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AGAINST THE LIMITATIONS OF RATIONALISM: UNDERCURRENTS IN THE WORKS OF WILLIAM FAULKNER

by

MARTHA NOCHIMSON

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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Abstract

AGAINST THE LIMITATIONS OF RATIONALISM: UNDERCURRENTS IN THE WORKS OF WILLIAM FAULKNER

by

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Although reams have been filled by critics of The Sound and the Fury, Light in August, and Absalom, Absalom!, much about their structure and unity remains a mystery. Is it the limitations of our western culture that make it so difficult for readers to understand these novels? When we dispense with our culture's Cartesian, dualist bias, the discontinuous structures of these novels make complete sense. By breaking rationalist conventions of time and space, these novels allow the reader an unorthodox perception of both idealist Christian morality and materialist theory as false and, what is more, destructive evasions of immediate life. All of the characters in these novels structure their lives with the grid of some form of dualist, rationalist thought--either idealist or materialist. They are all in conflict, but the structuring of the novels makes it possible for the reader to cease to ask which one is right. The rational criterion of correctness is made irrelevant as the radical structures of the novels place the reader in a position to give priority to immediate experience and living energy, as the characters cannot.

Faulkner never claimed an anti-dualist bias. Indeed it is present in only eight of his novels: Sanctuary, As I Lay Dying, Pylon, The Wild Palms, and A Fable, in addition to the above mentioned three. Considering the rarity of outspoken western anti-dualists, it is not strange that Faulkner never declared what he showed in eight of his novels. Lacking Faulkner's authorization for any interpretations of the nightmare world he showed the world to have become under the domination of dualism, the critic is aided in discussing what he sees by a comparison between Faulkner's creation and the works of a unique, avowed western anti-dualist, William Blake.

Blake is optimistic about the human struggle with dualism and Faulkner is essentially pessimistic. There are interesting parallels, however, between Blake's Ulro, also a product of the perversions of dualism, and Faulkner's nightmare world. The resemblances between Blake's consciously avowed creation and Faulkner's underscore the crucial essence of anti-dualism in Faulkner's radical work, on which he never commented himself.

The reinterpretations of The Sound and the Fury, Light in August, and Absalom, Absalom! in an anti-dualist light, with the aid of Blake's spectacles, are intended as paradigms for reinterpreting all eight novels that belong to Faulkner's radical group.

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CHAPTER I

FAULKNER AND BLAKE

Point of view is an important problem for the reader of William Faulkner's novels. In certain of his novels, no character is readily identifiable as the "spokesman," and at the same time the discontinuous exposition of the action seems to make such a figure necessary, as has always been abundantly clear to critics and readers. The absence of such a spokesman has created a problem that is the central concern of this study. The mind of the reader, anxious to find order in his seemingly unguided voyage through Faulkner's structurally disjointed works, automatically turns to one of a range of dualist frameworks from which to interpret the novel. This happens because our western culture is primarily a dualist culture and, while turbulent discord rages between dualist factions--the extremes being on the one hand idealist and on the other materialist--they all have in common the mental structures of a detached observer who feels himself ultimately alien from the object of perception. This fundamental western bias is a problem for readers of Faulkner, as I shall show, because the point of view that emerges from several of Faulkner's novels challenges the limitations of all forms of rationalist dualism.

The structures of those of William Faulkner's novels

that most disorient readers and critics are unorthodox indeed, yet I will argue that their real unconventionality goes far deeper, and that their difficult structure is merely a function of that unconventionality. My major concern in this study will be to deal with the heretofore hidden regions of these novels and lead my reader to understand that the novels to which I refer stand as highly unconventional revelations of the evils of the traditional forms of dualistic thought in our culture. Faulkner himself has never expressed such revelation as a deliberate intention of his. But, intended or not, there exists a crucial undertone of dismay at the whole gamut of mental constructs, whether idealistic or materialistic, in the society he is portraying; I will demonstrate the importance and meaning of that undertone.

Those particular novels that I have distinguished as being in conflict with idealism and materialism at the same time are The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, Sanctuary, Light in August, Pylon, Absalom, Absalom!, The Wild Palms, and A Fable, and they differ greatly in technique and point of view from all the other novels Faulkner wrote. Why Faulkner did, and how he could create two different literary universes can only be briefly touched upon; I will discuss this question in the conclusion of this study. (That there are differences between the anti-dualist novels and the other novels Faulkner wrote, and what they are, will be discussed in Chapter II.)

We begin here with a general consideration of Faulkner's implicit expression of disenchantment with traditional mental constructs of both the idealist and materialist views of reality, as a preliminary to the extremely specific consideration of The Sound and the Fury, Light in August, and Absalom, Absalom! that will follow. These explications will serve as models for revised reconsideration of the rest of the above mentioned eight. We also begin with the problem of choosing a vocabulary for making explicit what I see and will show as Faulkner's implicit attack on the very foundations of language as we use it--the rationalist, dualist view of the universe which allows for a distance between perceiver and object. Despite the western dualistic bias, however, there are precedents for western anti-dualism. William Blake is one widely recognized literary example of a western anti-dualist. Because Blake's conscious rebellion against dualist traditions is in harmony with the implicit attack on dualism that I see in Faulkner, I have found that his thoughts and mythology provide a convenient vocabulary with which to discuss Faulkner's unconscious struggle. Therefore, I will, frequently, invoke Blake as a gloss for Faulkner's mute presentation of what I see as a drama of idealism and materialism in action, destroying human life and happiness.

Blake burned with an apocalyptic optimism that human imagination could make immediate reality accessible, as Faulkner surely did not. But both perceived the same error,

the same terrible forces of mental death in the world around them; and Faulkner, pessimistic as he ultimately is, in these eight difficult novels at least, saw that such mental alienation was perhaps not inevitable, that mankind had imaginative resources he had not yet tapped.

Faulkner's implicit quarrel with idealism and materialism is, then, a quarrel not with two radically different approaches to life, but with aspects of the same human tendency to obscure life with abstract thought. I shall show that although he never talked about idealism and materialism didactically, Faulkner, in his anti-dualist novels, implicitly shows the dangers of placing priorities on these two similarly conventional schools of abstraction instead of on the phenomenal presence of being. Blake explicitly commented upon the common dangers to humanity of idealism and materialism.[1] Whether or not Faulkner could or would have verbalized these issues as Blake did, idealism and materialism are judged in his more radical novels as false, dualistic, abstracted limitations upon the human ability to perceive the integrity of reality. They are, in short, judged as Blake judged them.

We will see that one of the most characteristic traits of Faulkner's anti-dualist novels is the high degree to which they focus on situations which reveal the interdependence of the characters' estrangement from their immediate reality and their subjugation to the paired ideals of materialism and a false morality. But since so very little

in Faulkner's radical novels is made explicit, the search for his point of view about these situations is easily confused. I shall show that the complex structures I shall explicate use fragments of stories which concern blighted destinies and terrible confusion to create a point of view that supersedes anything the idealist or materialist characters think or say. Thus there is no character who presents Faulkner's own point of view in the novels I will be considering. There can be no character who makes explicit the Christ centered mythology and philosophy we shall see emerging from the juxtapositions of fragments and images, precisely because, as these novels are constructed, they show the reader how the failure of what is present in the Faulknerian characters' minds points to what is missing from their view of the world that has created such chaos for them. Blake, of course, did speak directly of the negative effects of idealism and materialism in a way that can supplement for the reader and critic what Faulkner silently indicates with the negative space created by his violently juxtaposed images and fragments.

Blake showed explicitly how the Pauline vision of a universe dominated by the abstract morality of a punitive and moralistic Jehovah and the eighteenth-century model of a purely mechanistic universe both failed to describe reality. In There Is No Natural Religion, Blake proved to his satisfaction that in a truly mechanistic universe nothing could ever happen except for the repetition of some chance initial

event. Similarly, using his wrathful figure, Urizen, Blake explicitly dealt with the Jehovan prototype and its ideal morality and re-interpreted this figure as subordinate to the living God of energy, Blake's true deity. He offered the loving figure of an unconventionally energetic Jesus, whose energy is a creative force, as an example of the true human relationship to holiness in contrast with the unconscious sleep of mankind, represented by Albion, under the domination of false ideal constructs.[2] Blake's unique mythologies of Jehovah, materialism, and Jesus provide a vocabulary for what Faulkner implicitly depicts as a sleep-walking world under the dominion of false gods, oblivious to the holy energy with which it could create paradise on earth. Blake's awful Covering Cherub, his mythological embodiment of that entrenchment of dualistic abstraction which has been sanctified, is another such mythology.[3] The false concept of the sacred that is explicit in Blake's Cherub is extremely useful for talking about a similar evocation in Faulkner's works of a human misconception of what is holy. This misconception is responsible for much of the tragedy in Faulkner's novels, as, for example, when Percy Grimm, who experiences himself as an angel of the Lord, finds that his sacred duty is to mutilate and murder Joe Christmas. Faulkner's implicit rendering of the characters' misconception of holiness in this horrible scene is indeed difficult to make explicit with conventional conceptions and images. Blake's conscious mythology of the Cover-

ing Cherub is an aid to critical explication of that scene among others.

Blake's outspoken restructuring of the universe in defiance of the religious and secular authorities of his time is a convenient gloss for passages in which Faulkner shows violence done to life because his characters' minds are possessed by time-perverted Christian ideals, materialist concepts, and stereotypes. In his anti-dualist novels, which I will at times refer to as Blakean, Faulkner implicitly shows the failure of models of idealism and materialism in action through his fragmentation of point of view. For example, through the several points of view in The Sound and the Fury the reader watches the characters forcing their ideals and materialist beliefs onto the flow of life with increasingly disastrous results, finally ending the family line. In the same way the fragmented structure enables the reader to perceive the energy represented by Caddy and her daughter as the positive center of the Compsons' lives, even though none of the characters can free himself from his set of assumptions to any degree that allows him to recognize Caddy's and her daughter's significance and value. I shall show how the structure of The Sound and the Fury gradually sensitizes the reader to the implications of the characters' abstractions and to the significance of their inability to perceive energy when they encounter it as the vital center. Blake's Christian, anti-dualist mythology of a universe made holy by the God and Christ of energy and love makes a help-

ful explicit companion to the implicit presentation of this mythology in the Compsons who are so lost in the violence created by the inadequacy of their sacred abstractions that they can never accurately describe their tragedy.

Benjy's special limitations as narrator of the opening section perform several functions toward subverting the abstract ideal. First, his position as the first voice in the novel emphasizes his passivity. The normal function of the narrator, especially at the beginning of a novel, is to shape the reader's perception and delimit his focus. This Benjy cannot do, and as opening narrator he calls attention to his limitation. Second, Caddy and luster are constantly presented to the reader in active and energetic roles. This contrast between Benjy's passivity and Caddy's and Luster's dramatic energy grows into a dialectic between abstracted passivity and vital energy. Indeed we shall see that the novel's structure, which appears to cause unnecessary difficulty for the reader's understanding of what is taking place, is appropriate for the needs of telling the Compson story precisely because it enables the reader to see what is happening to the Compsons, which they cannot relate because of their problem with abstraction. In my critical explication we shall see how the novel's structure transforms the presence of traditional, dualistic values in the characters' minds into a revelation of what is not present in their minds, an affirmation of the energy, love and immanence of life.

Although there is no character or narrator to tell us so, the evocation of what is missing enables the reader to see that the oppressive, traditional, dualistic values are all that Caddy encounters and that, without a balancing affirmation of phenomenal life, they erode her original creative, physical and spiritual verve. The discontinuities and juxtapositions of pieces of Compson history without respect for abstract organization of time and space show the reader the increasing domination of the Compson destiny by abstraction, which, to their sorrow, never adequately describes the life the reader sees occurring and always works to the detriment of the human spirit. For one example, the reader sees Quentin's obsession with ideal abstraction lead directly to death. The reader also sees that Mrs. Compson's wailing moral noises do not adequately describe her actual response to Caddy's sexual indiscretions, since Mrs. Compson shows us what she can never tell us about her horror of Caddy's sexuality: Caddy's spontaneity appalls Mrs. Compson because it makes her less saleable to a rich husband on the open market. Similarly, Jason's repeated expression of his mechanistic view of the world never adequately describes what the juxtaposition of scenes from his life shows the reader. Jason speaks of everything as material mechanism which he has the knowledge to control. But the scenes from his life transform his ideas into unreliable nonsense for the reader, albeit nonsense engendering tragic consequences. The reader sees everything escape Jason. Despite his belief

in the form of clock time, as we shall see, Jason is never where he needs to be. Despite his belief in the fundamental reliability of the dollar, its solidity liquidates with the ebbs and flows of the mysterious machinations of the stock market. Even Caddy and her daughter Quentin, whom Jason believes he has under his thumb, vanish eventually from his life.

