dilsey's superiority manifests itself in her responses to both natural and cultural environmental circumstances.

Dilsey represents the minimal norm of nature, in that she recognizes and ministers to the inescapable claims of his physical nature on man, and adjusts uncomplainingly to uncontrollable, adverse natural circumstances. The latter point is illustrated in the first pages of the fourth section, when, attired as for church in "a dress of purple silk," Dilsey emerges from her cabin, finds it raining, and, without repining, goes back in and changes clothes, to appear again shortly "in a man's felt hat and an army overcoat, beneath the frayed skirts of which her blue gingham dress fell in uneven balloonings."[3] Her quiet submission to the vicissitudes of weather contrasts to her credit with Jason's later,

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[1] Faulkner in the University, p. 5. [2] Ibid., pp. 38-39.

[3] Fury, pp. 281-82.

resentful fantasy at the mere thought of possible rain: "'It's going to rain,' he said. 'Get me half way there, and rain like hell.' And he drove on out of the bells and out of town, thinking of himself slogging through the mud, hunting a team."[1] That Dilsey's response to the weather is more than a stoic fatalism or a behavioristic reflex is shown by her later exchange with Frony and Luster on the advisability of wearing their best clothes to church on a threatening morning:

> "You got six weeks' work right dar on yo back," Dilsey said. "Whut you gwine do ef hit rain?"
> "Git wet, I reckon," Frony said. "I aint never stopped no rain yit."
> "Mammy always talking bout hit gwine rain," Luster said.
> "Ef I dont worry bout y'all, I dont know who is," Dilsey said.[2]

Dilsey's calm acceptance of the ineluctable adversities in nature's provision shows throughout the section, but most pointedly in her treatment of Benjy, who is a repulsive freak to Jason and a "judgment" to Mrs. Compson, but still "honey," a human being, and one of her "family" to Dilsey:

> Dilsey led Ben to the bed and drew him down beside her and she held him, rocking back and forth, wiping his drooling mouth upon the hem of her skirt. "Hush, now," she said, stroking his head, "Hush. Dilsey got you."[3]

Dilsey's relationship with nature, however, is more than a passive acceptance of its mischances; she in a sense cooperates with nature by recognizing and ministering to man's natural needs. She acknowledges, in other words, man's essential grounding in nature, in contrast to the Compsons, who variously deny or abuse that grounding. We can take the body's radical dependence upon the more or less regular consumption of food to illustrate the difference between the Compsons and Dilsey on the point of this acknowledgment. The preparation and eating of food consti-

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[1]P. 321. [2]P. 305. [3]P. 332.

tute an almost sacramental act in Fury as elsewhere in Faulkner's work, and characters can be partly evaluated by their attitudes toward the act. Quentin is at the business of trying to escape the metabolic processes; his goal is the condition that he remembers from his hunting trips with Versh: "When Versh and I hunted all day we wouldn't take any lunch, and at twelve o'clock I'd get hungry. I'd stay hungry until about one, then all of a sudden I'd even forget that I wasn't hungry any more."[1] Jason's attitude varies according to his temporary compulsion: sometimes he insists on the punctuality of meals, but at other times he skips eating altogether. By contrast, Dilsey approaches the preparation and serving of food regularly, methodically, and punctually, "gathering about her the raw materials of food, coordinating the meal,"[2] and trying to get people to eat: to Benjy, "'All right, honey,' she said. 'Here yo breakfast'"[3]; to Jason, "'Aint you going to eat no breakfast?' Dilsey said. He paid her no attention. 'Go and eat yo breakfast, Jason.'"[4] Dilsey's attitude does not stem from the servile performance of expected duty, but is a genuine concern for satisfying the basic needs of the body, as is shown by her rather blunt rejection of Mrs. Compson's "offer" to prepare breakfast:

> "If you're going to drop everything to dress Benjamin, I'd better come down and get breakfast. You know as well as I do how Jason acts when it's late."
>
> "En who gwine eat yo messin?" Dilsey said. "Tell me dat. Go on now."[5]

Perhaps Dilsey's peace with nature, "the sequence of natural events and their causes which shadows every mans brow even benjys," is

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[1]P. 131. [2]P. 305. [3]P. 292.

[4]P. 300. [5]P. 287.

best summarized by reference to the clock image. The clock's ticking "might have been the dry pulse of the decaying house itself"[1] of the Compsons, whose trouble Faulkner says is that "they are still living in the attitudes of 1859 or '60."[2] The cabinet clock hangs on the wall in the kitchen, has only one hand, and strikes three hours behind time, so that if meals were prepared by it, the Compsons would eat breakfast at eleven, dinner at three, and supper at nine in the evening. But Dilsey is present in the kitchen to correct the clock's version of time, so that when it "with a preliminary sould as if it had cleared its throat, struck five times," "'Eight oclock,' Dilsey said."[3] Thus Dilsey adjusts the Compson eccentricities to the natural rhythm of time and the bodily processes.

As Cleanth Brooks cautions, however, we must beware of seeing in Dilsey merely the norm of nature.[4] Dilsey is situated squarely in society, and so is subject to the same cultural forces, though often in different guises to be sure, as the other characters in the novel. Those aspects of the Southern society which have been the focus of this reading do not evaporate in Dilsey's section. Rather, their valid demands and forms are met and appropriated by Dilsey, while their unrealistic, stultifying, perverted facets are either ignored or assuaged by her. Dilsey is "the individual within society, product of it and often as not its victim, yet at the same time a free agent with the responsibility for

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[1]p. 301.

[2]Faulkner in the University, p. 18.

[3]Fury, p. 290.

[4]Cleanth Brooks, "Primitivism in The Sound and the Fury," English Institute Essays: 1952. Ed. Alan S. Downer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), p. 25.

his actions." Dilsey knows herself--at least has that image of herself which establishes her identity--, she knows her people, she knows her responsibility to her people, and she works to fulfill that responsibility.

Dilsey gets her image of herself from the same source whose perversion we see in Mrs. Compson: a fundamentalist faith in God. Mrs. Compson often prates of Christianity, sin, judgment, retribution, and other fundamentalist tenets, but it is just rhetoric, and the rhetoric is thoroughly contaminated by her selfishness and false pride as a Southern lady. For example, to Dilsey, on Quentin's reason for suicide:

> "What reason did Quentin have? Under God's heaven what reason did he have? It cant be simply to flout and hurt me. Whoever God is, He would not permit that. I'm a lady. You might not believe that from my offspring, but I am."[1]

And she shortly asks for her Bible, which has fallen off the bed and gone unretrieved all morning. The expression of Mrs. Compson's faith, we sense, precludes any real conviction in what she professes to believe.

In contrast, Dilsey's faith is profoundly heart-felt, nearly inarticulate, and active. It is as logically incoherent and fragmentary as Rev. Shegog's words when his intonation becomes negroid: "'When de long, cold--oh, I tells you breddren, when de long, cold--I sees de light en I sees de word, po sinner. Dey passed away in Egypt, de swinging chariots; de generations passed away.'"[2] But, however deficient in rational coherence, the Christian message as presented by Rev. Shegog finds its constant, mystical analogue in Dilsey's racial and familial experience as she sits with Benjy by her side:

> "Breddren! Look at dem little chillen settin dar. Jesus was like dat once. His mammy suffered de glory en de pangs. Sometime

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[1] Fury, p. 315. [2] P. 311.

> maybe she helt him at de nightfall . . . maybe she look out de do' en see de Roman po-lice passin."[1]

As Benjy's true "mammy," in every sense but the physical, Dilsey has seen and believed these things, but also "'de resurrection en de light . . . dat dem whut sees en believes shall never die. . . . en de arisen dead whut got de blood en de ricklickshun of de Lamb.'"[2] Dilsey, "crying rigidly and quietly in the annealment and the blood of the remembered Lamb"[3] (that is, Benjy, and "remembered" by Dilsey because of His saying, "as long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me"[4]) participates in the heart-to-heart communion effected by the minister's words in a way that Mrs. Compson, with her unopened Bible in her self-imposed solitude, could never understand or approach.

Moreover, Dilsey carries her faith into the weary routine of daily life, caring for her own family and the Compsons with an ungrudging steadfastness because she is secure in the image of herself and others as the children of God. Her religious faith is her constant support. As she works in the kitchen, preparing Benjy's dinner, she repeats her personal summary of Rev. Shegog's message, "'I seed de first en de last,'"[5] and sings over and over again the few lines she knows of a religious hymn. As she puts her old felt hat on Benjy's head for his weekly trip to the graveyard, she reveals the source of her strength: "'We's down to worse'n dis, ef folks jes knowed,' she said. 'You's de Lawd's chile, anyway. En I be His'n too, fo long, praise Jesus.'"[6] And a passage from the first section shows the ultimate location of Dilsey's

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[1]P. 312. [2]Pp. 312-13. [3]P. 313.
[4]St. Matthew 25: 40 [5]<u>Fury</u>, p. 316. [6]P. 333.

stable sense of self, and the reason why worldly losses mean less to her than to the Compsons:

> My name been Dilsey since fore I could remember and it be Dilsey when they's long forgot me
> How will they know it's Dilsey, when it's long forgot, Dilsey, Caddy said
> It'll be in the Book, honey, Dilsey said. Writ out.
> Can you read it, Caddy said.
> Wont have to, Dilsey said. They'll read it for me. All I got to do is say Ise here.[1]

Indeed, as Cleanth Brooks concludes, Dilsey's faith, her sense of purpose, is securer than anything in the Compsons' lives because it is rooted in something outside herself, but it is not nature and it is not man: "Dilsey does not believe in man; she believes in God."[2]

From her firm identification with a reality beyond herself, Dilsey can discern the true from the false values of the cultural scene surrounding and informing her. It would be easy, but false, to assume that Dilsey, because she is a Negress, is immune to the noxious influences infecting the white Compsons. Other Negroes, such as Luster here and Deacon in Quentin's section, consciously or unconsciously imitate the manners of their white mentors, and thus become parodies of both those mentors and themselves--as Quentin thinks of this type, "a nigger is not a person so much as a form of behavior; a sort of obverse reflection of the white people he lives among."[3] It is only Dilsey, really, who consistently adheres to essential values, without regard for specious appearances.