Blake is again helpful in a critical effort to make the implicit in Faulkner explicit in connection with the Christian milieu in which the action of The Sound and the Fury, as well as the other novels I have singled out as Blakean, takes place. For example, I shall show how Dilsey's positive reaction to the Easter service at the end of the book does not sufficiently describe what the reader sees in it, aided by the techniques of juxtaposition through which the novel is rendered. The implicit inadequacy that is shown is described well by Blake's insights into the overwhelming dualism of the kind of Christianity that is traditionally practiced. We shall see that the unity apparent in the congregation during the Easter service is really a united adoration of the dualism that has filled all other aspects of human life with alienation. Blake has explicitly described this vicious alienation cycle in which man is forced, tragically, to cling to the very evil that has caused his desperate state under the guise of benignity.[4] Blake has also mythologized the Fall in opposition to orthodox interpretation as the misguided creation of the world;

this explicitly illuminates what is implicit in Caddy's downfall.[5] We shall see that her misery is a result of the tragically warped way in which her world has been created.

In Light in August, the second novel I will consider, I shall show how Faulkner's portrayal of the evils of dualism becomes more intense through his evocation of their seemingly inextricable place in the fabric of society. Here he suggests a tragic view of a world in which evils of dualistic alienation cannot be fully redeemed. In Light in August I shall show how the ideal morality of Jehovah and the mental constructs of materialism are villains once more. Whether the reader is watching complacent people like the Armstids, who mouth casual moralism, or fanatics like Simon McEachern, who believe that God is speaking to or through them, or the mechanistic nonsense of Lena's description of physical reality, the structure of the novel focuses the reader's perception on the violence they do to reality. I shall show how the novel encourages the reader to see that the perception of the world fostered by the characters' beliefs in the central importance of abstraction is the prototypical crucifying act. This crucifying perception motivates a number of brutal acts which the structure of the novel shows to the reader to be, ironically, part of the highest ideals of society. Tragically, the community of characters in the novel never stops believing that its authority to act as it is doing comes from a holy, ideal God, despite the evidence that only misery and death emanate from

the ideal. The reader, on the other hand, cannot escape the evidence of the inadequacy of cultural dualism. Similarly, the problems posed by the mental constructs of materialism are made clear for the reader although the characters are oblivious to them. The story of Lena Grove threading through the narrative of the last days of Joe Christmas focuses the reader's attention on the destructive aspects of placing the purely material at the center of human life, despite the fact that to the characters Lena's nonsense is either laughable or inconsequential. The reader is enabled by the structure of the juxtapositions in the novel to do neither, but instead to perceive Lena as a materialist version of the crucifying perception; she castrates Byron Bunch almost as effectively as Percy Grimm castrates Joe Christmas. The reader sees that her mechanistic determinism, which allows that the biological father of her child, Lucas Burch, is the fit and proper husband intended for her by God, is in grave conflict with the evidence. Lucas Burch is no fitting and proper husband for anyone. The untenability of what is present in Lena's mind cuts off all possibility of her fulfillment in a relationship with Byron, whose energy and love are truly at her service. (Blake's mythology of the Female Will is helpful here in making explicit the implicit, baffling connections that appear to be made between Lena and the Virgin, and in making explicit the implicit evocation of a female who, seemingly fruitful and

lovely, acts as a chaste barrier to sexuality and fulfillment.)[6]

These points speak to the significant structural peculiarity of this novel, in which these two major characters never meet. Lena and Joe do not meet because for the purposes of the culture they live in they do not need to; the significant encounter is between materialist and idealist abstract limitations to human perception. Through the two parallel stories, as I shall show, the reader is made aware of the irrelevance of immediate human contact when humanity places the abstract principles of materialism and idealism at the center of its existence. Under this circumstance, it is the engagement of abstractions that matters, and that encounter will always be to the detriment of human energies.

Again, Blake's explicit mythology is useful in making accessible to the reader the implicit orthodoxy with which the Christian milieu of these events is presented. Again the terrible, unrecognized consequence of what is present in the characters' minds is used to imply crucial absence. What is present of God to these characters is horrifying and corresponds to no orthodox Christian interpretation of reality. Blake's mythology of the Covering Cherub is helpful here as an explicit gloss on the image of Jehovah that is present in Light in August, as I shall show in Chapter IV. The relationship between the Covering Cherub and Blake's Christ is helpful in interpreting what is implicitly

taking place in the allusions to the crucifixion surrounding Joe Christmas, and at the end of the novel in interpreting Hightower's near miss at understanding the evils of his culture.[7] When, in his last appearance in the novel, Hightower clears away the "ideal" camouflage that has hidden the realities of his life from him, an implicit deity stops him from affirming immediate life and sends him back into hallucination. We shall see how the Covering Cherub is a useful mythology for making explicit Hightower's inability to find affirmation present in himself.

In Absalom, Absalom! the third and last novel I shall consider closely in this study, we shall see Faulkner's most powerful assault on the limitations of conventional rationalism. I shall show that the sequence of fragments of narrations presented by various characters shows the reader that illusion is all that is present to the characters. Once again we shall see the implicit evocation of the absence of immediate life by the terrible implications of what is present to the characters. I shall show that the thrust of the novel is that the search for the "true" Sutpen story by the characters, who are all detached from the immediate occurrence of the events in the Sutpen history, leads to only illusory satisfaction, the only kind available to these tragically benighted characters. What the reader can gather was in Sutpen's mind, his abstract ideal, is shown responsible for the destruction of his family as it becomes clearer and clearer to the reader that

affirmation of immediate life is missing from his point of view. But this tragedy will be found to be dwarfed by Quentin's and Shreve's hallucination that their fantasy recapitulation of Sutpen's history is material reality, although the reader is made increasingly aware that it has no necessary connection with anything that ever existed. The early narrators of Sutpen's story, Rosa and Mr. Compson, are abstractly detached from their own immediacy and that of the story they are telling, but they are therefore troubled and confused. Shreve and Quentin, even more abstractly detached from themselves and from the story, are in worse trouble because they do not perceive any problems with what they are saying. They believe completely in their story as immediate reality, but the reader is enabled by the juxtapositions to see it as a terribly destructive illusion. As the novel comes to its bleak conclusion, neither Shreve nor Quentin nor any other character in the fiction can save the fictional world from the madness that gives to abstraction the illusion of phenomenal solidity.

This lack of redemption marks a divergence in Faulkner from the Blakean gloss I am using, and an important one. For Blake, a figure variously called Los and Urthona was the ultimate artist who could redeem all time, all history, all nature from degradation by warping dualistic modes of reality back into the immanent present. Faulkner found no such figure. As I have suggested above, he seems to be involved in a more tragic vision than Blake's in which the evils of

dualism are irredeemably inherent in the condition of social culture. The greatest triumph of a Faulkner character is in A Fable where the runner sees as much as the reader does and can articulate it, the first and last time a character in Faulkner's visionary work is thus empowered. But the runner is unable to do very much, unlike Blake's hero Los. Perhaps the closest approach to Los is Faulkner himself as artist when he wrote what I have referred to as his Blakean works, but clearly Faulkner never went further than the runner. Thus we see that in some important respects Faulkner's sub rosa battle with dualism was qualified by a sense of tragedy, as Blake's was not. We now turn to a more complete exploration of this qualification.

Notes to Chapter I

[1]Throughout his writings, Blake warns that idealism and materialism are but variations of dualistic alienation from life. One early, but typical, example is the mythology in his Visions of the Daughter of Albion. Here idealist religion and material nature work together against Oothoon's humanity and it is only her rejection of both that frees her (The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. David V. Erdman, commentary by Harold Bloom [New York: Doubleday & Co., 1970], pp. 44-50). The twin dilemmas of idealism and materialist dualism in Visions have been noted in the critical works of Harold Bloom (Blake's Apocalypse [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963], p. 115), Mark Shorer (William Blake [Henry Holt & Co., 1964], p. 291), and Northrop Frye (Fearful Symmetry [Princeton University Press, 1968], pp. 238-42.

[2]Blake's inversion of the Pauline, orthodox, deity Jehovah is one of the major themes of his works. This inversion is hinted at in the early works, especially The Marriage of Heaven and Hell and begins its mature expression in The Book of Urizen. Harold Bloom provides a good critical treatment of Blake's parody of the conventional Jehovah (Blake's Apocalypse, pp. 164-75). Blake's views of materialism are made very clear in There Is No Natural Religion (The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, p. 2). Blake's Jesus is a figure differing greatly from the orthodox suffering Lamb of convention. Blake's Jesus is the force and energy of imagination, love, and forgiveness, and alone possesses the power to redeem the webs and engines of dualism. He appears triumphantly at the end of all three of Blake's epics: Milton, Jerusalem, and The Four Zoas (The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, p. 142, pp. 229 passim, pp. 370 passim).

[3]Blake's Covering Cherub is Blake's way of talking about the misprised sanctity of abstractions that hide the true holiness of all life from man and stand, as Bloom characterizes it, as "a barrier between man and his salvation" (Blake's Apocalypse, p. 353). The revelations of the Cherub's false sanctity occur in Jerusalem, and Milton (The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, pp. 229, 140).

[4]The vicious cycle of idealist Christianity is explicitly present in Blake's works in the Orc Cycle. The cycle begins because of the oppressive inadequacy of idealism to describe or creatively shape the forces of life. The omnipresent inadequacy unleashes wild chaos, forcing humanity to panic and cling more tightly to the seeming form of the

original dualistic cause of chaos. The Orc Cycle is embodied as a struggle between Orc, the expansive energy of instinct, and Urizen, the binding force of abstraction. Blake began working out the details of the struggle early in his career, between 1793-1795, in a sequence of realtively short works: America, Europe, The Song of Los, The Book of Urizen, The Book of Ahania, and The Book of Los (The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, pp. 332-70). Bloom comments fully on this mythology (Blake's Apocalypse, pp. 117, 161-84, 231-65).

[5]Blake's version of the Fall is radically different from the conventional Christian version. Blake's Fall is in fact the false Creation effected by his parody of Jehovah, Urizen. The Book of Urizen is an early version of Blake's Fall and its mature restatement is in The Four Zoas (The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, pp. 69-82, 296-309).

[6]The Female Will is Blake's mythological figure that gives a "local habitation and a name" to the evil of the passive beauty and attractiveness of abstraction. The Female Will is the goddess of chastity to whom sexual energy is sacrificed and for whom it is ironically turned into the energy of death through war and sadism. She appears in Europe as Enitharmon and at the beginning of The Four Zoas as Enion, a prime effect of the Creation-Fall (The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, pp. 61-65, 298). She appears in Night the Eighth of The Four Zoas as the mystery of Nature, when Deism becomes a part of fallen culture (The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, p. 371). She appears as a component of the Covering Cherub at the end of both Milton and Jerusalem (The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, pp. 140-41, 231-56).

[7]The Covering Cherub is Blake's Anti-Christ, since Jesus is immediate life and the Cherub is the barrier to it. Bloom discusses this mythology at length (Blake's Apocalypse, pp. 425-33).