The preservation of the family as an institution is one such value to which Dilsey commits herself unreservedly. Hers is not the

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[1]P. 77.

[2]"Primitivism," p. 26.

[3]P. 105.

empty voice of Caroline Compson, alternately proclaiming the value of familial appurtenances and disowning actual members of her family, while all the time corrupting the family from within. Rather, Dilsey believes in the family as a natural social unit, a community of love and loyalty extended unwaveringly to every member, regardless of his condition and merits. She has filled the vacuum of parental responsibility in the Compson family and applied these "principles" of love and loyalty to its members as well as to her own family. When Miss Quentin is brought home an outcast bastard, for example, and Mrs. Compson raises a stir about putting "it" in Caddy's old room "to be contaminated by that atmosphere," Dilsey cannot understand why the infant's treatment should differ from the normal pattern:

> "And whar else do she belong?" Dilsey says, "Who else gwine raise her cep' me? Aint I raised eve'y one of y'all?. . . Why aint she gwine sleep in here," Dilsey says, "In the same room whar I put her ma to bed ev'y night of her life since she was big enough to sleep by herself."[1]

And when the girl grows up, Dilsey never stops trying to protect her from Jason, in spite of Quentin's ingratitude:

> "Now, now," Dilsey says, "I aint gwine let him tech you." She put her hand on Quentin. She knocked it down.
> "You damn old nigger," she says.[2]

In short, to Dilsey, family members are always family members, not to be disowned or renamed, in the manner of Mrs. Compson, when they do not live up to expectations.

Nor does Dilsey believe in that blood fatalism which is one of Mrs. Compson's favorite ideas. When Miss Quentin finally disappears, Mrs. Compson immediately concludes that she has fatalistically followed her

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[1]p. 216. [2]p. 203.

uncle's example: "'It's in the blood. Like uncle, like niece. Or mother. I dont know which would be worse. I dont seem to care.'"[1] Although Dilsey is mistaken about the girl's reappearance, she at least knows that Mrs. Compson is talking nonsense about the nature and cause of Quentin's absence: "'Whut you talkin about?' Dilsey said, 'Dont you know she all right? I bet she be walking right in dis do befo dark. . . . Whut you keep on talkin that way fur? . . . Whut she want to do anything like that fur?'"[2] Certainly one reason for Dilsey's disregard of Mrs. Compson's belief in "blood" is her own deep faith in the redeeming power of "de blood en de ricklickshun of de Lamb," which renders Mrs. Compson's idea of blood meaningless.

Dilsey's attitude toward race is a little more complex. In general, she shows little consciousness of race, with respect to herself and her relationships with white people. That is, we do not find her worrying about being a Negress, or about being called "nigger," or about being treated like a "nigger," as she is called and treated by at least Miss Quentin and Jason. If she were reflective, she would probably acknowledge her acceptance of her race and station as another dispensation from God, a cross to be borne without complaint as a part of this life's trial for the next. However, this is just speculation; the only evidence for it is the fact that Dilsey does not allude self-consciously to her own racial character, as many Negroes from other Faulkner works often allude to theirs (for example, Jesus and his wife Nancy in "That Evening Sun," who exhibit extreme sensitivity to the fact of their race). Dilsey's "policy" is to meliorate the bi-racial situation by avoiding involvement

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[1]P. 315. [2]P. 315.

in the private affairs of white people, except when it is necessary to protect the defenseless. Her advice to Luster, "'You tend to yo business en let de white folks tend to deir'n,'"[1] expresses her own course and that of most other Negroes in this novel.

The complicating factor is Dilsey's occasional language, which sometimes superficially suggests racism and inverse racism, or "Crow Jim." The truth is that Dilsey employs "nigger" and "white trash" usually as normative epithets to characterize low moral quality in persons of those races, regardless of their hierarchical rank. Thus, in her exchange with Frony on "folks talkin" about her taking Benjy to the Negro church, Dilsey uses "white trash" to indicate all whites, including the Compsons, who would bar Benjy from the Lord's presence on the grounds of his idiocy or her race:

> "And I knows whut kind of folks," Dilsey said, "Trash white folks. Dat's who it is. Thinks he aint good enough fer white church, but nigger church aint good enough for him."
> "Dey talks, jes de same," Frony said.
> "Den you send um to me," Dilsey said. "Tell um de good Lawd dont keer whether he smart er not. Dont nobody but white trash keer dat."[2]

Dilsey's use of "nigger" is sometimes casual and merely descriptive, as in "nigger church" in the last passage. Very often, however, it is a pointed reminder of low character in one of her race, as when she comments on the importation of Rev. Shegog from St. Louis, "'Whut dey needs is a man kin put de fear of God into dese here triflin young niggers,'"[3] or when she warns Luster, "'G'awn, now. En ef you hurts Benjy, nigger boy, I dont know whut I do. You bound fer de chain gang, but I'll send you dar fo even chain gang ready fer you.'"[4] When Luster tries to define himself in antithesis to the Compsons, Dilsey is quick to point

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[1] P. 314. [2] P. 306. [3] P. 306. [4] P. 334.

out that the Compson quality is found in Negroes too when they are niggers:

> "Dese is funny folks. Glad I aint none of em."
> "Aint none of who?" Dilsey said. "Lemme tell you somethin, nigger boy, you got just as much Compson devilment in you es any of em. Is you right sho you never broke dat window?"[1]

Dilsey's use of such language thus contrasts with Jason's. For Jason, black skin invariably means "nigger," which in turn invariably means shiftlessness, parasitism, immorality, irresponsibility, and the like. But for Dilsey, skin-color means nothing in itself; it is the moral quality that counts, and low moral quality is "nigger" for Negroes, "white trash" for white people.

So it is with Dilsey's expression of other cultural dynamics: what counts is the inner value and the suitability of the form to the occasion, not the form or the convention in itself. For example, the Negro world is just as mannered and ritualistic in its way as the white world in its, but Dilsey modifies the form to suit the needs of practicality, the convention to express reality. Easter Sunday is the occasion to parade in one's best apparel, but if rain threatens, Luster can wear his old hat or carry an umbrella, and Dilsey will take Benjy to church no matter how people talk. On the way to church, little ritualistic greetings are customarily exchanged, but Dilsey's exhaustion permits her to reply personally only to the venerable aged, to whom an extra effort of respect is due.[2] Likewise the past, which is an obsession with all the Compsons in one way or another, receives its due attention from Dilsey, but only as a part of the cyclical process of time, whose consummation

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[1] P. 292. [2] P. 307.

is eternity: "'I've seed de first en de last,' Dilsey said. . . . 'I seed de beginnin, en now I sees de endin.'"[1]

In summary of this novel's enveloping action, which we have been observing in its emergent aspect alone, let us review some of the advantages in appreciation which the generic concept of the Southern image makes possible for the reader of The Sound and the Fury. First, on the level of fairly minor significance, it enables him to "place," to know the meaning of, certain facts, mannerisms and conventions whose references are immediately concealed by the dramatic method, and hence to estimate with greater precision and I think enjoyment their incidence upon the action. Some of these are seemingly very minute details, such as Mr. Compson's burial on Confederate Memorial Day,[2] which yet serve to specify the pattern of ideas and motives at work in the novel. Some are matters of vocabulary. For example, knowing that in the South the noon meal is called "dinner" and the evening meal "supper" occasionally helps the reader to establish what time of day it is and which meal is being taken. Similarly, an awareness that older Southern Negroes frequently use the term "nigger" among themselves in the way Dilsey does helps to clarify her racial attitude. Other mannerisms, once recognized in their true nature, take on symbolical and evaluative significance. For example, the reader may notice that all the male characters here place special importance on having and wearing their hats. Of course, in an

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[1]P. 313.

[2]First noted in publication by George R. Stewart and Joseph M. Backus, "'Each in Its Ordered Place': Structure and Narrative in 'Benjy's Section' of The Sound and the Fury," American Literature, XXIX (Jan., 1958), 440-56.

older America, hat-wearing was much more commonplace than it is at present; but in an older South, because of the almost perpetual sunshine and the fair skins of the Anglo-Saxon community, it was virtually a sine qua non of one's dress, a testament to one's sanity, as Jason suggests. The constancy of the convention therefore renders the different characters' attitudes toward hat-wearing emblematical of their adjustments to nature and societal standards, and Dilsey's casual deference to the convention, without regard to the style and antiquity of the headdress, once again emerges as the ideal. Likewise, an awareness of the leisurely, lonely existence of Southern sharecroppers makes more understandable their flocking to town to see the show, and at the same time renders more perverse Jason's resentful objection to their recreation. A knowledge of other peculiarly Southern ways, such as the "Christmas gift" convention,[1] helps in a similar manner to illuminate characters' attitudes for the reader and therefore to sharpen his appreciation of the novel.