CHAPTER II

FAULKNER AND DUALISM

I have indicated that significant parallels between Blake's works and a special group of Faulkner's novels exist and that I will use these parallels to help make clear some of the as yet unexplained structural discontinuities and events in three exemplary novels: The Sound and the Fury, Light in August, and Absalom, Absalom!. As I have also briefly indicated, important differences between Blake and Faulkner will also be remarked; these can be generally summarized as differences in belief in the power of imagination to free humanity from the tragedies inherent in its dualistic culture. Blake's faith here was an unbounded one that the imaginative apocalypse would both free man from duality and enhance the unity of human culture; Faulkner's faith was qualified, and his relationship to dualism more complex. Although Faulkner's Blakean novels point to an appreciation of the imagination's power to extend beyond the characters' perceptual limitations, they do not indicate the possibility of a human society from which these limitations can be successfully removed. In fact, Faulkner's novels propose that individual man's humanity necessitates his existence in his intractable fallen culture, yet that it permits his simultaneous, courageous, and undaunted imaginative apprehension

of the tragic limitations that prevent his full encounter with life's immediacy. No character in Faulkner's anti-dualist novels has even this kind of imagination, however; it is reserved solely for author and reader. What the characters do possess of imaginative energy never succeeds in full affirmation of immediate life. Significantly, the reason that author and reader participate in full, affirmative vision as the characters cannot seems to be that author and reader alone, in the process of transmitting and receiving the fictional vision, are unrestrained by human society and its tragic dualistic entanglements.

In The Sound and the Fury, Caddy's imagination, in the Blakean sense, is displayed in her free integration of mental and physical perceptions regardless of materialist notions about function or idealist notions about morality. As we shall see in the explication of this novel, the power and sparkle of her imagination are impressive to the reader because of what the novel's structure enables the reader to see of the impediments to its creative employment. Nowhere near the Blakean visionary who consciously confronts the abstractions that dominate him and affirms life, Caddy becomes a protagonist through her spontaneous battle with what the structure of The Sound and the Fury insists the reader regard as false and irrelevant limitations. Eventually, however, that struggle culminates in the defeat of her energy because, irrelevant as her culture's limiting concepts of idealism and materialism are to salvation, they are all

there is of relevance in human culture. Caddy never knows this, though author and reader are freed by the novel's structure to perceive it and to affirm Caddy's unconscious heroism.

In Light in August, Gail Hightower and Byron Bunch are empowered by their imaginations to free their visions temporarily from the limits of ossified forms of Christian idealism and materialism. In the end, however, both find the scopes of their visions contracted again because of their membership in a human community they can neither change nor leave, except by death. Only author and reader, bound by the fiction and not by society, remain with full possession of what has taken place, freed by the novel's structure to affirm the immediate life that has been mutilated and hidden by the force of abstraction in the dualistic cultural context of the novel.

Finally in Absalom, Absalom! the power of the imagination runs full tilt into the limits imposed on it by the fallen character of human culture. Sutpen's failure of imagination, Quentin's, Shreve's, Miss Rosa's, Mr. Compson's, Judith's, Henry's, Ben's, and Ellen's, their inevitable submission to the warping influence of their culture--this, not the building or failure to build a dynasty, is the drama to which the reader's attention is called. As we shall see, the characters are manacled by the chains of idealist and materialist values that is their fallen society such that the only extrication from the living death of fallen com-

munity appears to them to be physical death. Once more, only author and reader can, though their community in fiction, see past the cultural blinders to affirm the phenomenal being obscured by idealist and materialist fantasies.

Thus although Blake's mythology is beneficial for the reader in drawing out the implicit Faulknerian criticism of dualistic idealism and materialism, it is finally the structures that Faulkner has created that define the crucial Faulknerian character of his work. Because Faulkner has both an essentially Blakean view of reality and a tragic view of fallen human culture, the explication of his vision of a reality with which the organization of fallen society is so much in conflict necessitates a violent inversion of normal cultural channels. Because Blake's characters can redeem their context, Blake's exposition calls for a comparatively simple journey for the reader along the trail of the characters' revitalization of the existent human culture. But since Faulkner's characters cannot redeem their context and, because of that context cannot even fully affirm life, Faulkner must use a structure that can bring the reader to his own conclusion behind the backs of the characters and in freedom from the social conventions and values that bind them. This is made possible for the reader by a vision of unmediated existence that violates ordinary rationalist expectations of the temporal and spatial context of actions. Thus my analysis of Faulkner will necessitate attention to his structural violations of conventional means

of communication--violations that are mandatory for portraying a Blakean vision of reality if conventional dualist means cannot be redeemed, but instead work to disguise rather than to reveal what is taking place.

In explicating Faulkner's Blakean novels, I shall be pointing out a special technique of juxtaposition through which the rhetorical structure of the novel is freed, unlike the characters, from the fallen dualism built into society. I shall show that Faulkner used the technique of juxtaposition to create a semblance of unmediated experience for the reader. Clusters of juxtaposed elements in these novels work to build for the reader an evolving judgment of the conventional actions and words of the characters, in a context of values based on a veneration for the unitive energy of life that opposes the characters' dualistic context. Eventually a story will emerge, but it is always in the background. The structures of these novels summon the reader to the emerging point of view, a summons which few readers have answered, too limited as most are by our own society's dualistic conventions to suspend them temporarily and follow the juxtapositions.

The sequence of clusters constitute in themselves a non-dualist language which constantly sheds light on the opinions and code beliefs of the characters, expressed chiefly in the recessed linear plot; the clusters invite the reader to focus his attention on resemblances, contrasts, and causes which contradict and undermine the expressed

opinions of the character-voices in the novel. (For example, I will show how in Light in August by the time that Gavin Stevens explains Joe's death, the reader has been shown through the interconnecting, juxtaposed scenes that preceded his explanation enough to know that he is totally wrong, even though the other characters accept the authority of what he says.) The sequences of clusters become an obliquely rendered omniscient presence, brushing away the veils of mediation for the reader while the characters act and speak in conventional terms.

The cluster structure of the novels requires that the reader's imagination redeem the materialist and idealist beliefs in the novel by perceiving the moment of immediacy to which the characters in the situations are blinded by their detachment in materialist or moralistic abstraction. These enlightened moments of perception are not very different from Joyce's epiphanies, Wordsworth's spots of time, or the "moments" of Woolf and Hemingway. This standard modernist technique, however, is used to build one moment upon the other toward a fiction of fully unmediated perception of a particular situation.

The clusters create a situation in which the rational categories do not mediate perception but are only one element of the moment encountered. For instance, at the beginning of The Sound and the Fury, the reader is presented with several fragments in the life of Benjy Compson which clearly take place in time and space, but their presentation

is not ordered by these conventions. Instead, they are juxtaposed because the element they share is that each is a moment of preparation of Benjy for cold weather, managed in one situation by Caddy, his sister, and in another by Mrs. Compson, his mother. From these fragments emerges the insight intended for the reader that is contingent on direct confrontation of the situation minus the mediating conventions that shape the character's perceptions. We can see how Mrs. Compson's abstract way of dealing with Benjy is destructive and that Caddy's spontaneous approach is creative (pp. 24-25). None of the characters could possibly speak about these moments in this way and yet the reader sees them if he can approach the juxtaposition without the blinders of the rationalist demand that chronological and spatial sequence structure a story. Most readers, bound up by the conventions of rationalism, assume that the chameleon changes in time and space in The Sound and the Fury, Light in August and Absalom, Absalom! are intended as a puzzle, and they try to rearrange the fragments with conventional concepts of time and space. I will show that the novel becomes more accessible when the reader assumes that conventions of time and space should not structure what he is about to see.

The clusters are units of meaning which call for a more direct confrontation of the images presented than dualism allows. They create the fiction of the reader's unmediated experience of the events in the novel, in counterpoint

with the fiction of the characters' heavily mediated experience as a poetic evocation of the possibility for understanding and truth that eludes the characters because of their tragic dualist limitations. To use Bloom's paraphrase of Blake's shaper Los, these are "systems to free us from systems."[1]

My approach, though radical, is not capricious; in each explication, I make explicit the elements that unify the fragments I call a cluster and refer closely to the novel to demonstrate that these elements are in the text. In discussing the clusters of the three novels I have chosen, my highest priority is given to showing how they transform the reader's vision, especially how they liberate moments in each novel that the texts show us are lost to the characters because of the abstract ordering of their lives.

Three of the many portentous moments on which my explications will shed light are Quentin's castigation of Caddy at "the branch" in The Sound and the Fury, Hightower's long interior monologue at the end of Light in August, and Shreve's question to Quentin about his hatred of the South at the end of Absalom, Absalom!. My exploration of the cluster structure of the Blakean novels will show how these moments are integrated into each novel with other moments to form the basis of a harmonious, whole work of art. It is this radical cluster structure that accounts for the parallel between Blake's epics and Faulkner's novels even though Blake's poems terminate in the joyous return of humanity to

immediate and creative existence and Faulkner's novels terminate in the same human wasteland in which they began. (In the three texts I will closely explicate, the terminal points are the drying up of the Compson family line, the destruction of the lives of Joe Christmas, Reverend Hightower, Lena Grove, and Byron Bunch, and the crushing of Quentin's potential life--all as a result of the conquest of immediate life by abstraction.) Faulkner's worlds are nevertheless Blakean worlds because, unconscious as Faulkner seems to have been about what he was doing, he has created a kind of implicitly prophetic literature. Whatever dualism has obliterated for the characters, the clusters have preserved the reader, if he stops trying to impose conventional form upon the novel. For the free-wheeling reader, the possibility of recovering immediate life has not been lost, and the implication that immediacy exists though veiled by idealism and materialism dominates the work as the prevailing value. I propose that this implicit prophecy of spontaneous life that is only covered by social dualism is the reason for the odd upsurge of humor that occurs at the end of Faulkner's Blakean novels. The terminal points of Faulkner's novels cannot be called outrageously joyous, but they are ambiguously funny. The last two sections of The Sound and the Fury are unconventionally humorous. Jason's bitter, macabre humor permeates the final destruction of his family line, not a typical subject for laughter. The last scene, in which Jason restores Benjy's serenity, and its grandiose

reference to "ordered places" for all the components of Benjy's world, are farcical hyperbole. The success of this closure, I think, makes unavoidable the question of how it can succeed, given what agony the reader has seen.

Light in August also ends with a joke. It closes with a narrator who has neither appeared nor been mentioned before in the novel popping up before the reader to tell his wife, another late and abrupt arrival in the novel, a story about two people he has met on the road, who turn out to be Byron and Lena. He is a travelling salesman, and he and his wife are in bed; this last glimpse the reader has of Byron and Lena is told to him as a sort of dirty joke. That this humor successfully concludes a novel which tells of castration, despair, murder, and the awakening of love under almost impossible conditions, must, I think, raise significant questions.

The situation is the same with the joking closure of Absalom, Absalom!. The novel ends with a version of the old, sadistic, vaudeville joke question, "When did you stop beating your wife?" Shreve's parting shot to Quentin is "Now I want you to tell me just one thing more. Why do you hate the South?" It has the form of the abusive old joke. The presence of snickering sadism at the end of this novel is not out of place, given the low regard for the importance of other people and of life shown throughout by the characters; but the fact that the sadism takes the form of humor requires some exploration.

I plan to show how these oddly placed jokes again exhibit the reader's distance from the characters. I will show that although these closures mock the literary universe of the novel, they are somewhat akin to the joyous apocalypse at the terminus of Blake's epics. They are moments of what is possible for the reader: a courageous human resistance to the imagination's defeat in a tragically flawed world. Because of the special knowledge the cluster structure has made possible for the reader, the moments at the end of these novels are indeed a cause for laughter. They are an assertion of the possible freedom from the tragic limitations of society that Faulkner's tacitly prophetic literature makes possible.

The Conventional Novels

As I have said above, I am imputing to Faulkner a struggle with dualism only with respect to certain of the novels. I have already explained that I believe the non-dualist group of novels to have in common a resistance to what they evoke as the tragic consequences of the dualistic constructs with which people in social situations operate. Before I proceed with detailed analyses of three novels from this group, it seems to me that I must be more specific in differentiating Faulkner's "Blakean" novels from the others.

The main difference between Faulkner's anti-dualist and his conventional novels is that the conventional novels are in complete harmony with abstractions of dualism as the

ordinary truths of human reality. His conventional novels are literary worlds of moralistic melodrama, as is never the case in his Blakean novels. The clashes between simple evil and uncomplicated goodness which occur in the central events of the conventional novels require no transformation of vision on the reader's part. They are completely comprehensible through the dualist conventions of standard "Christian melodrama" which spring from the interpretation of Christ's sacrifice of his body as the Atonement. This convention occurs over and over in mass culture, in the cliched movie and television scripts which portray the turning point of the battle between Evil and Goodness to be the sacrifice of the life of a "good" Indian or a faithful black servant, for the hero or for society at large. One shining example of this stereotype is in the musical comedy Showboat. Here Julie, the mulatto singer, incarnation of physical passion, sacrifices herself for Magnolia, the pure, white heroine, incarnation of moral virtue. Without either the backing of society, or the means to support herself if she leaves her job in a cafe, Julie withdraws from the scene when she learns that the life of the now destitute Magnolia depends upon employment in the same cafe. This is the cliche which resolves the central dilemmas of the plot in Faulkner's conventional novels.

A second and related difference between Faulkner's Blakean and conventional novels lies in his contrasting uses of time and space. In Faulkner's Blakean novels, the

mechanics of the clusters operate on the assumption that most important meaning is possible only through the transcendence of conventional time and space. In Faulkner's conventional novels, time and space totally structure meaning, and it is through their workings in the strictly sequential progression of events in history that the sacrifice of the body becomes an effective means of atonement.

Beyond presenting a few brief examples, I cannot and will not try within the confines of this study to prove my contentions about the conventional novels. But there is really no need to; the conventional reading of Faulkner does not need to be defended. From a representative sampling of the criticism of Faulkner's conventional novels which I shall cite, it will be clear that these sorts of theories have already been expounded at length. What needs to be done, and what my study will try to do, will be to show that these novels are Faulkner's entertainments. They do not represent his contribution to the complex art of serious literature as do the novels that I have called Blakean.

Soldier's Pay, Mosquitoes, Sartoris, The Unvanquished, The Hamlet, The Bear, Intruder in the Dust, Requiem for a Nun, The Town, The Mansion, and The Reivers--all of these vary in structure, in competence, and in power, but all of them are based on the traditions of dualism. For example, the Snopes Trilogy takes place most emphatically in the conventional context, with moral superiority of the spirit over the body and the confines of time and space

serving as parameters of the mill of "reality." The invading Snopeses are in dialogue with the moral conventions of established culture. The dialectic is resolved in the mill of time, during which internal permutations and combinations play themselves out until Flem is destroyed by the stones he himself has placed in the mill race. A Newtonian action-reaction causality is involved in the convergence, in The Mansion, of the revenge-crazy Mink and equally revenge-motivated Linda, which causes Flem's death. Both of these revenges are the last acts of a temporal, sequential train of events that has been melodramatically unfolding since The Hamlet: Flem's unfeeling exploitation of Eula, Linda's mother, in aid of his ambition, and his betrayal of his kinship to Mink in the same cause. In the trilogy, time is a mechanical, forward-moving sequence which carries all with it in its powerful grinding action. Unlike the situation in Faulkner's Blakean novels, where the intuitive ignition of moments that transform the reader's vision is in the foreground, in Faulkner's conventional novels the cog and wheel of the linear plot is at center stage.

People in the trilogy may misunderstand each other, may mistrust each other, but the Blakean notion of the abstractions at the center of conventional society that dehumanizes its members is absent. The source of evil in the trilogy is the traditional "old Adam" in man, and in the ability of Flem Snopes, who is explicitly linked with Satan, to take advantage of it. What is abstract solipsism in the

anti-dualist novels is, what is more, presented as the acumen of detachment in this triad of conventional novels. A dramatic example is the figure of V. K. Ratliff; he is unthinkable in the anti-dualist novels, and indeed he does not appear in them, because he makes explicit what is implicit in the conception of community in the trilogy, the possibility for real human interaction through the dualist virtues of detachment. Where the Blakean novels reveal the error of this conventional, positive characterization of objectivity, Ratliff, in the trilogy, unifies society _because_ he is detached. He travels from house to house, between town and outlying areas, and, without any personal involvement of his own, in his travels he creates the personal involvements of society, while forming a view of situations that can make sense of everything that is going on. As we shall see, no character in the Blakean novels can see through his own detachment to a reality outside of him. Ratliff, on the other hand, is in contact with reality because he is the incarnation of detachment. An ascetic, Ratliff avoids the flesh, and the trilogy ties his lack of sexuality to clear-headedness, not, as the Blakean novels would do, to solipsism. However (another Pauline convention), he is not proof against evil altogether; no man in the flesh could be. He too is human and has some of the "old Adam" in his flesh. At the end of _The Hamlet_ he too is taken in by Flem Snopes.

Thus the trilogy is written from a traditional,

humanist set of conventions. Uncritical of the prevailing values of its characters, it exhibits acceptance of their duality of flesh and spirit. Another source for good, Gavin Stevens, is certainly correct (from the point of view of The Town) in refusing Eula's offer of her body. Though it is clear that she does not intend such a result, a side effect of Gavin's acceptance would have been his subjugation to Flem's influence. Eula's sacrificial suicide in that novel, though not an approved Christian act per se, is clearly in the spirit of the essential, Pauline model of virtue. Giving up her body, Eula performs an effective atonement, weakening Flem's grip on her daughter, Linda, and freeing the girl to destroy Flem in The Mansion. In conventional Faulkner novels, of which these are good examples, the triumph of virtue involves Pauline fleshlessness.[2]

The Pauline point of view in Requiem for a Nun, to take another example, is an interesting reversal of Sanctuary, to which it is supposed to be a sequel. As I shall briefly indicate in the conclusion, Sanctuary lays the blame for its tragic events at the door of the dualistic, abstract Christian ideal of virginity. Requiem, a most traditional Pauline statement, totally reverses the vision I see in Sanctuary. Nancy may not be the ordinary image of the virginal nun, but she becomes the "true" virgin in this book because she understands the lack of importance of the physical body and sacrifices it and its evils for the good of the non-corporeal soul. Certainly the favor with which we are

to view Nancy's sacrifice of both the life of Temple's baby and of her own life supports this contention.[3]

The Bear unfolds a universe that is not ordered around an easy Christianity, but Ike's sacrifice of the physical world is ultimately meant to be viewed positively; the novel is Pauline and not Blakean. Some critics have claimed that Ike's renunciation is not approved by Faulkner. But I think that the internal evidence of the novel supports the claims of the opposing critics that Faulkner does approve, and that he means us to.[4] Interpretation of the meaning is determined by several key issues. First, it is important to know whether Sam Fathers represents the ideal values in this work, and whether these ideals are those of renunciation. Second, we must know whether Ike McCaslin's choice of renunciation is in keeping with Sam's teachings. Third, we must evaluate Boon Hogganbeck's role as the bear's killer in reference to the point of view in the novel.

I think it has been demonstrated that Sam Fathers' ideals are the ideals of renunciation and also the highest ideals in the book. The major lesson that Sam teaches Ike is that it is better not to shoot; the hunter's ideal role is to perfect his aim and judgment. This is shown when Sam is initiating the very young Ike into the ways of the forest. Sam also dies as the bear is shot, of no other discernible cause than the fleshly degradation of the hunter's skills. Sam's relation to the wilderness, which clearly reveals the

presence of God in this work, is one of perfecting his soul in relation to it.

It is at the point of Old Ben's death that civilization begins its destruction of the forest. Boon, the man who shot the bear, changes from a man who under Sam's tutelage lived in humble relationship to the wilderness into the degenerated figure we see in the last scene in the book. After shooting the bear, Boon becomes a man obsessed with possession of the physical world. In the last scene of The Bear, Boon exhibits materialist hysteria as he tells Ike not to touch the squirrels that are racing up and down the tree behind him. "They're mine!" Those are the last words of The Bear.

In a conversation between Ike and his cousin Carruthers, this distorted relationship to nature is linked both to the terrible problems of history and to the problems of man's flesh. The existence of the flesh brings with it the evil of materialism, dramatically embodied in the institution of slavery. Ike, in his effort to put an end to this evil, performs an atonement, renouncing his inheritance, a simultaneous renunciation of his sexuality because Ike's wife refuses to have sex with him unless he claims his inheritance. In a Blakean literary context, the evils of possession are not linked to sexuality but on the contrary are an impediment to its creative energies. This Pauline construction of Ike's choice shows the renunciation of one to be automatically the renunciation of the other.

For a final example of Faulkner's conventional fiction, we come to Intruder in the Dust, one of the rare openly didactic statements that Faulkner made in novel form.[5] The situation in this novel is that a unified, basically organic community is attacked by an evil force, this time from within itself, not, as in the Snopes trilogy, from outside. In the grinding of the mill of time, the evil is conquered by three asexual people: two young boys and a spinster. The book appears to be a mystery melodrama, and in addition, a tirade against those who would belittle the loyalties of the human heart. Primarily, Intruder in the Dust is a harangue against the Federal interference in the desegregation question which does not take into consideration the loyalties involved there.

Lucas Beauchamps, a black man, is accused of murdering Vinson Gowrie, a white man, and kin to the most violent clan in the county. The accusation against Lucas, made by Vinson's brother, appeals to clan loyalty to make sure that "justice is done." As we find out, however, the accusation itself is clan treachery. Vinson's brother, who is the real murderer, is using Lucas to cover his tracks. Two boys, white Chick Mallison and black Alek Sander, and Miss Habersham, spinster, come to Lucas' aid. At first they seem to be traitors because they are defending an alleged black murderer against his white accusers. But traditions of loyalty between black and white that come to light here make Chick, Alek, and Miss Habersham at least as loyal as the Gowries.

Miss Habersham and Lucas' dead wife grew up like sisters; Lucas saved Chick's life once; Alek Sander is linked to Lucas by race. The human heart, in other words, may have its devious ways, but in the end its loyalties will lead it to make justice prevail. Gavin Stevens' interminable speeches turn this into a parable for the Federal government to heed; the South will take care of its own racial injustice.

So far, it would appear that Intruder cannot fit into the pattern; the heroes are asexual, but there is no sacrifice. Nevertheless, this novel is the exception that proves the rule. Chick's heroism is not very convincing, and there is good reason; the success is too easily won. The Gowrie clan is described repeatedly in epic terms of violence and viciousness. Yet when we see old Gowrie, the head of the clan, he accepts the sheriff's hypothesis that one of his sons has killed the other like a first-grader taking a dressing down from the principal of the school. The old man is too easily convinced on the basis of a few shreds of evidence that could and must easily be rejected in order to protect itself by the passionate clan heart, as described in this novel.

The evidence consists of a proliferation of corpses. It seems that a travelling salesman was also killed. Adding to this knowledge the discovery that Vinson was shot by a gun belonging to his brother, the sheriff, Miss Habersham, Stevens and the boys conclude that Vinson has shot his

brother. Other knowledge leads them to believe that the details of the Gowries' business were at issue. Perhaps it is probable that Lucas' would-be rescuers and a formally convened jury would be convinced by the evidence, but it is hard to believe that a tough old man, passionately committed to the priority of the needs of his clan, violently bigoted against blacks, and highly irrational as he is reputed to be, would not be able to suppose any number of other interpretations of the evidence. Instead, in the inflammatory presence of his son's dead body, newly dragged out of some quicksand, he mutters, "O. K. shurf," and canters off to kill the offending son.