Second, a knowledge of the Southern image enables the reader to perceive the underlying relationships among the different, sometimes apparently disparate motivational forces--to see these forces as issuing from a single, massive, enveloping, informing cultural organism. This perception has the effect of unifying, enlarging, and complicating the "body of fate" in and against which the characters of the novel are struggling. Without this perception, certain motivational forces might appear to strike characters at times serially and disjointedly. For example, Quentin's memories, thoughts, words, and actions regarding the Negro might seem at first arbitrary and gratuitous, unrelated to his

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[1]Fury, pp. 105-106.

prepossessing problem of honor, without the elementary recognition that both problems stem from the same, inescapable cultural source, and the further apprehension that the two issues are inextricably related: that Quentin's ideals of honor and gentility, for which he can find no basis in nature and experience, parallel in character and origin his stereotyped pictures of the Negro, some of whose falsity or at least ambiguity he has begun to penetrate. So the more clearly the reader understands the common background of Quentin's thinking on these two questions alone, the more acutely does he see into the tertiary levels of Quentin's main problem, as also into the solution which eludes Quentin.

This insight does not, however, simplify either Quentin or his plight. On the contrary, it complicates both, in the desirable sense that it lends them that density or impenetrability which is characteristic of real persons in critical situations. In other words, possessing the generic picture of the South enables the reader to <u>see</u> with greater clarity the nature of Quentin and his problem; and it also complicates <u>what is seen</u>. Here the internalization of cultural dynamics, achieved by dramatization, comes into active play. Quentin's Mississippi culture is not something exterior to himself, which he can analyze, accept and reject piecemeal, without loss to himself. It has formed him and it is, quite literally, in him in the form of his memories--Father's voice, Mother's voice, Caddy's voice, Dilsey's voice, recollections of hunting trips with Versh and Uncle Louis Hatcher, and the like. For Quentin directly to repudiate one or another of these voices or images would be to mutilate a portion of that very self he is trying to integrate and establish. It would be analogous to that self-castration which Quentin

explicitly rejects:

> Versh told me about a man mutilated himself. He went into the woods and did it with a razor, sitting in a ditch, flinging them backward over his shoulder. . . . But that's not it. It's not not having them. It's never to have had them then I could say O That That's Chinese I don't know Chinese.[1]

Similarly, if Quentin had never heard his mother's voice talking about honor and the Southern lady's purity, he could say, "That's Chinese I don't know Chinese"; but having heard it, he cannot reject its content without serious loss to himself--or rather of himself. In a sense, therefore, Quentin's decision for suicide emerges as an admirably well-intentioned, though horribly misdirected, gesture toward self-integration.

The same complicating effect from discerning the Southern terms of action is of course true in connection with other characters, as I have tried to show in the cases of both Caddy and Jason. More broadly, both the subject ("blood gone bad," "the tragedy of two lost women," the decline of a family) and the theme ("the relation between the act and man's apprehension of the act") are thoroughly conditioned by the terms of Southern culture, the recognition of which enriches and deepens both subject and theme. The very core and axis of the novel is the family, whose modern status in America, as we have seen, is peculiarly Southern. Thus Cleanth Brooks comments that, while Fury may be about the break-up of Southern aristocracy and of the old South itself,

> what seems to me more immediately obvious is that it has to do with the break-up of the institution of the family. The break-up of the family is probably much further advanced in California and in Connecticut than in Mississippi; but in the former states the dissolution has occurred quietly and almost without fuss. The true significance in the Southern setting lies, perhaps, in this: that placed in a Southern context, the break-up can be presented, not as a slow

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[1]Pp. 134-35.

erosion, but as a crashing landslide.[1]

Not only that; the Southern context causes the break-up of the Compson family, in that the context has supplied the family with a pattern of ideals to guide the conduct of its members, but has also evolved into a chaotic state whose circumstances subvert those ideals. In other words, the Southern context establishes the importance of the family, but also provides the ready means for its destruction.

The theme of Fury, "the relation between the act and man's apprehension of the act," is similarly conditioned by the terms of the novel's Southern environment. As I pointed out, Caddy's irrevocable loss is in large measure caused, certainly aggravated and accelerated, by the importance placed on honor and purity by Quentin and Mrs. Compson. But that loss in turn causes Quentin to strive the more frenetically to create honor, at last by suicide, while it leads Jason, as he thinks, to jettison the ideal of honor entirely. These developments, along with Mr. Compson's hastened death by over-drinking and Mrs. Compson's increased self-pity, in turn deprive Miss Quentin of the little love and security Caddy had known and so insure her early and total loss. There is a good deal of truth to Miss Quentin's remark to Jason, "'Whatever I do, it's your fault. . . . If I'm bad it's because I had to be. You made me,'"[2] as well as pre-justification for her flight in her bitter retort, "'I'm bad and I'm going to hell, and I dont care. I'd rather be in hell than anywhere where you are.'"[3] So the act and its apprehension work reciprocally, in an ever-worsening spiral, and always in terms of the environmental dynamics.

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[1]"Primitivism," p. 26. [2]Fury, p. 277. [3]P. 207.

Third, the recognition of the Southern scene brings about an effect which is hard both to describe and to find its causes. It is an impression of solidity or density or continuity--of a life, truly, "that would conceivably continue beyond the frame of the story, just as it preceded it, and out of which the particular drama develops," as Tate and Miss Gordon define "enveloping action."[1] Some of our ultimate questions about certain novels, it seems to me, have to do with this impression, or the lack of it. We ask, How singular are the persons and circumstances here? What are the options of conduct and principles available to the characters within their society? How involved or engaged with their society are the characters? How permanent is the society itself? In some novels, such as On the Road or Other Voices, Other Rooms or Wise Blood, the social settings seem as ephemeral as the characters; there is an air of transience about both, as though they had been temporarily summoned for the occasion of the action, in order to illuminate each other briefly, and will evaporate after the books are closed.

By contrast, in The Sound and the Fury the Compsons seem an inalienable part of a complex society which stretches endlessly before and after them. They emerge from it briefly to hold our attention, and collapse back into it, but the society itself goes on and on. Moreover, strange as the Compsons are, they do not seem especially singular, in the sense of going against the grain of their milieu, of standing out in sharp opposition to or violation of societal norms. The few outside viewpoints we get of the Compsons--through Earl, through the sheriff, through the town Negroes--do not point with horror or outrage at the Compsons,

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[1]House of Fiction, p. 631.

but accept them unreservedly as a part of communal life. An articulation therefore exists between the Compsons and their society which tends to substantiate both. As I say, the reasons for this effect of solidity are not clear to me. Perhaps it is due in part to the centrifugal reference of the novel's enveloping action, so that we confuse the South of the novel with the real, existing South. Perhaps it is due in greater measure to our knowledge of the whole Yoknapatawpha series, in the panoramic sweep of which the Compson drama is indeed but incidental. In any case, the effect is quite real and contributes considerably, in my estimation, to the overall stature of this novel.

III

Our purpose here is to consider briefly the technical means by which Faulkner has put together these materials to produce the relationships and emphases just outlined: how he has dramatized and mythicized "the provincial terms of his background" into the terms of his characters' behavior, so that, to recollect Miss Welty's phrase, "as place has functioned between the writer and his material, so it functions between the writer and reader." We are concerned here with the "rhythmical" aspect of the Southern image in Fury, or, more precisely, with the techniques which secure the rhythmical development of that image in the manner characteristic of the regional novel.

Now, studies of Faulkner's general techniques and of this novel's particular form exist in great profusion and on all levels of quality, Our purpose, however, is neither the general survey nor the detailed explication; we are on a plane inferior to the former and superior to the latter, in the ladder from particular to general. What we want is a

characterization of the techniques in Fury sufficient to indicate their unique way of bringing the details of the enveloping action to bear upon the action, so as to give the thematic outlines we have already discussed.

As if in contradiction, I would begin by noting Faulkner's general dramatic instinct, which is the essence of his creative method and the principle which "complains" at least the Yoknapatawpha canon, from the briefest story to the entire corpus. For Faulkner, "'living' is motion, and 'motion' is change and alteration, and therefore the only alternative to motion is un-motion, stasis, death"[1]; "time is, and if there's no such thing as was, then there is no such thing as will be."[2] Moreover, "time is not a fixed condition, time is in a way the sum of the combined intelligences of all men who breathe at that moment."[3] Therefore and necessarily, no single viewpoint, state, moment, or action can ever express or match perfectly Faulkner's "dream" of Yoknapatawpha County. Any single viewpoint is only one integer in the "sum of the combined intelligences of all men who breathe at that moment," and demands supplementation. Any character or state or action, once written down, has gotten out of the stream of "is" which is the independent life of Faulkner's characters, and demands re-admission by later treatment or reference. Again, the idea that time is the sum of the combined intelligences of men suggests the dramatic principle of indirection: that the reality of at least time does not reside sheerly in external objects and events, but also in men's apprehension or reflection of them, and that the entire group of such reflections is necessary to get at the full reality of any moment.

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[1]From the frontal note to The Mansion.

[2]Faulkner in the University, p. 139. [3]Ibid.

In the Yoknapatawpha canon, therefore, individual stories and novels are of course self-subsistent creations, but they are also episodes within the whole epic, just as, within a particular novel, apparently self-contained episodes transpire to contribute to and be modified by the whole novel.

This essentially dramatic approach is seen in Faulkner's statements about his conception, execution, and revision of The Sound and the Fury, as well as in the novel's form itself.

> It began with the picture of the little girl's muddy drawers. . . . And I tried first to tell it with one brother, and that wasn't enough. . . . I tried with another brother, and that wasn't enough. . . . I tried the third brother, because Caddy was still to me too beautiful and too moving to reduce her to telling what was going on, that it would be more passionate to see her through somebody else's eyes, I thought. And that failed and I tried myself--the fourth section--to tell what happened, and I still failed.[1]

Even then, "it was still not complete, not until fifteen years after the book was published, when I wrote as an appendix to another book the final effort to get the story told and off my mind, so that I myself could have some peace with it."[2] In Fury as elsewhere for Faulkner, no effort is ever "enough," because of his philosophy of "is" and the heart's dream, which are always a step ahead of and a cut above what has been written.