In other words, in order to rescue Lucas in Intruder in the Dust, Faulkner had to sacrifice the presence of the body's energy in his novel. He rationalized the passions and the automatic instinctual reactions to the point where they would have been suitable as stock character attributes on a prime-time television series. In this unusual Faulknerian rationalist version of simplistic melodrama, he could not bring in the body with all the disruptive and creative energies it contains, and which he has always shown it to contain, even in his conventional novels; and so he sacrificed it to the resolution of his conflicts.[6]

Faulkner and the Critics

The moral vision and world view which the critics ascribe to all Faulkner's works is easily found in his con-

ventional novels; until the critics apply dualistic values to Faulkner's Blakean novels I can agree with them. One example of my partial concurrence with extant criticism can be seen with respect to Irving Howe's opinion that Faulkner is writing with a belief in the sad dichotomy between society on the one hand and the innocence, freedom, and mobility of the wilderness on the other, using woman as the paradigm of social influence. Even though some of the examples Howe gives weaken his thesis--he claims for woman a powerful sexual influence on man at the same time that he separates her from the innocent forces of nature--one can see his point. That is, one can when he singles out Belle Mitchell in Sartoris and Eula Varner as examples of this thesis. In these women sexual power works as adhesive between man and the worst aspects of society. I would say that as Belle appears in Sartoris and Eula in the trilogy, there is no reason to doubt that this is the female role as the novel sees it. It is when Howe includes on his list Temple Drake in Sanctuary and Laverne Schumann in Pylon that my thesis begins to take issue with him. When Howe attributes Faulkner's supposed point of view on women to Charles Bon in Absalom, Absalom!, and to Hightower in Light in August then I am in full disagreement. Temple and Laverne indeed destroy man's innocent dream, but as I shall demonstrate briefly in the conclusion, the novels show us that the faults of that "innocent" dream have made these women destructive in the first place. Dualism, and not Woman, is

the primary enemy in these novels. As for Bon and Hightower in their respective novels, in neither is there any character who can speak for the novel's point of view, let alone Charles Bon in Absalom, Absalom! whose sentiments, as I shall show, are almost always someone else's fabrication of what they think he said. If the women in those novels are shown to be anything, they are shown to be victims right along with the men.[7]

Olga Vickery also sees society opposed to the individual's integrity in Faulkner. She does not see the better part of man as located by Faulkner in nature, however. She believes that ultimately Faulkner is asking the individual to take responsibility on himself to learn to interpret what is right--not from social categories and imperatives, but from his own heart and head. This is much closer to my own view of the Blakean novels than is Howe's account. However, Howe's remains more apt for the conventional novels. When Vickery discusses woman's role in the light of her thesis, she speaks of how secondary the female's role is in Faulkner, and she correctly uses the Sutpen women as examples. But she does not mention either Belle Mitchell, Narcissa Benbow, or Eula Varner in their power to affect society (just as Howe fails to mention the Sutpen women) because the literary existence of these ladies breaks up her thesis as an umbrella for all of Faulkner's novels. One of her problems is that she has applied to all the novels a thesis that is only partially correct for some of them. I want to show that

Vickery is right to some degree about some of Faulkner's novels, and I want to supplement her thesis with mine, which can take into account many important details in the works about which she is totally silent.[8]

Cleanth Brooks clearly believes that all Faulkner's novels exhibit a Christian world view. He believes that Faulkner sees no return to innocence in nature. Brooks believes that Faulkner sees all nature as fallen and imperfect: In effect, then, Faulkner seems to accept the doctrine of original sin. Men are condemned to prey upon nature. The only question is whether in doing so they will exercise some kind of restraint and love the nature they are forced to use, or whether they will exploit nature methodically and ruthlessly in a kind of rape."[9]

This certainly seems applicable to the contrast Faulkner makes between Sam Fathers and Boon Hogganbeck in The Bear. It can also be applied to Flem Snopes and to the Texan in the last section of The Hamlet. They are both exploiting the horses and their customers' animal natures. Where, however, the Texan shows restraint in his exploitation when he pities Mrs. Tull's plight, Flem is ready for profit no matter what the circumstances. But Brooks' thesis breaks down when applied to As I Lay Dying, in which, as I shall briefly indicate in the conclusion, the question is not what we do to nature, and whether it is fallen, but how we perceive it--even whether we can--and what possibilities it has in conjunction with the imagination. Original sin is

not a basic assumption of Light in August either. In that novel, the energy of the body and of the natural world is shown to be a precious partner to man from which the doctrine of original sin has alienated him. So, while I agree with Brooks that the doctrine governs what I have called the conventional novels, I shall show that it does not bear on the Blakean novels.

Waggoner, too, finds Christianity in Faulkner's world view. In discussing the conflicting and contradictory statements Faulkner has made about religion, God, and Christianity in particular, he comes to the same conclusion that I have reached; Faulkner's own statements are unreliable witnesses. Waggoner believes that Faulkner's non-fictional statements of belief cannot, because of their contradictory nature, be a reference point for determining the points of view of Faulkner's novels. His further conclusion I concur with only partially: ". . . his fiction is more susceptible of traditionally religious interpretation than Faulkner the man, as distinct from the artist, intends it to be." Some of Faulkner's novels are more conventionally religious than the position Faulkner explicitly admitted to.

Using Nancy from Requiem for a Nun as one of his major examples, Waggoner shows that Faulkner's belief is that "Glands and conscience are always in conflict, and our only hope is that conscience may win."[10] And Waggoner is right--about Nancy. In fact his formulation describes all the conventional novels. But in The Sound and the Fury,

when we are shown what this novel tells us about human morality, we are going to hope that glands can operate in a context in which conscience is redefined.

Walter J. Slatoff, in pursuing his thesis that Faulkner's novels are failures because they are bundles of unresolved paradoxes and oxymorons, has much more success with what I call the Blakean novels than he does with the conventional ones. Slatoff finds a great deal less to say about the incoherence of Requiem for a Nun than he does about Light in August, for example. Slatoff has trouble with Joe Christmas as a Christ figure. He correctly tells us that there are "dozens of means, many completely explicit, to [compel us to] think of Joe Christmas as Christ or very much like Christ."[11] The problem Slatoff finds here is that there are also dozens of equally compelling details that do not remind us of the traditional Christ: Joe's violence, obscenity, coldness, and so forth. Slatoff finds incoherence here, but not in Requiem for a Nun, even though these literal questions about Joe's deviations from orthodox Christ-like behavior ought to apply equally to Nancy, as far as any claim for sainthood can be made for a drug-addicted whore. I believe that the reason why Slatoff has trouble with Joe and not with Nancy is that Light in August is set up to make Joe troubling for us, whereas Requiem is deliberately structured by sentimental conventions of melodrama to make us accept Nancy. What Slatoff does not see, and what I shall try to show, is that the point of view in Light in August,

built into the juxtaposition of scenes, subverts traditional Christianity and morality so as to leave in a heap of rubble the conventional way of looking at the details with which we are presented, one of them being the Christ figure. The coherence of Light in August destroys the values conventional coherence is built on. This is not true in Requiem, in which the sacrifices of the body are ennobling.

These critics are the heirs of an evolutionary criticism. When Faulkner was first published, he was considered a misguided naturalist and, what is more, a Fascist.[12] It was not until 1939 that critics could begin to regroup their stunned expectations and begin to apprehend the aesthetics involved in Faulkner's work; this exploration was begun by Conraid Aiken. Confused about the values in Faulkner, Aiken deeply appreciated the forms of the novels.[13] In 1946 Malcomn Cowley brought out the Portable Faulkner, and, although he mistakenly believed that Faulkner was less of a novelist than he was a short story writer, he claimed a respectable place for the violence and disjunction that had so shaken the majority of the critics. Cowley suggested a mythmaking talent at work.[14] When Robert Penn Warren reviewed the Portable, he suggested that critics investigate the possible presence of a single point of view in the novels which saw more than any character could.[15] It was this sort of criticism that indeed made possible knowledge of affirmative values in Faulkner; if a critic was limited to

the characters' values, he could hardly attach much positive affirmation to most of Faulkner's novels.

I now wish to go a step further and say that there are two kinds of value systems possible in Faulkner's works. Some of the novels embody a dualistic value system; the values in these novels have already been adequately treated critically. The other novels, which I call Blakean, embody values, as I shall show, that are diametrically opposed to those in the conventional, dualistic novels. There are the novels that are at present misunderstood. I think my division is a helpful one, critically, as it saves us from the contortions necessary for unrealistically including all the novels in one category. But, more important, my exposition of the Blakean novels will make those novels available, not as peculiarities of the genre, but as examples of appropriate form. In addition, my explication will make available to the reader the richness of experience the Blakean novels can produce, once the reader's approach to them is unhampered by all the prejudicial value systems which have made it impossible to see them in their immediacy.

Notes to Chapter II

[1]In Jerusalem, Los exclaims, "I must Create a System, or be enslaved by another Man's. / I will not Reason & Compare: My business is to Create" (p. 151). Bloom comments on this: "Jerusalem is a system to free us from systems" (Blake's Apocalypse [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963], p. 576).

[2]As far as the critics are concerned there are few problems with the conventional nature of this trilogy. Criticism about the trilogy deals with the traditional issues of character development, tone, and ambiance. For example, Irving Howe characterizes The Hamlet very simply in terms of Flem's incursions into a tightly knit community, as Ratliff observes the progress with horror. He does not have much to say for The Town and The Mansion, because he clearly feels that they do not live up to The Hamlet, not because they pose any challenging difficulties for him (William Faulkner [New York: Random House, 1951], pp. 241-52, 282, 294).

Hyatt H. Waggoner also easily characterizes The Hamlet as the chronicle of Flem's corruption of an organic community. Waggoner reads the Snopeses as an attack upon humanity by modern popular culture. He too thinks The Town inferior; The Mansion had not yet been published when Waggoner's book came out (William Faulkner: From Jefferson to the World [Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1959], pp. 183-93, 232-37).

Cleanth Brooks has more serious interest than Howe or Waggoner in the ideas in the trilogy, but his reading remains conventional nevertheless. He discusses mythic aspects of The Hamlet. As mythic polarities which work to establish a definition of man, "Flem, Eula, Ike, then mark some of the boundaries of the total human experience which The Hamlet undertakes to explore" (William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963], pp. 192-218). The Town is more realistic, says Brooks, and The Mansion is heroic. Brooks goes into an extended discussion of the way the love relationships in all three of the books, but especially in The Town, are examples of medieval courtly duality between ideal lady and flesh and blood female which makes earthly union a diminished thing. It is an interesting and valid discussion, and this explication too emphasizes the use of conventions in the works (pp. 219-43).

Vickery characterizes The Hamlet as a collection of anecdotes concerning various types of human erotic and eco-

nomic involvement. She characterizes Ratliff as the perfect opponent for the Snopses, because he indulges in neither the erotic excesses of Ike Snopes nor the economic excesses of Flem Snopes. Thus, she too sees the highest ideals in the novel as the traditional ones of moderation and Christian virtue (The Novels of William Faulkner [Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959], pp. 183-93). In discussing The Town, Vickery indicates a belief that this sequel more broadly defines economics and sexuality from the point of view of traditional morality (pp. 193-218).

[3]There is less trouble in this Faulkner novel than in most in placing the ethical center. Olga Vickery, for example, has no trouble interpreting Nancy's murder of the baby and her self-sacrifice as admirable Christian actions, as affirmations of traditional Christian values (pp. 114-23). Brooks, too, believes that Nancy's sacrifices are based on a conventional Christian faith, which is presented in the novel as the only salvation for Temple and Gowan. He has doubts about the literary achievement, but not about the interpretation (pp. 138-40). Waggoner is not sure whether the conventional Christianity that Nancy represents is presented as more than an "instructive myth" (p. 225), but he is sure that Nancy's are the only positive values in the novel. Walter J. Slatoff, who makes categorical statements about very little in Faulkner's work, interprets Nancy as a strongly affirmative figure in Requiem (The Quest for Failure [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960]

[4]There is a broad range of interpretation of Ike's renunciation. Herbert Perluck believes that Ike's decision is a cowardly one, that he should have faced up to the "tragic incompleteness of man, and to the necessity for involving ourselves in the inequities of life" ("The Heart's Driving Complexity: An Unromantic Reading of The Bear," Bear, Man & God: Seven Approaches to William Faulkner's The Bear, ed. Francis Lee Utley, Lynn Z. Bloom and Arthur F. Kinney [New York: Random House, 1964], p. 303). Olga Vickery concurs saying the alternative Ike has chosen is a way of escape, not a true solution ("God's Moral Order and the Problem of Ike's Redemption," Bear Man & God: Seven Approaches to William Faulkner's The Bear [New York: Random House, 1964], pp. 323-27). I think that both Vickery and Perluck are looking at Ike from the point of view of their own philosophy rather than from the point of view of the novel. Rather, Irving Howe, R. W. B. Lewis, and William Van O'Connor are more accurate when they judge Ike's act on the basis of the values that are emphasized in the text of The Bear. Howe interprets Ike's choice as impressing "upon us one decisive meaning, one final gesture . . . Isaac McCaslin's moment of repudiation and renewal, his choice of a private incarnation by which to break past a heritage of

guilt and modestly assume a new life" (p. 253). R. W. B. Lewis calls the renunciation "an act of atonement which may conceivably flower into redemption" ("The Hero in the New World: William Faulkner's The Bear," Bear, Man & God: Seven Approaches to William Faulkner's The Bear, p. 307). Finally Van O'Connor agrees that Faulkner handles Ike's sacrifice as a promise of redemption ("The Wilderness Theme in Faulkner's The Bear," William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga Vickery [New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1960], pp. 322-29).

[5]William Faulkner in the University, ed. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner [Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1959], pp. 209-12). Here Faulkner expresses the same ideas to the students of the university that Stevens expresses in the novel. Faulkner says in his address, "Let us say to the North: all right it is our problem, and we will solve it. For the sake of the argument let us agree that as yet the Negro is incapable of equality for the reason that he could not hold it and keep it even if it were forced on him with bayonets . . . because he, the Negro is not yet capable of, or refuses to accept, the responsibilities of equality.

"So we the white man, must take him in hand and teach him. . . ." (pp. 210-11).

Stevens says to his nephew Chick Mallison, "That's why we must resist the North; not just to preserve ourselves nor even the two of us as one to remain one nation because that will be the inescapable product of what we will preserve. . . . They postulate that Sambo is a human being living in a free country and hence must be free. That's what we are really defending: the privilege of setting him free ourselves" (Intruder in the Dust [New York: The Modern Library, 1948], pp. 154-55). Stevens then goes on to describe how bad "Sambo's" values are and how the white Southerners should educate him. The resemblance of these two sentiments and the lack of evidence in the novel that any irony is intended encourages us to accept the novel as didactic.

[6]Vickery sees a successful assault here on the empty words and rituals that plague Faulkner in his other novels. Gavin and Chick, in her opinion, succeed in meaningfully redefining outworn traditional acts and words (pp. 134-44). Brooks concurs (pp. 279-94). Waggoner guardedly puts forth this interpretation qualified by some hesitation about the possibility that Stevens' Christian doctrine is too simple to account for the more unruly parts of human behavior (pp. 214-19). Howe believes, as I do, that the characters' success in the novel is paid for by an uncharacteristic evasiveness on Faulkner's part: ". . . a good part of the book seems designed almost willfully to evade and hinder a mature

development of these [Faulkner's usual themes] themes" (p. 105).

[7]Howe, pp. 138-53.

[8]Vickery, pp. 253-64.

[9]Brooks, p. 37.

[10]Waggoner, pp. 214, 243.

[11]Slatoff, pp. 178-79.

[12]Frederick J. Hoffman, "An Introduction," William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, pp. 6-7. Hoffman tells us that it was Harry Hartwick who referred to Faulkner as a misguided naturalist in The Foreground of American Fiction, 1934, and Maxwell Geismar who called him a Fascist in Writers in Crisis, 1942.

[13]Conrad Aiken, "William Faulkner: The Novel as Form," The Atlantic Monthly, 164 (November, 1939), 650-54.

[14]Malcolm Cowley, "Introduction," The Portable Faulkner (New York: Viking Press, 1954), pp. 1-24.

[15]Robert Penn Warren, "Cowley's Faulkner," The New Republic, 115 (August 12, 1946), 176-80; continued (August 26, 1946), 234-37.

CHAPTER III

THE SOUND AND THE FURY

The Sound and the Fury is primarily a sequence of clusters and only secondarily a sequence dependent on a plot and action. The construction is governed by neither of the conventional mechanisms that provide the form of conventional novels, the beads on the string of the picaresque novel and the cog and wheel machine of plot. Instead of mechanical form, The Sound and the Fury employs the immediate moment of creation.[1] At first nothing exists for the reader but immediate states of energy, Luster's drive and Benjy's passive woe, each barely articulated by the presence of names and objects. Little by little the clusters communicate selected particulars in epiphanal flashes, clear in their internal vivacity, but joined to each other by no obviously necessary sequence. Thus the reader looking for conventional structure is both confused by the Compson reality being created before him as the novel progresses and baffled by the task of simultaneously making sense both of the immediate fragments and of the relationship between fragments which he hopes may and fears may not be leading to some overall shape.

This study contends that the apparent discontinuity of these opening moments is a function of their failure to

cohere by means of a conventionally rational system. In fact, to the reader who can free himself of traditional expectations, the structure of The Sound and the Fury reveals moments from the Compson family life in the context of a continuous vision that undermines the rational assumptions ruling their lives. This vision is possible only because the necessary associations between fragments and clusters do not depend on the logical dictates of any rational system. Carefully isolating from their accustomed authoritative roles all the rational concepts used by the characters in the novel's fictional world, the clusters enable the reader to preceive the Compson conceptual framework as dangerous to human life. The authority of the cluster association does not derive, however, from a set of formal assumptions which explicitly contradict those of the Compsons. Instead the sequence claims a supra-rational authority. From the point of view of a faculty capable of total perception, which I identify as Imagination, the sequence looks at all rationality as a human faculty capable only of partial perception.

The Sound and the Fury aspires to the cosmic scope of Blake's epics. It tells a story climaxed by Miss Quentin's revenge as if it were a part of a cosmic chain of events stemming from a Creation. But God is not creating; the Compsons are, and their creation is a false one. They shape their world to the limited specifications of abstraction, while spontaneous creation, the abundance of which is

truly the shaping power in man, is mutilated on the Procrustean bed of their rationality.

The terrible results of the Compson creation discredit the authority man has given to the limited, partial perceptions of which his rationality is capable. The structure of the novel is the embodiment of that protest, militating against reason's mechanical, divisive powers; it is intuitive and organic. As Conrad Aiken saw, the reader can understand fully the larger context of the many moments of action he sees only when the last word is in place.[2] I have called the significant units clusters, and I have expanded Aiken's formulation. When the last cluster is placed, the full series is a triumph of Faulkner's imagination that lifts author and reader beyond the limits of the rational to a Blakean anatomy that shows how the rational, by nature dualistic, attacks man's potential for wholeness and creativity.[3]

The cluster structure in The Sound and the Fury acts in juxtaposition with the forms of rational thought the characters employ, instead, as is usual when writing from a critical point of view, of being in formal dialogue with it. Instead of beginning with a voice enunciating principles that attack the Compsons' beliefs, The Sound and the Fury begins as a fiction of unmediated experience, making discursive form itself an issue for consideration instead of a given. This fact makes the introduction of values or organizing concepts into the original moment of the Benjy sec-

tion more meaningful for the reader than it would normally be. Because they are appearing against the immediacy of the moment, the Compsons' concepts and values are dramatically called to the reader's attention to be questioned as forms of order instead of working as unobtrusive assumptions, as in most novels.

As the various ordering conceptions are juxtaposed with each other, the reader is led, through the necessary sequence of the juxtapositions, to examine the dynamic of the relationship between abstractions of order, and to assess their impact on the characters. At the same time, the clusters lead the reader to see man as the source of these various ideas of order and as the creator of this world. The cluster structure dramatizes man's authority over the shape of the world by showing the characters in the process of struggling to use human rationality to impose values on the moment with which the reader begins. The clusters show the consequences of man's preference for the limited divisions of reason over the more generous, total faculty of Imagination, and man's mistake in attributing the source of his values to powers outside himself. The characters often invoke divinity--ironically at the very moments when the reader is watching them function as supreme authorities.

In order to explicate this novel, I will communicate some sense both of the necessary order of the transitions from fragment to fragment and from cluster to cluster toward

the goal of criticizing the human imposition of rational order. I will also demonstrate the overall mythological implications of the whole pattern.[4] I shall, for the purposes of this explication, separate the discussions of structure and mythology. First I shall show the significance of the structure, then discuss the mythological implications of the complete series of juxtapositions.

Structure

Beginning in the mind of an idiot, the Benjy section introduces the Compsons to the reader. The introduction is discontinuous, attacking the reader's expectations of comfort and guidance from an introduction. The normal introductory information is withheld, and all the reader is allowed to see and hear is a carefully selected group of details which forcibly draw the reader's attention to the characters' patterns of thinking.

The absence of a larger system of values, the absence of a larger context in the fragments the reader beholds, or of any plot action connecting the fragments at the beginning of the book, places a great deal of weight on the immediacy of the details there. This is the beginning of a rhetorical strategy which governs the entire novel, that teaches the reader to think of learning about reality through imaginatively apprehended particulars in their immediacy and not through abstract generalizations. This is not a question of induction versus deduction, each of which

involves a central role for reason, but of the "world in a grain of sand." Each particular contains the whole picture which the imagination can grasp, but which will not filter down to the reason until the observer has registered many particulars.

As the novel opens, Luster is dragging Benjy about. They are immediate presences before the reader, unqualified by any abstract framework into which they fit. The reader's knowledge of these two characters is limited to the perception that at the moment Luster is trying to hustle a quarter by finding a golf ball and returning it for a reward. Benjy is irrelevant to this pursuit; what it is that is relevant to Benjy we do not yet know, but it is not Luster. We also know that they are standing near a golf course. The particularity of these details, unrelated as yet to any larger picture, is magnified in importance for the reader, for he knows nothing else. In the most concrete way, the reader is not beginning in a time, place, or action as much as he is beginning in the immediacy of the moment of energy barely imposed upon by the abstract presence of names and objects. When we receive further information, it is about another immediate moment, Benjy walking with Caddy on a cold Christmas day.

Benjy's memory of the cold Christmas walk with Caddy is his first regression into time: "Caddy uncaught me and we crawled through."[5] We will learn later that they are on their way to deliver a note to their uncle's paramour. Here

the incident is an immediate moment. Our knowledge is extended from what we saw in the first moment to include Caddy's name, her personality, and its relationship to Benjy. But because the novel has been arranged so that there is a paucity of abstract scaffolding, it is the direct experience of all that we do know that is emphasized. Caddy is introduced to the reader as the name of a mode of order. She is not yet a character, but she does give form to the moment. She unsnags Benjy, and teaches him how to stoop over. She instructs him to keep his hands in his pockets for warmth. This small fragment is immediately followed by a longer, more intricate fragment in which Mother, Mrs. Compson as she will later be known, introduces another mode of order. These two modes move the novel beyond the raw moment of energy, and provide the beginning of continuity.

Mrs. Compson is also involved in protecting Benjy. She is shown debating whether or not to allow Benjy out to meet Caddy. The fragment is clearly not in conventional temporal sequence to the previous fragment; Caddy and Benjy were already together in that scene. But since there are several similar details in the two fragments, their contiguity provides continuity. The same names are involved, and so is the problem of protecting Benjy from the cold. The significant variation is the presence of Mrs. Compson and her abstract, selfish way of thinking. Mrs. Compson's reaction to Benjy's desire to go out is a confused melange of worrying about the cold and that he will get sick, feeling

overwhelmed by, and moralizing the situation. She says that "it" is a judgment on her, meaning that Benjy's outlandish behavior, a part of the affliction of his retardation, has a place in a moral scheme of punishment and reward which is directed particularly at her. The reader immediately learns that Benjy's behavior is motivated only by his relation to Caddy; she is due to return from school, and Benjy wants to meet her. Mrs. Compson's confused selfishness and moral abstractions distort a simple act of spontaneous affection from a bond between Caddy and Benjy into a moral matter of which Mrs. Compson is the center. Mrs. Compson, unlike Caddy, does not put her cognition into relation with simple immediate facts. She interposes herself and remote abstractions between the situation and her evaluation of it.

The first cluster of fragments, then, opens the novel with the moment of energy and then begins the process of ordering it through a juxtaposition between Caddy and Mrs. Compson by focusing them on the concrete problems Benjy's immediacy presents. Caddy's energy is associated, through her manner of dealing with Benjy, with affection and effectiveness in the unmediated moment. Mrs. Compson's abstracted confusion is associated, through her manner of dealing with Benjy, with self-enclosure, feebleness, and detachment from Benjy's immediacy. From the raw material of the two kinds of order in this cluster grows the dialogue between abstracted and immediate creation that is the Compson destiny. The cluster contains within itself the incipi-

ent Compson universe, and the implicit terms which will be seen through their future effects as the triumph of false, abstracted Creation.