Whatever Faulkner's motives for rewriting Fury, the critic is primarily concerned with the result of that revision, the accomplished novel after Faulkner "wrote it five separate times, trying to tell the story."[3] What appears as the techniques of narrative structure and point of view is not the same story retold from five different angles, but a "spiral" structure, in which the central issue ("the tragedy of two lost

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[1] Ibid., p. 1.

[2] Writers at Work, p. 131.

[3] Ibid., p. 130.

women," "blood gone bad") is viewed from different angles of vision, with a general movement forward. In spite of the confused chronology, the movement is forward in several ways. One is the progression in understanding and clarity of vision, as we move from the anarchical world of Benjy's through the chaotic world of half-mad Quentin, through the deceptively simple world of spuriously "sane" Jason, to the well-ordered, objective vision of Dilsey and the omniscient narrator in the last section. Another is the dual progression in attitudes toward time and in types of motion. Benjy's is a timeless world in which past is as real as present and interchanges indiscriminately with present when stimuli trigger his unconscious, associative processes; his motion, dictated entirely by the wills of others, is volitionally aimless and possesses only the rhythm of natural processes—waking, eating, and sleeping. Quentin lives mostly in the past, whither he has already renewed himself mentally; he is "killing time" till the evening hour of his suicide, and his motion too is random and casual. Jason lives oriented toward the future, and, in contrast to Quentin, who has too much time, Jason never has enough time to do adequately what he wants to do; his motion is frenzied as he rushes about Jefferson and the countryside, always too late to accomplish his purpose. These three aberrant complexes result, directly or indirectly, from the "tragedy of two lost women" and "blood gone bad," as they reflect in a disorganized fashion the causes and consequences of those losses. Only in Dilsey, again, do we find the ideal, one who admits the legitimate claims of past, present, and future without letting time dominate her; her motion is purposeful, methodical, punctual, and morally centered, as she copes heroically with tragic circumstances.

All of these progressions have been frequently remarked. The progression which strangely has not been explained, to my knowledge, is that of the action itself. That action is the last stage of Compson decay, "de endin" which Dilsey sees on Easter Sunday with Miss Quentin's flight, Jason's departure ("'Jason aint comin home,'"[1] Dilsey says, in a way which the reader can understand as unintentionally prophetic), and Benjy's abandonment. The last significant act in the Compson drama, centering on Miss Quentin's elopement, begins on Friday and concludes on Sunday, although its antecedent causes lie far back in Compson family history and its denouement falls several years ahead. The structural presentation first of Saturday, at the end of which we see Miss Quentin making her escape, and then of Quentin's death day in 1910 and of Jason's trials on Friday, before the conclusion in proper chronological perspective on Sunday, reveals an intricate causal pattern bearing on the action which needs to be unraveled. In brief, the structural order itself, as well as the objective facts disclosed fragmentarily in the first three portions of the structure, is ultimately responsible for Miss Quentin's flight and the final desolation of the Compsons.

The Compson domination by the past, which is a communal and cultural heritage symbolized by the prominent display of the Confederate soldier "with empty eyes beneath his marble hand,"[2] deranges the family's temporal perspective and prevents the practical, moral confrontation of present needs and the foresight of future developments and requirements. This pattern can be shown at will by isolating any Compson act and tracing its causes to a distortion of time and its effects on not only the actor

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[1] Fury, p. 317. [2] P. 336.

but Miss Quentin. Thus Quentin's obsession with out-moded standards causes his suicide and also commits Miss Quentin to the guardianship of Jason. Mrs. Compson's complex of proud, outdated notions deprives Miss Quentin of her mother's love and care and restricts the girl so severely that, like Caddy, she is driven to secret assignations and eventual flight. Jason's preoccupation with the future, which is determined by his past experience, leads him to ruin even his own potential future by overdoing his exploitation of his niece and driving her from the house. The point is that the chronological confusion among as well as within the structural sections reproduces formally one of the decisive factors bearing on the action. We might say that just because, figuratively speaking, Friday comes after Saturday and 1910 after a day in 1928 to the Compsons, Miss Quentin is compelled to accept the first available offer of freedom. And Faulkner has not stated this relationship; he has represented it, as James would say, by dramatizing it in this structural order.

Moreover, there exists a submerged causal relationship among the sections which culminates in Miss Quentin's robbery of Jason and escape from the household. Odd as it may sound, there are causal nexus between Sections One and Two, and between Two and Three, which also cause the event witnessed at the end of Section One. The causal pattern holds in that the state of mind, partial content, and typical or particular action of one section are invariably at least partly responsible for the state of mind, partial content, and action of the next section, up until Dilsey's portion of Four. For example, much of One concerns events prior to 1910 and so helps determine and explain Quentin's anguish and suicide

in Two. But, in addition, Benjy's kind of consciousness and typical actions--his way of responding to certain phenomena, such as changes in Caddy--sorely afflict Quentin because they seem to exhibit the family's decay and reflect Caddy's dishonor. In this sense, then, the state of mind and type of behavior exhibited in 1928 have helped to cause an event eighteen years before. Similarly, with cumulative force, Sections One and Two determine in part Jason's attitude and behavior in Three, especially his "practicality" and revulsion from Compson pride, folly, and decay: "I says no I never had university advantages because at Harvard they teach you how to go for a swim at night without knowing how to swim,"[1] and "I could hear Ben in the kitchen, where Luster was feeding him. Like I say, if we've got to feed another mouth and she wont take that money, why not send him down to Jackson."[2] In turn, Jason's complex motivations are expressed in his sadistic, exploitative treatment of Miss Quentin, which drives her down the pear tree on Saturday night. Within the Compson ménage, only Dilsey is able to resist the causative, gravescent interaction between act and apprehension which ruins the dynasty.

The extremely complicated pattern of causation presented by the spiral structure is inseparably connected with the angles of vision, or points of view, through which the action and enveloping action emerge. The priority of Compson subjectivity, as exhibited in the first-person points of view of the first three sections, is one of the reasons why the family is in the last stages of decline and why Miss Quentin consummates that decline by her departure. Like their father and mother, the

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[1]P. 213. [2]P. 239.

Compson brothers, in varying measures and for different reasons, are incapable of loving persons other than themselves, and this absence of love eventuates in the loss of both Caddy and her daughter. The dramatic essence of the novel's form is illustrated by the contextual evaluation of the first-person authority in the first three sections by the objective presentation in Section Four, where the self-detachment of the form, as well as the portrait of Dilsey responding fully to objective values, criticizes the self-centeredness of the earlier sections.

In those sections the first-person point of view locates the reader within the minds of persons paralyzed in various states of innocence, so that he experiences the quality of innocence as well as attaining to an eventual understanding of it. With Benjy he experiences the chaos of a meaningless, random present, determined altogether by the will of others and interrupted by flashes from other scenes coming as if by chance. Of course the reader's experience never duplicates Benjy's exactly: the reader never shares Benjy's emotional involvement, and successive readings enable one to catalogue the fragments from the past and to recognize the stimuli and associative principles which evoke them. Nevertheless, the illusion or impression of a primordial chaos never ceases to operate in the reader as an approximate analogue to Benjy's state.

With Quentin, the reader is placed in immediate relation to a different kind of chaos, one complicated by the presence of a tortured will. Quentin's will has predetermined the hour of his suicide, and in the meantime, with the exception of accomplishing a few last-minute tasks such as dispatching his parting letters and purchasing his weights, he is almost literally killing time by drifting aimlessly around Cambridge and

its environs. Still, his apparently random, mysterious actions, such as amputating the hands of his watch, are dictated by the encounter of his will with images from the past. The reader's bewilderment by these enigmatic actions is enhanced by the confused state of Quentin's consciousness. The past irrupts into Quentin's mind no less than into Benjy's, but with these complicating differences: only Benjy's sensations were affected by these irruptions from the past, whereas Quentin's sensations, actions, and conscious thoughts are all disordered by recurring memories; Benjy's "memories" were simple recordings, while Quentin's are emotionally tinged, often ejaculative; and Benjy's were unaccompanied by any comment, whereas Quentin's are fused with interpretative parallels from his literary, mythological, and Biblical knowledge. The following brief passage, which occurs when Quentin is supposed to be conversing politely with the Bland party, illustrates all of these points and epitomizes the obscurity of Quentin's conscious processes:

> "No," Shreve said. running the beast with two backs and she blurred in the winking oars running the swine of Euboeleus running coupled within how many Caddy[1]

Placed in immediate contact with such mental processes, the reader undergoes even more befuddlement than in Benjy's section, but he gradually comes to recognize in Quentin the person whose captivation by the past and his society incapacitates him for prudent, moral conduct in the present. It is a kind of innocence illustrated by his unconscious attack on Gerald Bland when Quentin is lost in recollecting last summer's abortive attack on Dalton Ames. Quentin's situation is partially clarified for both himself and the reader by such objective comments as Spoade's

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[1]P. 167.

description of the attack:

> "The first I knew was when you jumped up all of a sudden and said, 'Did you ever have a sister? did you?' and when he said No, you hit him. I noticed you kept on looking at him, but you didnt seem to be paying any attention to what anybody was saying until you jumped up and asked him if he had any sisters."[1]

But, as we saw earlier, Quentin cannot benefit from such illumination; only the reader grows in insight through Quentin's section.