The second cluster further shapes the moment, extending the order created by concreteness and by its opposition, abstraction, and moving their implicit conflict toward an explicitly decisive one. A fragment portraying Mrs. Compson driving to the graveyard with Benjy to visit the graves of her son and her husband comes right after the opening cluster. The trip, as an act, is discontinuous from the earlier actions concerned with the walk on the cold Christmas day, but the continuity is supplied by Mrs. Compson's attitude. She repeats her pattern of confusion, selfishness, and moral abstraction, complicating and destroying a simple moment. This fragment shows the reader how the confusion of abstraction may be compounded by the concealment of its source of authority. Mrs. Compson repeatedly disclaims power, authority, and responsibility, and yet it is clearly Mrs. Compson who is creating the situation. It is she who determines whether the drive shall be made or not, and also, in the latter part of the fragment, whether Jason will give Uncle Maury the money he has requested, while she talks on and on about how afraid she is, about how no one pays attention to her, and about God's judgment on her. This moment is juxtaposed with one in which Benjy and Caddy are again seen delivering a letter to a neighbor's wife from their adulterous uncle. In the "letter" fragment,

Caddy simply and concretely deals with the problems of the walk with Benjy through the field. Ironically, the context of this action has been complicated beyond her control by the abstractions of morality lent it by the adults. Caddy, unaware of the abstract implications of her errand, is forced to take part in a situation with which she cannot deal. The juxtaposition subtly prefigures the destruction of Caddy's wholeness and immediate concreteness by the confused, the fearful, and the abstract.

It is significant that in the sequence of events it is Mrs. Compson who introduces the evil of rational, dualist abstraction to destroy the concrete. Mrs. Compson is not widely discussed in the criticism of the novel and has often been dismissed by the critics as "silly." Far from being harmless, as the term "silly" implies, Mrs. Compson is the prime danger to human existence in the novel. The structure of the novel introduces her into the moment as the conventional account of the Creation introduces the snake into Eden. It is Mrs. Compson who creates the destructiveness, selfishness, confusion, fear, and abstraction in the novel, when, in opposition of Caddy's loving concreteness, she begins to dominate the moment. She continues to dominate the moment, as we shall see, behind her pose of fluttering fragility, through Quentin's part in Caddy's destruction at the branch and through the marriage she subsequently makes for Caddy. Toward the end of the novel we shall see further that she is behind Jason's exploitation of Caddy and Miss

Quentin, creating Jason's opportunity for blackmail with her confused and abstracted morality. She is in fact an interesting parallel to Blake's evil Female Will. The evil of the Female Will is not part of the vision of an anti-feminist, but a perception of the passive, abstract faculty in male and female humanity. The Female Will appears in Blake's inversions of the Pauline Virgin Mother, and of the chivalric conception of the Woman, revealed through Blake's vision to be the source of erotic sado-masochism and the source in general of the wars of destruction. As Enitharmon, in Europe, she calls on women to keep men in sexual bondage in the name of virginity and inspires the carnage of the European wars in which she delights. As Enion in The Four Zoas she is a prime mover of Blake's version of the fallen creation with which he satirizes the conventional notions of Genesis.[6]

Following this juxtaposition is an important cluster, the fragments of the night of Damuddy's death and of Caddy's wedding, in which the decisive encounter between abstraction and immediacy takes place. The Compsons' actions in this third cluster are best read through Blake's mythology of the Creation-Fall. Blake interprets what is conventionally thought of as the Creation, and not the temptation of Eve, as the Fall. The conventional notion of the structure Jehovah gave to the world in His Creation was seen by Blake as a rational diminution of the abundance of immediate reality which required the energy of imagination and not the

abstraction of reason to give it living shape.[7] The imaginative vantage point which the cluster gives to the reader shows the effects of the Compsons' abstract values on the abundance of reality to be just such a fallen, limited creation.

For about twenty-seven pages (pp. 37-64), fragments depicting the night of Damuddy's death are alternated with scenes of Caddy's wedding day. Though these experiences are normally expected to be essentially different, the cluster portrays them as essentially alike in the Compson context. The essential quality of both experiences is a confusion between mind and body caused by rationalist forms of order.

The death-wedding cluster begins with the Compson children playing in the branch, still unaware that Damuddy is dying. A spirited interchange concerning Caddy and her wet dress develops between the children. All the children acknowledge that a wet dress means a whipping from mother. Wetness and dryness are forced by the absent Mrs. Compson into a rational system of punishment and reward; Quentin transforms the system into a moral one that construes Caddy's play as wrong. When Caddy, refusing to be ruled by the abstract imputation of morality to wetness and dryness, takes off her dress in an immediate response to the problem of wet clothing, Quentin punishes her by hitting her. As a result, Caddy falls and becomes muddy. What Quention is punishing Caddy for is confused: the slap is associated with playing, being wet, exposing herself without her dress, and

disobedience all at once, with no easily determined referent. The immediate act disappears in the confusion of abstraction that Quentin receives from his mother. Quentin's attempt to rationalize Caddy's act, nevertheless, produces material consequences. Caddy gets dirty, and her act of play is then reduced to dirt by Jason who will use the soiled clothing as evidence for reporting Caddy to their parents, and thus gain control of his brothers and sister.

Caddy's literal fall is a Cosmic Fall as well. Its circumstances take place on the night when death is brought into the world of the Compson children. Damuddy's physical death, however, never shown, is turned by its invisibility into an analogue for Caddy's fall, the important death for the Compsons. This death, leading to the materialist advantage, is specifically displayed as a Blakean division of human energy from the world by the confusions of morality. The death is the death of wholeness. Whether from the point of view of morality or materialism, the act as a total event disappears; neither Quentin nor Jason is able to perceive its immediacy. In Quentin's partial distortion, Caddy's act of play becomes abstract evil, in Jason's utilitarian distortion, evidence; Caddy's unity of physical act and joy dies in the division.

Thus Quentin extends his mother's sphere of influence, the confused moralizing of experience; this has several important results. For Quentin the physical has no reality except as he can make it correspond to an abstract

system. For Caddy, the simple desire to play has been transformed by moral abstraction into transgression with sexual undertones. For Jason, the physical has been transformed into a source of power that eradicates his perception of all non-material existence. Most important, perhaps, is the fact that Caddy's simple spontaneous energy is transformed into rebelliousness and defiance once it is separated by abstract moralizing from its immediate connection with reality. Caddy's automatic response to Quentin and Jason is combative. No longer creative, her energy is turned into a negative force by the process of the Fall. Portraying evil, death, and Original Sin as results of the rational dissection of man's energy is Blakean; it implies an inversion of the traditional relationship between energy and limits. The portrayal is Blakean too in that part of the evil of the Fall lies in its being a tragic creation; it creates limits within which energy will be confined, and ensures the destructive terms of reality within which energy will be forced to operate. In The Sound and the Fury the terms this Creation/Fall brings to the moment are parts of the blueprint for the Compson family destiny, which is ultimately its destruction from within.

The rest of the death-wedding cluster focuses with anti-dualist irony on the beginning of Compson fulfillment of the terms set at the branch. The only scenes from Caddy's wedding show separation. The scenes of T. P., Benjy, and Quentin getting drunk emphasize, in connection

with Caddy's wedding, an abstracted relationship between energy, mind, and body, which has already been equated with death in terms of the Creation/Fall at the branch. The remaining scenes of Damuddy's death are concerned with Caddy's thwarted attempts to operate with simple concreteness.

Mr. and Mrs. Compson determine that the Compson children should not be told that Damuddy is dead, and Dilsey complies with these instructions. This decision separates the children from their immediate understanding of their circumstances. In repetition of the pattern of defiance at the branch, Caddy reacts to the confusion by defiantly trying to regain control of her newly confused world. When the children discover that their routine is to be mysteriously changed, and that they are eating and sleeping in unaccustomed places, Caddy tries to regain control by forcing all the children to obey her. Finally she abandons this tack in favor of climbing a tree in search of pertinent knowledge. She tries to look through a window at what the adults are doing. Dilsey pulls her out of the tree, saying, "You, Satan . . . come down from there" (p. 64).

Dilsey's exclamation is the climax of the death-wedding cluster. It sums up the dualist reaction to energy, concreteness, and unself-conscious impulses toward the outer world. Dilsey, traditionally, places the source of evil in Satanic temptations to transgress the confusing limits set by rationality. Juxtaposed as Caddy's efforts have been

with the fabricated confusion about Damuddy's death and the drunken separations of mind and body in the fragments from her wedding, the reader is led to an inversion of Dilsey's traditional idea of original sin. The juxtapositions have identified Caddy as the source of love, of energy, and of significant relationship to the immediate moment, and have identified the moralized abstractions of Dilsey and the Compsons as the unthinking impulses toward true evil--the Blakean sin of division that man commits against himself.[8]

Benjy must be the first narrator because the pure immediacy of Benjy's understanding permits the literary mimesis of the Compsons' Creation/Fall as their abstract modes of ordering the moment become dominant and set the pattern for the rest of the novel. But Benjy also has an active part in the Compson Creation. During the Creation/Fall (p. 38), Benjy begins to take part in creation within the unfortunate limits set by the encounter by the branch. Benjy cries at the uproar, but not when Quentin and Jason threaten Caddy. He protests when, in defiance of Quentin's morality and Jason's threat to report her actions, Caddy says that she will run away. In Blakean terms, Benjy is not a spontaneous reaction to the evil of division represented by Jason and Quentin, but an innocently selfish reproach to Caddy for fighting the evil. Benjy is not an immediate moral presence, but an innocent, powerful part of the abstracted evil.

Benjy is innocent of the problems he causes for

Caddy only because it is impossible for him to understand the nature of evil in any terms. His development arrested, he cannot know, while the others do not, that any division has taken place or what its implications are. Nevertheless, Benjy's innocent immediacy constitutes an analogue to the divisiveness of abstract morality as he selfishly interposes himself between Caddy and the world. The effect is the same as Quentin's interposition of the rational abstraction between Caddy and her play. Thus when Benjy cries at Caddy's wedding because he does not "smell trees," he is not reacting to the evil that the reader can see in the marriage but trying, like Quentin's abstractions, to come between Caddy's energy and her spontaneous involvement in reality, just as he does when Caddy is taken to sleep in her own bed later in the death-wedding cluster, and also when Caddy wears perfume. Benjy is powerful because he cuts off the defiance against division with which Caddy automatically reacts to Quentin and Jason. His lack of ability to be anything but the innocence of pure immediacy short-circuits her defenses. The Blakean ramifications are specific here. Immediacy must be humanized; of itself it constitutes a barren ur-abstraction.

Following the death-wedding cluster, the cluster of fragments about Caddy and Miss Quentin and their respective lovers in the swing reveals Caddy's defenses totally penetrated by Benjy's infantile, shapeless immediacy. Caddy perceives Benjy, however, as the symbol of the morality she

is defying and punishes herself after his interventions with her dallying. From the preceding clusters, the reader knows that Caddy's promiscuity is a part of a pattern of defiance created by the very morality of dualism which condemns it, and not by any evil in her, since none has been presented. The reader also knows that Benjy's reproach is moral in the worst sense, one which the clusters have been leading the reader to reject, that of abstract, selfish confusion of immanent reality.[9]

To this the cluster juxtaposes Caddy's daughter, Quentin, many years later, in the same circumstances in the swing, reproached by Benjy. This juxtaposition signals to the reader that Quentin is an analogue of her mother, but one more intensely defiant. The cluster prefigures the progressive deterioration of Caddy's original unity, and evaporation of the tenderness of Caddy's outgoing love for the immediacy of life, in Miss Quentin's attempts at self-preservation. Thus Benjy is innocently the most formidable weapon against Caddy's unity. He completes her defeat at the hands of dualism through inadvertently mirroring abstraction in his helpless selfishness, forcing her to reject rationalist judgments only at the cost of rejecting her spontaneous tenderness for him as well. Although the reader cannot know that fact at this point, Miss Quentin's juxtaposed, disastrously increased defiance and rejection of Benjy reflects Caddy's full dilemma. An alternate course would not have helped her. Her agony lies in the Fall at

the branch; it is an oxymoron and nothing but an apocalyptic reversal of its terms will help.