With Jason, the reader is situated in a consciousness which, according to my reading, is apparently much simpler and more ordered than Benjy's or Quentin's but actually in its own way more unintelligible than either. It is true that the past does not break in upon Jason's consciousness as disjointedly and frequently as with Benjy and Quentin, but that is for two reasons: Jason's specious control over the past through the verbalization "I says" and the associative theme of loss to self, which have the effect of assimilating the past to Jason's present by distortion, and Jason's obliteration of large blocks of the disturbing past from his memory. The first effect is illustrated in a passage just after Earl has asked Jason to serve a customer. Jason's response is, "Well, Jason likes work. I says no I never had university advantages. . . . Then when she sent Quentin home for me to feed too I says I guess that's right too. . . ."[2] Here we move from the actual present to an ambiguous present whose real time must lie between Quentin's suicide and the infant's arrival. Later in the same paragraph we move imperceptibly forward to Mr. Compson's funeral ("and I says well I could spare Uncle Maury myself and then they came and said they were ready to start"[3]), and again we have shifted from a specious present, really located in the

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[1]P. 185. [2]P. 213. [3]P. 214.

past, to a definite past occasion. The point is that Jason's "I says" often conceals the pastness of the past, which occurs to Jason anyway only when it relates to a loss or pain which he suffers in the present. The second point, Jason's obliteration of much of the past from his conscious memory, is revealed when he feels vaguely disturbed about something but can't quite identify the cause, as when he and Caddy stand over their father's grave: "We stood there, looking at the grave, and then I got to thinking about when we were little and one thing and another and I got to feeling funny again, kind of mad or something. . . ."[1] Here the "when we were little" probably refers to an occasion like Damuddy's funeral, which is quite distinct in Benjy's and Quentin's memories but obscured in Jason's, although its vagueness does not prevent it from affecting him.

The normal reader is relieved when he arrives at Jason's section because it seems so much plainer and simpler than the first two sections. He cannot proceed very far, however, without beginning to see that the simplicity is illusory, the plainness deceptive. In addition to finding that Jason's "says" often conceals the workings of the past, the reader discovers that the same "says" is no reliable index to what is actually spoken, since Jason is often imagining what he has said, is saying, or would say, and there is frequently a discrepancy between what he does say and what he would like to say. An example is his talk with his mother on her illness and the disposition of Benjy:

> Then she says, "I'll be gone soon. I know I'm just a burden to you" and I says "You've been saying that so long that I'm beginning to believe you" only I says you'd better be sure and not let me know

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[1]P. 220.

> you're gone because I'll sure have him on number seventeen that night. . . .[1]

If the reader is deceived into thinking that quotation marks indicate what Jason actually speaks aloud, one of Jason's last "words" to his mother about Miss Quentin compels him to re-examine the entire section:

> "I don't know what else she'd do in there alone," she says. "She never did read any."
>
> "No," I says, "You wouldn't know. And you can thank your stars for that," I says. Only what would be the use in saying it aloud. It would just have her crying on me again.[2]

Another insidious attraction of Jason's consciousness is the presence of adverbial connectives between his thoughts, in contrast to the inadequate co-ordinating connectives in Benjy's section and the truncated connectives in Quentin's. But Jason's "logical" relationships are perhaps even more confusing to the reader as he gradually discovers, for example, that Jason's ubiquitous use of "because" to express all relationships makes nonsense out of many passages. Thus, to Lorraine, spoken or imagined,

> I says I'll buy you enough beer to take a bath in if you want because I've got every respect for a good honest whore because with Mother's health and the position I try to uphold to have her with no more respect for what I try to do for her than to make her name and my name and my Mother's name a byword in the town.[3]

Jason's "logical" forms and his "says" thus conduce to a surface plainness which conceals a very disordered mind.

My purpose in elaborating these points on the reader's contact with Jason's consciousness is to emphasize an effect which actually parallels the experience of the first two sections, although it does not seem to do so at first glance, and that is the reader's active participation in the quality of innocence, and his gradual insight into that state.

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[1]P. 239. [2]P. 279. [3]P. 251.

Just as the reader shares the differing disorders of Benjy's and Quentin's sections, but slowly comes to understand those characters, so he at first shares Jason's illusions of simplicity, practicality, and self-sufficiency, but gradually comes to see, as Jason never does, the real complexity, disorder, and contingency underlying those illusions.

The reader's successive engagement with the minds of the three brothers depends not merely upon the first-person points of view, but upon the qualities of style which lend persuasiveness to those points of view. The styles of the first three sections vary according to the nature and plight of the character "speaking" in each case, or, to put it more suitably from the reader's side, the nature of each character is knowable through his style. Except for the objective conversations it records, each character's style is constantly revealing the kind, scope, and limitation of his knowledge; and since each character's knowledge is sharply limited in one way or another, the reader is drawn into considerable inferential and comparative activity.

Benjy's consciousness, excepting the talk he records, is limited to very simple sensory impressions whose meaning he doesn't understand. This simplicity is reflected in his diction, which consists of a few concrete words giving approximate images with few refinements or nuances of perception: "smooth, bright shapes,"[1] "bright grass" (for golf green) and "flower tree"[2] (for a tree in bloom), and so on. His syntax is typically a series of short, independent clauses joined by "and" and "but" or their equivalents, since the cumulative and adversative relations are about all he is capable of seeing: "They took the flag out, and they

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[1]p. 94. [2]p. 23.

were hitting. Then they put the flag back and they went to the table, and he hit and the other hit. Then they went on, and I went along the fence."[1] Although no true figures of speech issue from Benjy's perception because of his inability to see occult resemblances, occasionally his failure to detect the source of a sensation results in an expression that sounds figurative: "I squatted there, holding the slipper. I couldn't see it, but my hands saw it, and I could hear it getting night, and my hands saw the slipper but I couldn't see myself but my hands saw the slipper."[2] This kind of synesthesia and Benjy's awareness of death, which he "smells" or knows in some way, carry the strong implication that in the "natural" state some things are sensed intuitively without needing sensory specification.

Such stylistic traits immerse the reader in Benjy's perceptions yet at the same time require him to infer the significations which Benjy misses. They exemplify, on the stylistic level, the indirect revelation of meaning which characterizes dramatic technique. From the simple description, "Our shadows were on the grass. They got to the trees before we did. Mine got there first,"[3] the reader infers the direction of movement and the relative sizes of Benjy and Luster. Or, as Benjy sits before the fire, "The long wire came across my shoulder, and the fire went away. I began to cry,"[4] and we know that Luster is badgering his charge again by furtively shutting the stove door. So, all through the section, Benjy's simple impressions, appropriately reproduced in his simple style, are the medium by which the reader obliquely approaches meaning.

Quentin's style is far more complex than Benjy's, as I have

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[1]P. 23. [2]P. 91. [3]P. 73. [4]P. 77.

already partly indicated. Quentin is endowed with a good mind and an acute sensibility, and in addition he is highly literate and well-educated; hence he should be able, through his style, to clarify relations for us. Instead, his obsession with honor and the sharp disjunction between past and present convert his natural advantages into limitations, which are often reflected in his style by tortured, fragmented syntax, missing punctuation, irresoluble paradoxes, mysterious allusions, pronouns with lost antecedents, obscure abstractions, and figures of speech whose meanings are initially unclear because the terms are unknown. The difficulties of Quentin's style are compounded by its frequent shading off into the voices of his family, which are usually but not always distinguishable. Thus in the following passage, which also illustrates these other complexities, it is difficult to know where Mr. Compson's voice stops and Quentin's begins:

> Because women so delicate so mysterious Father said. Delicate equilibrium of periodical filth between two moons balanced. Moons he said full and yellow as harvest moons her hips thighs. Outside outside of them always but. Yellow. Feetsoles with walking like. Then know that some man that all those mysterious and imperious concealed. With all that inside of them shapes an outward suavity waiting for a touch to. Liquid putrefaction like drowned things floating like pale rubber flabbily filled getting the odour of honeysuckle all mixed up.[1]

Quentin's section has many intervals of extreme lucidity, and toward the end, after the Bland episode, the style assumes a serene tone that is almost elegiac. Still, the section has enough passages like the disordered one above, and worse, to compel a constant re-reading and cross-referencing before Quentin's exact situation, with all the forces producing it, becomes clear to the reader.

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[1]p. 147.

The stylistic features contributing to the surface simplicity of Jason's section have already been noticed in part. In addition, we observe that the staple of Jason's vocabulary is coarse, vulgar diction heavily interlarded with stereotyped words and phrases often indicative of his racial and religious bigotry:

> "And what for? so a bunch of damn eastern jews, I'm not talking about men of the jewish religion . . . I've known some jews that were fine citizens. . . . I have nothing against the jews as an individual. . . . It's just the race. You'll admit that they produce nothing."[1]

Such diction, and the ungrammatical, frequently curt syntax with causal connectives and ellipses of unnecessary words conspire to produce an image of the direct, unsentimental, practical man of no foolishness, but this image is belied, as I have stressed, by the actual deviousness and non sequiturs of Jason's motives and actions.

A unique dramatic feature of Jason's style is its humor. Jason's contempt for most of the persons, institutions, and conventions of his environment, plus his self-centeredness, results in his straight-faced, sardonic exaggeration of what exasperates him at the moment. The humorous effect is dramatic in that it first elicits our commitment, as we laugh spontaneously at Jason's scornful characterizations and scenes, and then condemns that commitment, as we realize that we shouldn't have laughed, that Jason's humor is based on a degradation of humanity. In other words, we divide ourselves by first sympathizing with Jason temporarily and then censuring him and ourselves; but since we can never condemn ourselves utterly, so we can never thereafter totally condemn Jason. A good example of this process at work issues from Jason's digression on

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[1]P. 209.

Benjy and the golf course:

> It's bad enough on Sundays, with that damn field full of people that haven't got a sideshow and six niggers to feed, knocking a damn oversize mothball around. He's going to keep on running up and down that fence and bellowing . . . until first thing I know they're going to begin charging me golf dues, then Mother and Dilsey'll have to get a couple of China door knobs and a walking stick and work it out, unless I play at night with a lantern.[1]

Here the hyperbolic ridicule of golf and golfers, which Jason conceives as incredibly otiose, the image of Mrs. Compson and Dilsey improvising a set of clubs and playing the game, and the picture of "practical" Jason playing by lantern-light—all strike us, I think, as quite funny, until we see the dehumanizing aspects and assumptions; the degradation of persons to parasitic "niggers," the conception of Benjy as a burdensome, sideshow freak, even Jason's own miserliness, which would compel him to find a way to "work it out" if he were charged golf dues. The humor thus effects a kind of double perspective of both Jason and ourselves which helps subvert our patronizing view of Jason as an inhuman, cruel, intolerant Southern bigot.

The point of view and style of Section Four, as well as the character of Dilsey, present a norm which evaluates the points of view, styles, and characters of the first three sections. The omniscient authority presents a balance of objective description, interior exposition, panoramic and close narration, and exposition, which is not especially remarkable in itself but which stands out in marked contrast to the various distortions in the other sections. With the exception of Quentin in his lucid periods, for example, the Compson brothers either could not or would not notice the objective appearances of persons and things with

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[1]P. 205.

any fineness of perception: Benjy could not, Quentin was usually too distracted to see things clearly, and Jason didn't much care what things looked like unless, like a red tie or a dilapidated wagon, they violated his canon of respectability. In contrast, the narrator of Four gives close attention to the fine details of appearance, as in his opening, five-paragraph description of Dilsey as she launches Easter Sunday. Such attention not only provides the reader with information which the Compson brothers failed to provide and without which the characters have seemed rather bodiless, but also reflects an assumption of value in persons and things in themselves which was notably missing in the Compsons. It is a kind of "precious object" mentality in the narrator, in contrast to the Compson warping of objective phenomena to subjective interests.

But the narrator does not focus long on merely spatial dimensions, as though captivated by things outside of time and action; he propels them forward into action, engaging them in a meaningful interaction with other things and persons that corresponds formally with Dilsey's commitment to significant action and contrasts with the isolating subjectivity of the Compsons. Narration follows swiftly upon description in Section Four, and even objective descriptions are activated by verbal figures: "The gown <u>fell</u> gauntly from her shoulders, across her <u>fallen</u> breasts, then <u>tightened</u> upon her paunch and <u>fell</u> again, <u>ballooning</u> a little above the nether garments. . . ."[1] Moreover, the narrator does not rely upon appearances alone, which can deceive, but intermixes sufficient exposition to indicate the relationship between appearance and meaning, as in the presentation of Jason and his mother

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[1]P. 281. My italics.

> in identical attitudes; the one cold and shrewd, with close-thatched brown hair curled into two stubborn hooks . . . and hazel eyes with black-ringed irises like marbles, the other cold and querulous, with perfectly white hair and eyes pouched and baffled and so dark as to appear to be all pupil or all iris.[1]

Finally, the description, narration, and exposition are marked by shifts in perspective which cumulatively demonstrate an awareness of context hitherto wanting in the points of view. So, as we are situated in the Negro church, listening to the sermon and observing the congregation's response, our attention is momentarily diverted to the larger context of time and the outside world, and then the former focus is resumed:

> As the scudding day passed overhead the dingy windows glowed and faded in ghostly retrograde. A car passed along the road outside, labouring in the sand, died away. Dilsey sat bolt upright, her hands on Ben's knee. Two tears slid down her fallen cheeks. . . .[2]

In spite of the authoritative omniscience, Section Four remains intensely dramatic. The narrator makes sparing use of his power to judge and to generalize, so that there are but few instances of the overt, general evaluation illustrated in this weak characterization of Mrs. Compson: "Like so many cold, weak people, when faced at last by the incontrovertible disaster she exhumed from somewhere a sort of fortitude, strength."[3] Instead, the proportion of representational modes described above; the full, coherent syntax supplied with accurate connectives; the heavy predominance of the subject-verb-complement pattern; the variety of sentence lengths and types (simple, complex, compound, compound-complex); the variety of diction; and the plenitude of figurative expressions: all these qualities of focus and style, with their resultant clarity and fullness of vision, judge in themselves the various distortions

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[1]P. 295. [2]P. 311. [3]P. 315.

in perspective and style of the first three sections.

Moreover, comment on the characters and actions of Section Four alone is for the most part indirect rather than direct, emerging from implicit contrasts of action, speech, and appearance. For instance, Jason's frantic, futile, morally unjustifiable pursuit of Miss Quentin contrasts implicitly with Dilsey's calm, effective, moral performance of her duties to God and her fellow man. Similarly, her genuine religious faith, expressed in both action and words, contrasts not only with Mrs. Compson's hollow religion but with Jason's open blasphemy: "'For what?' Jason said. 'You never resurrected Christ, did you?'"[1] Imagistic antitheses likewise suggest temperamental and moral differences, as we half-consciously compare, for example, the coldness, hardness, and darkness of Jason's and Mrs. Compson's eyes, and the peculiar cut of his "close-thatched brown hair curled into two stubborn hooks, one on either side of his forehead like a bartender in caricature,"[2] with Benjy's eyes and hair:

> His hair was pale and fine. It had been brushed down upon his brow like that of children in daguerrotypes. His eyes were clear, of the pale sweet blue of cornflowers. . . .[3]

Also, the use of figurative expressions, of the subjunctive and potential moods, of "as if" and "as though" constructions, and of the words "appeared" and "seemed" often avoids the direct interpretation of appearances, as though the narrator were simply an objective observer, while nonetheless suggesting the proper interpretation. Thus, of Benjy's "sound," "It might have been all time and injustice and sorrow become vocal for an instant by a conjunction of planets"[4]; of Jason's posture

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[1]P. 295. [2]P. 295. [3]P. 290. [4]Pp. 303-304.

before Miss Quentin's door, "His attitude was that of one who goes through the motions of listening in order to deceive himself as to what he already hears"[1]; of Benjy's hunger, "It was as if even eagerness were musclebound in him too, and hunger itself inarticulate, not knowing it is hunger"[2]; and of Luster's hat, "The hat seemed to isolate Luster's skull, in the beholder's eye as a spotlight would, in all its individual planes and angles."[3] So the emphasis and style of the narrative authority in Section Four present a clear picture rectifying the distortions of the Compson brothers, and yet preserve a dramatic detachment requiring the reader's continued, active engagement.

The dramatic techniques of the spiral structure, the first-person and detached points of view, the characterized styles, and humor are the principal means by which the details of the Southern image have been so enacted that they emerge as the terms of the characters' thought and behavior, not as an external body of fate or the subject of the novel. In the non-dramatic or "romantic" mode, when authoritative generalizations about place occur, place is at the same time externalized to the characters inhabiting it and uplifted to the status of subject in one degree or another. "They were silent for a moment, knowing in common with all Southerners that when the knot got too tangled it was just as well left alone."[4] "Southerners hear parts of stories with their ears, and the rest they know with their hearts."[5] "It is part of the consciousness of

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[1]P. 296. [2]P. 292. [3]P. 304.

[4]Elizabeth Spencer, The Voice at the Back Door (New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1958), p. 25.

[5]Ibid., p. 218.

a Southern household that a Negro is calling at the back door in the night."[1] Such generalizations, from a very respectable novel incidentally, tend to make the characters' actions to which the generalizations apply illustrative of a pattern existing outside the characters and operating mechanically through the characters without their human agency. At the same time, such authoritative generalizations call special attention to place and thus elevate its importance, while diminishing that of the characters. The dramatic rendering of place, as seen in The Sound and the Fury, achieves quite a different effect.

The few generalizations about the South by name occur in Quentin's section, and there they are not "reliable," authoritative generalizations, but dramatic opinions, derived from his own observation and from contact with another culture, which compete with other opinions for ascendancy in his structure of values and exert additional strain on his frail sensibility. Thus his generalization "In the South you are ashamed of being a virgin. Boys. Men. They lie about it" is a challenge to his self-definition by honor and to the physical basis of that honor in woman's purity. He can answer the challenge, as he tries to do, or he can succumb before it; but in either case, it is not just a "rule" which he mechanically illustrates. Moreover, the primary relevance of the generalization is to Quentin's own consciousness, not to the cultural background; its importance lies in how thinking this way about the South will affect him, not in whether it is a valid statement about the South of the novel. Therefore the Southern background remains subsidiary to our focus on Quentin's consciousness.

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[1] Ibid., p. 76.

The same effect holds true of other generalizations, in the first three sections, about institutions and conventions which we recognize as Southern but which the characters usually do not explicitly identify as such: the generalization is always revelatory of the character who makes it, and its main significance is its effect on those who apprehend it. "Father said it used to be a gentleman was known by his books; nowadays he is known by the ones he has not returned,"[1] reveals Mr. Compson's scoffing, world-weary nihilism; it also offers Quentin a degraded version of the gentleman at odds with the traditional, questions the validity of his very presence at Harvard, for which a great sacrifice has been made, and requires him to choose, to appropriate one or the other concept of the gentleman as his standard. Or consider the letter which Jason receives from Uncle Maury, whose parasitical mode of subsistence validates Quentin's observation, in another context, on familial obligation, "Remote cousins and family friends whom mere acquaintanceship invested with a sort of blood obligation noblesse oblige."[2] Uncle Maury's letter, however fine the rhetoric, is simply another of his periodic "touches" for money, which he wishes to keep concealed from Mrs. Compson on the pretext of gallantry to Southern ladies:

> "'This is in confidence. . . . And knowing your Mother's delicate health and that timorousness which such delicately nurtured Southern ladies would naturally feel regarding matters of business . . . I would suggest that you do not mention it to her at all.'"[3]

The transparent sham of this loftiness, especially in view of Maury's borrowing from Dilsey while "explaining to her . . . that she was not only in his eyes the same as a member of his sister's family, she would be

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[1] Fury, p. 100. [2] P. 124. [3] P. 241.

considered a born lady anywhere in any eyes,"[1] exposes Maury's flabby decadence behind the facade of aristocratic gentility; also it vindicates and intensifies Jason's scorn of genteel standards and his assumption that such forms are just convenient masks for the self-gratifying instinct. The dramatic technique thus renders even generalizations about cultural milieu directly operative on the minds of characters, although the operation, being represented and not stated, requires our active search for relations; and simultaneously it subordinates the terms of that milieu to the characters and action affected by the terms.

More commonly and importantly, however, the details of the Southern image occur particularly and casually, not in the form of generalizations, and this incidence also is effected by the complex of dramatic techniques. Although various characters make observations on aspects of Southern family life, the most significant way of our seeing the importance of the family is being placed inside the minds of the three brothers. No authority has to state the importance of family ties in forming the person, when we ourselves are hearing constantly, with the characters, "Mother said," "Father said," "Caddy said"; when we detect through stylistic changes, the typical voices of Father and Mother entering the consciousnesses without introductory identifications; and when we witness the characters unconsciously thinking like Father or Mother or Uncle Maury. The privation of familial love and its effects on Miss Quentin are not explicitly described to us; we see the absence of love in Jason's mental processes and in his record of Mrs. Compson's cold, formal preachments to the girl ("'He is the nearest thing to a father you've ever

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[1]Pp. 18-19.

had. . . . It's only right that he should expect obedience from you'"[1]) and we see the effects in Miss Quentin's desperate outbursts ("'Dilsey,' she says, 'Dilsey, I want my mother'"[2]) and finally in her theft and flight. The spiraling, looping structure, by juxtaposing parallel scenes widely separated in time, lets us witness at first hand the decline of the family, as for example we see through Benjy's unknowing eyes the different reactions of Caddy and her daughter, as well as the different caliber of their beaus, when Benjy interrupts their courting twenty-two years apart.[3]

The dramatic method similarly exposes us directly to all the other lineaments of the Southern image, which we can recognize by the aid of the generic concept even though they are not explicitly identified. Rhetoric is another good example of this effect. It is true that Quentin generalizes the emptiness of words,[4] but we get an immediate impression of that emptiness by listening to Uncle Maury and Mrs. Compson talk and by hearing Jason's "I says," "like I says" beat incessantly on our minds and at the same time recognizing the falsity of what he says. Moreover, and this is very important, Quentin's view of rhetoric is an extreme position, obscuring from him the partial truth which words always convey, even when they are lies, and ignoring that possibility of true communication by language which Rev. Shegog's sermon demonstrates in Section Four.

Finally, then, as my last remark suggests, Faulkner's dramatic method in Fury introduces the details of the regional enveloping action

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[1]P. 276.

[2]P. 203.

[3]Pp. 65-69.

[4]Pp. 136-37.

in a tentative, ambiguous, contingent fashion so that they are, in fact, dramatic: they clash with one another for domination of the characters, they require the reader's active participation, and they are evaluated, ultimately, only by the context of the whole novel. With respect to the characters, this dramatism is actually thematic. That is, the completed novel attests the disaster to oneself and others which results from critical action, or inaction, out of a state of innocence. For example, Quentin's attitude toward honor is like his attitude toward rhetoric: it is tentatively valid, but only a partial truth, needing to be revised and modified from other environmental information. Quentin's "mistake," in terms of the whole novel, is committing the irrevocable act of suicide on the basis of a highly-selected, extremely conditional, partial picture of his world. Quentin makes an irreversible decision from an inadequate view of all the "contingencies which surround and modify action." And his act is judged by its consequences--the hurt to others and the further decline of the family to which his suicide contributes--and by the portrait of Dilsey, who acts from a total, religious view of her world.

The reader's experience contributes an increment to the same theme. The dramatic enactment of the Southern image enforces upon the reader the necessity to withhold his judgment, and to constantly revise his convictions in the light of the accumulating evidence, until the last word is in. Such a suspension of judgment is of course necessitated by any dramatic performance, but it is doubly urgent in a drama where there is a strong centrifugal reference to a controversial area like the South. Whatever the reader's conventions and convictions about the South, they tempt him always toward a premature commitment to some

position rendered untenable by later developments. If he happens, for example, to entertain convictions such as Edith Hamilton's, that "'Mr. Faulkner's novels are about an ugly people in an ugly land,'"[1] he may find himself, like Quentin Compson, looking for evidence to substantiate his beliefs, and he may identify himself, again like Quentin, with some partial view of the novel's world which the rest of the novel judges to be inadequate, innocent, and injurious to humanity. Thus the dramatization of regional materials in The Sound and the Fury creates an affective tension which parallels the tension within the novel's characters and action.

"Mythicization" we noted as the second, and ancillary, branch of regionalist formalism by which the regional novelist incorporates his regional materials without reducing them to the distorting conventions of an outside audience. The Sound and the Fury does not contain, in any significant degree, the more common and obvious mythopoeic techniques that we find in other Faulkner novels, such as the narrative parallel with Biblical myth in Absalom, Absalom! and the "archetypal" pattern of initiation in "The Old People" and "The Bear" in Go Down, Moses. The principal external illumination shed on the characters and action in Fury comes from the non-mythical source Macbeth, to which the title alludes. Still, there are incidental uses of mythopoeic devices in the novel, and there is one major technique which is partly concealed but which our previous discussion of mythicization enables us to recognize and interpret.

Occasional mythological references both illuminate the meaning

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[1]Cited by Brooks, "Primitivism," p. 7.

of characters and actions and elevate them above the particular circumstances of their environment. Jason's name and pursuit of Miss Quentin and the stolen money recall with some irony the more heroic quest of another Jason for the golden fleece; the mythical Jason's patrimonial dispossession and difficulties with women are also pertinent to the situation of Jason Compson, who in a sense is trying to recover his usurped, dynastic "kingdom" through Miss Quentin, and whose abuse of her defeats his own purpose as the mythical Jason's abuse of Medea defeated his. It is doubtful, however, that these more detailed parallels are either "intended" or commonly apprehended; the basic connection between the two Jasons is their quest for a valuable object, and this connection tends to universalize or extend the meaning of a small-town, Southern store-clerk's greed.

In Quentin's section we find more, and more conscious, mythological allusions than elsewhere because of Quentin's learning. Hence the allusions not only increase our understanding of the persons and actions mythicized, but also characterize Quentin by revealing the state of his formal education and his disposition to think in symbolical and mythical modes. In other words, Quentin himself is constantly prone to exaggerate his own situation into heroic proportions, and thus to escape confronting the commonplace, matter-of-fact, natural kind of reality which his situation reflects. Mrs. Bland is not just the fatuous, pretentious, amoral, Southern-lady snob she really is, but Semiramis, the Assyrian queen who established lust as her realm's law in order to mask her own licentiousness. Caddy is not just naturally passionate but demon-ridden, like the demoniac of Gerasa whose unclean spirits, exorcised by Jesus, entered

the nearby swine and rushed into the sea; the image of "the swine untethered in pairs rushing coupled into the sea"[1] recurs to Quentin several times in connection with Caddy's promiscuity. (In view of Quentin's suicide by drowning, this allusion gives rise to the interesting question of whether Quentin thinks of himself as the unclean spirits or the swine into which the spirits entered, or perhaps both, since by drowning himself he in a way "cleanses" Caddy.)

Quentin's penchant for mythicizing persons and states is also attested by his younger brother's name, for it was Quentin who picked "Benjamin" after Mrs. Compson "insisted weeping that his name must be changed,"[2] and Quentin thinks of Benjy as signifying something beyond himself: "Benjamin the child of mine old age held hostage into Egypt."[3] What it is that Benjy signifies to Quentin, however, is harder to specify, since it was Joseph who was actually sold by his brother into slavery, while Joseph later only threatened to hold Benjamin hostage as a trial to his brothers and father.[4] Although it is tempting to discover, in the story of Jacob's sons, abstruse parallels and relationships applicable to Quentin's situation, such as Simeon's and Levi's revenge on their sister's violator, it is more likely that Quentin connects the name "Benjamin" generally with the idea of pride or "Egypt," to which the innocent are sacrificed. Thus the pride of Joseph's brother, of the Egyptian Pharaoh, of Pharaoh's wife, even of Joseph, each case resulting in harm to the innocent, is to Quentin a fitting magnification of his

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[1]P. 195. [2]P. 19. [3]P. 189.

[4]Faulkner says that he used Joseph and Benjamin "interchangeably." Faulkner in the University, p. 18.

mother's pride, which has resulted in changing Benjy's name and sacrificing his pasture to send Quentin to Harvard. Indeed, Quentin thinks of his mother as a kind of prison in which the whole family is captive, for he compares the family plight to

> a picture in one of our books, a dark place into which a single weak ray of light came slanting upon two faces lifted out of the shadow. . . . I'd have to turn back to it until the dungeon was Mother herself she and Father upward into weak light holding hands and us lost somewhere below even them without even a ray of light.[1]

Quentin's mythicization of aristocratic pride into a land or state of captivity lends additional significance to Rev. Shegog's words in Section Four: "'Dey passed away in Egypt, de swingin chariots; de generations passed away. Was a rich man: whar he now, O breddren? Was a po man: whar he now, O sistuhn?'"[2]

Faulkner's rather loose employment of the Old Testament story typifies his use of established myth. Normally he does not intend a minute, point-by-point parallelism with his own story,[3] but wants rather to introduce an area and kind of meaning to illuminate temporarily his fictional details. This pattern of mythical incidence obtains as well for the Christian parallels in Fury as for the Hebraic. Although Faulkner has expressly denied any elaborate parallel with Holy Week in this novel,[4] Faulkner speaking on Faulkner is by no means infallible or altogether trustworthy. But on this point a close examination of the novel bears him out; to force the action of the novel into the pattern of Holy Week is to distort the former beyond the limits of credibility. The

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[1] Fury, p. 191. My italics. [2] P. 311.

[3] A Fable is of course an exception.

[4] Faulkner in the University, p. 68. Faulkner calls Holy Week "Passion Week."

falling of the novel's last day on Easter Sunday appears rather to emphasize the theme of secular endurance and redemption through Dilsey's humility, faith, hope, and charity: the idea "that the will of man to prevail will even take the nether channel of the black man, black race, before it will relinquish, succumb, be defeated."

These instances of mythical reference are not of great importance individually, though cumulatively they add an extra plane of significance to the story of a provincial family's decline. But a form of mythicization of great importance in itself and for the novel's action is the exaltation of Caddy which takes place by the exhibition of her effect on her brothers, primarily Quentin and secondarily Benjy and Jason. One mythical technique, we recall, is to "convey the excitement of the mythic state and the 'preternatural efficacy' of the exciting object," to show the psyche captivated by the mythical object in which the "sum of all Being" seems to reside. Such is precisely the case with Quentin, for whom the sum of being, including his own, lies in Caddy, her maidenhead, and the honor it represents. The way of exhibiting this captivation is itself dramatic, consisting of the continual irruption into his present thoughts and actions of past scenes with Caddy, or sometimes just her voice or name. The core of Quentin's mythic consciousness is his image of Caddy the day of Damuddy's funeral, when she muddied her drawers in the branch, and to this center he eventually arrives through the intercession of another past scene, when he and Caddy engaged in an abortive, mutual suicide pact:

> do you remember the day damuddy died when you sat down in the water in your drawers
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Caddy do you remember how Dilsey fussed at you because your

drawers were muddy
dont cry[1]

Here Quentin's reference to the childhood scene and his weeping over it reveal its immense significance for him--the intensity of his identification with Caddy's purity and the anguish of that early moment when he intuited the meaning and eventual loss of the purity. It is by such measures exhibiting the power which Caddy exerts over Quentin that she emerges as the mysterious, marvelous object of mythic proportions.

That effect is due mainly to Quentin's section, but it is reinforced by the presentation of Caddy's impact on Benjy and Jason. To Benjy, Caddy "means" love and security, but he can express this meaning only in sensory terms which invest Caddy with more than personal, human qualities. So through his section, as the theme "Caddy smelled like trees" recurs again and again, Caddy gradually acquires something of the mysterious power of nature. To Jason, Caddy also means woman and nature, but this significance is concealed from him, and he experiences her mainly as a fateful force which somehow manages to rob him at every turn. The insight into both brothers' minds thus contributes to the mythicization of Caddy which is centered in Quentin's section.

Now there are two important points to be emphasized in this mythical effect. The first point is the way in which the technique of mythicization expands the very limited, regional terms of Caddy's meaning into a universal condition. Directly for Quentin and indirectly for Benjy and Jason, Caddy's significance is actually determined by a complex of factors peculiarly Southern: the importance of family, of female purity,

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[1]Fury, pp. 170-71.

of male honor, of aristocratic tradition, of "blood," and of fundamentalist concepts of sin and damnation. The utter dependence of Caddy's significance to Quentin on their Southern origin is perhaps suggested by Shreve's chiding of Quentin upon the arrival of Caddy's wedding announcement:

> Young Lochinvar rode out of the west a little too soon, didn't he?
> I'm from the south. You're funny, aren't you.
> O yes I knew it was somewhere in the country[1]

Or again, Shreve points out by innuendo the peculiarity of the Southern genteel tradition in his retort to Spoade:

> "You're not a gentleman," Spoade said.
> "No. I'm Canadian," Shreve said.[2]

But Faulkner, by stressing and augmenting the effect of Caddy upon the minds of her brothers, very largely bypasses the cultural terms of that effect at first glance. As readers, we are struck immediately by the powerful influence which Caddy exerts on Quentin, Benjy, and Jason; we too are initially captivated, I think, by the mysterious girl who means so much to the first three "speakers" in the novel, and our captivation partakes of that universal experience, the mythic apprehension. It is only later, when we begin to analyze and interpret the reasons for Caddy's importance, that the Southern conditions emerge with full clarity and force.

At least there is, for the reader, that reflective glance, as there is not for the Compson brothers. The second point is then the function of this mythical mode in the theme of The Sound and the Fury. The mythical mode, in the form of the brothers' awed apprehensions of

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[1]P. 112. [2]P. 166.

Caddy, is the primary "romantic" dimension of this novel. Each brother is dominated by a picture or image of Caddy which impedes his efficient, moral action in the present. Quentin's blunder with the little Italian girl is a paradigm of this pattern: he gets into trouble with the girl's brother and the law just because he is too distracted by thoughts of Caddy to pay attention to what he is doing. But for both Quentin and Jason there are far more pressing needs for wise, moral action in the circumstances of their environment. Caddy has asked Quentin to "look after Benjy and Father,"[1] and not to let "them" (Mrs. Compson and Jason) send Benjy to Jackson.[2] Miss Quentin pleads to Mrs. Compson and Jason for relief: "'It's his fault,' she says. She jumped up. 'He makes me do it. If he would just--' she looked at us, her eyes cornered, kind of jerking her arms against her sides."[3] But neither Quentin nor Jason can respond to these needs in the dramatic action because of their domination by pictures of Caddy, which in turn blind them to their determination by their environment. Only Dilsey, whose vision has located herself and the "sum of all Being" in their only adequate repository, can provide the kind of response which is this novel's final definition of innocence.

IV

Thus, if the preceding exposition of The Sound and the Fury is sufficiently illustrative, does the generic concept of the regional novel, and then of the Southern regional novel particularly, enhance the understanding and appreciation of individual novels falling within the class. The generic concept enables us, first, to identify novels which do fall

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[1]P. 134. [2]P. 131. [3]P. 276.

within the class, so that we do not mistake their "intentions" and read them for what they are not. Then, second, it enables us to read the identified novels with greater insight into their materials and movements than is likely, I claim, without the generic concept.

Beyond the aid to appreciation, which yet remains primary, is another value which I hope has emerged from this essay. It is, not presumptuously the proper, but a proper or decorous means of using "extrinsic" findings of scholarship in the act of literary criticism. Implicit throughout this study, and at points explicit, is the assumption that sociological, historical, biographical, linguistic, and other kinds of extrinsic data may be useful in discovering, and thence fulfilling, the intentions of single works and kinds of works. The regional novel and the Southern regional novel in particular constitute, as it happens, an ideal testing-ground of this assumption and its application to generic criticism because of the factor of cultural differentiation and the ignorance and bias stemming therefrom. By using extrinsic data in some such fashion as that indicated in the early chapters of this study, the reader surmounts his initial handicaps and becomes equipped to perfect, as it were, the intention of any work to which the generic concept applies. This value of the study, the proper use of extrinsic materials, thus connects seamlessly with the first, the enhancement of appreciation of novels included within the sub-genre.

The connecting point is the concept of motivation, which I have suggested as a comprehensive and hence useful criterion for the generic criticism of fiction. Knowledge of intention, to which extrinsic data may contribute, relates to perception of motivation very roughly as end

to means: it is partly by knowing the end toward which a process tends that we are able to apprehend and appraise processional stages, although in fiction process and ultimate construct are inseparably interfused, intention and motivation mutually illuminating and fulfilling each other in their growth toward finality. But, in the case of the present subject, a knowledge of regionalist intention prepares us to respond "correctly," that is appropriately, to the motivation of a Southern regional novel, so that we do not for example hasten to premature judgments on Southern characters and ways while still in the midst of the dramatic development.

Finally, and beyond the preceding, there is another assumption pervading this study, with I hope its corresponding "value" or "point": it is the focus of the critical vision steadfastly on the literary object and its experience, but the direction of the critical voice to the reader of literature. If this sounds axiomatic, yet consider the frequency with which the critical voice is heard addressing--advising, commending, or admonishing--the authors of literature; or, perhaps more distastefully, addressing its own ear. As for the latter veniality, the critical journals are crammed with the sounds of criticism talking to itself. As for the former, which can be much more hurtful to readers, even so masterful a study as Wayne C. Booth's The Rhetoric of Fiction goes badly astray in the last chapter, "The Morality of Impersonal Narration": "And yet, difficult as it is to argue, and with all of the complications carefully noted, one must say that an author has an obligation to be as clear about his moral position as he possibly can be."[1]

But no, the author's only obligation, as author, is to the good

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[1]p. 389.

of his work. And the critic's obligation is not to the author, who will not hear the critic anyway, but to the reader. It is not true that "the author makes his readers"[1]; these days, it is very largely the critic who makes readers. His job is to make good readers, readers with the capacity and inclination to know the literary work for what it objectively is, and to appreciate it on the basis of that knowledge. The critic can best approach this task with the attitude toward literature recommended by John Edward Hardy, the attitude of love,

> that state of affection in which enjoyment is indistinguishable from understanding. And the true lover, our true critic, is not jealous of his prerogatives in the enjoyment of the beloved. He will not make her the instrument of his vanity before the world. But rather, he will recognize the infinite superiority of her greatness to his, and her presence will be his world. And merely to enter into that world, with all it contains, he will be himself content.[2]

Not, however, merely to enter that world, but also to conduct other readers into it, is the fuller critical task.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 397.

[2] *The Curious Frame*, p. 193.

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