From the swing-scene cluster until the last cluster in Benjy's section, Caddy is seen mostly in fragments in which she is either crying or fighting. The juxtapositions reinforce the results of the Fall in the reader's understanding. Until the last cluster, Caddy is almost always at bay. The last cluster of Benjy's section serves two important purposes; first, it begins the "plot action" of the novel, although this beginning will not be noted as such until later, in Jason's section. Here the reader sees, with Benjy and Luster, Miss Quentin leaving her room through the window (pp. 91-92). We will later understand that we were witnessing the beginnings of Miss Quentin's revenge. Here her exit inherits resonances of Caddy's exuberant human assertion and, at the same time, human defeat by the dualistic moralizing of reality. Miss Quentin climbs out of her window and down the same tree which Caddy had climbed up to make some sense of the death her parents hid from her. Caddy's quest "Satanized," her attempt at knowledge was turned into her daughter's need for escape.

Second, the closure of Benjy's section portrays Benjy's reversal of the division of the Fall. Benjy ends his section by remembering when he used to sleep with Caddy. Even his memory is pure immediacy to him; for him it is again the time when, as two very little children, they were happy, before he became the unconscious spokesman for divided

morality. Within the terms of the Creation/Fall, the palliative to division is regression. But this remedy is for Benjy alone; it is not the reversal of the Compson destiny. The Quentin section continues creating the Compson history. Although Quentin's section is not subsequent in time to Benjy's, his use of abstracted morality forms for the reader a sequential continuity in the Compson suppression of humanity as it is left at the end of the Benjy section.

Quentin's section extends the division caused by the Fall. It further explores the irony involved in the self-destructiveness of the moral, rational duality as it destroys human creative power. This section again encourages the reader to reject regression as a viable shelter from the destruction caused by the abstract structuring of life, and ends with the ultimate irony of showing the reader abstraction creating through its own evasion of the immediacy of life the triumph of its opponent, materialism. Quentin's suicide leaves the implacable materialist, Jason, in control. Fulfilling the pattern of Quentin's original act at the branch, Quentin's repeated attempts to shape the world through abstract morality not only destroy Caddy, but give Jason control of the family.

In the first cluster of Quentin's section (pp. 95-108), Quentin begins his day with some abstract thoughts about time and virginity. These thoughts are presented to the reader in such a way that their most important function is not what they tell us about virginity, and time, the sub-

jects at hand, but how they serve to tell us further about the confusion and fear caused by the moralized ideal as the Compsons use it to try to shape the moment.

In the first cluster of Quentin's section, he opens his eyes and sees the shadow of the window sash on the curtains in his room, "then I was in time, again, hearing the watch" (p. 95). Quentin tells the reader that he has learned from his father to think of time both as an undefeatable opponent and as something that has the material watch for its mausoleum. An obvious contradiction is involved in this double identity, which may perhaps suggest many complex insights into life, but which requires examination. Quentin does not examine it; in allowing the paradox to hang in the air he establishes the tone for his section. Quentin's mind is a riot of unexamined abstractions. He proceeds to envision time as a parade and then as long rays of light in which "you might see Jesus walking, like. And the good Saint Francis that said Little Sister Death, that never had a sister" (p. 96).

Quentin's chameleon abstracting tendency is juxtaposed to his perceptions of a less protean world outside him. The reader suddenly emerges from Quentin's abstract chaos to the immediacy of the world of being. We hear "Shreve's bed-springs and then his slippers hishing" (p. 96). But the reader is out of Quentin's head only briefly. Back he plunges into the shifting abstractions to learn that "Christ was not crucified: he was worn away by a minute

clicking of little wheels. That had no sister" (p. 96). The abstracting tendency has leaped to control Quentin's existence again. The sequence dramatizes how the abstracting process not only reduces Quentin's referent to nothing but cuts off his perceptions from the spontaneous existence of immediate life. The juxtaposition of "sister" to the thinning out of the idea of time both foreshadows what we will later know of Caddy's danger from Quentin and functions as a resonance of what we have already seen of her victimization.

Ironically, Quentin's chaotic and abstract musings about time are juxtaposed with a desperate dependence on material clock time. Quentin has learned from his father to identify this desperation as mental excrement. "Father said that constant speculation regarding the position of mechanical hands on an arbitrary dial which is a symptom of mind-function. Excrement Father said like sweating" (p. 96). The reader is shown a link between a chaotic, chameleon abstraction and a degraded material object. Quentin is driven into the materiality he has degraded through the chaos created by abstraction.

The fragment then proceeds to develop for the reader the specifics of Quentin's vicitimization. Quentin begins to think of Caddy. The terms in which he thinks about her are in relationship to the abstraction of virginity (pp. 96-97); in these thoughts Caddy becomes to virginity what the

watch was to time, a degraded material obsession fostered by the chaos of the parallel abstraction.

The sequence of fragments in this first cluster of Quentin's chapter juxtaposes to Quentin's musings about Caddy his memory of his father saying, "It was men invented virginity . . . Father said its like death" (p. 97). Time is also like death, according to Mr. Compson. Whether or not they both are like death in any frame of reference but Quentin's is not investigated, nor is this question what is important here. What is significant is that both abstractions, time and virginity, divergent as they are, become equivalent in Quentin's life; he reduces both to death. The sequence of Quentin's fragmentary thoughts thus leads the reader to some insights to which Quentin is not privy. First, Quentin's abstracting process, because of its chaotic, unchecked excesses, may thin out the immediate referent to the point at which abstractions, and perceptions of their referents, become interchangeable. Second, despite Quentin's belief in forces that control him and transcend his own spontaneous life, his detachment gives no evidence of forms higher than the human, and his own power terrifies him, as the reader can see in the next fragment.

Just at this point, Quentin looks out the window and sees a kind of epiphany: his classmates running frantically to get to chapel on time, except one, Spoade, a figure of human control in the flux of life. Quentin ruminates about how Spoade never rushes and is never late. Then, "I watched

them running for chapel . . . flushing past like debris on a flood, and Spoade," (p. 97). Spoade walks at his own pace "like a terrapin in a street full of scattering leaves" (p. 98). Spoade and his measured pace are a vision which implies for Quentin human possibilities of immediate life that he does not wish to acknowledge. Quentin, like his father, is cynical about man's subjugation to rational determinations and conventions, but he wallows in that subjugation anyway. Quentin rejects the possibility of human power; anything is preferable to that. He thinks of his own drowning, which is to take place, and juxtaposes against that his thought that "It's not when you realize that nothing can help you, religion, pride, anything--it's when you realize that you don't need any aid" (p. 99). His potential for power is Quentin's worst agony.

This fragment of Quentin's first cluster is followed by Quentin's visit to the watchmaker, his antidote to the epiphany provided by Spoade. Before leaving his room, Quentin breaks his watch. He shatters the crystal and rips the hands off the face, but leaves the mechanism intact. His ostensible reason for going to the watch shop is to fix the watch he has just broken; but that is not the reason why he goes there. He refuses to leave the watch there to be fixed and is not really interested in what the jeweler has to say about it. Instead he is intensely interested in whether any of the multitude of timepieces in the shop is exhibiting "the right time." None of them does, and Quentin's watch,

without hands now, cannot show the time. Quentin muses on the fraud involved in the immediate world, but this is nonsense; the clock is a mechanical interpretation of time, not the unmediated experience of it. In the series of actions pertaining to the watch shop, Quentin self-destructively stagemanages a ritual affirmation of his helpless position between the abstract chaos of time in his head and the degraded material parallel. This ritual is the first of a series in which Quentin himself forces the material-spiritual dichotomy on his world in a constant, symbolic degrading of immanence. These rituals structure the reader's interpretation of Quentin's actions, leading to the understanding that spiritual and physical reality are not inherently separate; the separation requires human energy.

In the second cluster of Quentin's chapter (pp. 109-135), the fragments of his thoughts focus themselves on his dislike and contempt for the way Gerald Bland, a classmate, and his mother conduct their lives and the way Quentin's mother had tried to influence the Compson family's life. He watches Gerald Bland rowing on the Charles and thinks of how he hates the Blands' assertion of their place in an elite tradition and concurrently of how he hated the way his mother tried to ensure the continuity of the Compsons' elite tradition through the marriage between Caddy and Herbert Head. Quentin perceives himself as being superior to both the Blands and his mother, but the second cluster reveals this notion to be another part of his confusion. For exam-

ple, Quentin tells us (p. 116) that he realizes that the relationship he has to the old, black campus character, the Deacon, is a parody of the ideal master-slave relationship. Nevertheless, the reader sees Quentin continuing to participate with the Deacon in just that relationship (pp. 116-119). This is an instance of the distance between Quentin's abstracted reason and his immediate existence. The distance is equally present when Quentin discusses with contempt the Blands' acceptance of the rational construct of stereotyped relations between black and white, as if he himself, regardless of his ambivalence, did not live by it (p. 126).

Similarly, the reader sees that Quentin's attempts to oppose the approaching marriage between Herbert, as Quentin remembers them, reveal the same kind of abstraction from life that makes his mother support it. Quentin's strongest reason against the marriage concerns Head's violations of Quentin's abstract code of honor. Head cheated at cards when he attended Harvard (p. 127). It is clear to the reader from what Head says both to Quentin and to Caddy that he is the essence of the evil division from spontaneous life that took place at the branch; even his name implies the rational faculty abstracted from the totality of potential human creativity. Quentin, however, does not oppose him on this basis, because he is too deeply involved in the evil of abstraction that began to dominate the Compson destiny through the new life of their children at the branch, and can respond to the evils of his mother and the Blands only

with another version of their abstractions. Quentin differs from them, as the reader is led to see in this cluster, only in that they exploit the immediate reality from which they are abstracted and Quentin does not. His version of division is to try to withdraw from the moment entirely. His efforts focus on his revulsion toward sexuality; in contrast, his mother and the Blands attack the moment through sexuality.

In Quentin's second cluster we see Mrs. Compson in her desire for power all but selling Caddy for Herbert Head's income, using sexuality as a lure. Gerald Bland and his mother use it as a trophy to attest to the elite superiority of their family. Quentin thinks about their tales of Gerald's conquests alterately with his memories of Caddy and Head (pp. 110, 125, 126). In terms of the reader's insights about the events at the branch, Quentin does not differ from the Blands or from his mother in the way that he thinks he does; he too in his rational abstraction from the moment divides the world as the children did at the branch. The reader is led in this way to see Quentin's moralizing as a third set of hollow impositions on the world of spontaneous energy.

The fragility of Quentin's formula for division, his unwillingness to accompany it with power over the moment, distinguishes him from the Blands and his mother. Quentin, in his passive way, insults the immanent reality of life as much as they do aggressively. Perhaps Quentin does not

exploit others as they do, but his idea of perfection will not accept immediate reality for what it is. For example, at the end of the second cluster in his section, Quentin recalls a story he once heard from Versh, one of the Compson servants, about a man who castrated himself. "But that's not it," says Quentin to himself. "It's not having them. It's never to have had them. I could say O That's Chinese I don't know Chinese" (p. 135). This attitude is essentially extremely hostile to the immediacy of actual reality.

Quentin's third cluster (pp. 135-64) shows him vainly struggling to make his fleshless abstraction the essential reality. Here Quentin spends some time with a group of young boys and with a little immigrant girl who apparently cannot speak English. Although he tries to abstract himself back into childhood as an idealized state of existence, Quentin finds the immediate moments of childhood around him very distant from his abstraction, as is his own experience. As he spends time with the little girl, he continually thinks about Caddy, and his thoughts become progressively more concerned with the sexual female than with the child who is beside him. The cluster ends in a confused uproar as the little girl's brother appears with the local authorities, Quentin under suspicion of purposeful abduction of the child for devious reasons which are never articulated by anyone. He is rescued by Mrs. Bland, her son Gerald, Shreve, and Spoade, who happen by in an automobile. This cluster must be read as having arisen from all the previously described

clusters; taken out of context and pondered separately, it leaves Quentin's relationship with the little girl ambiguous, but in relation to the previous clusters, this one is part of a sharply defined set of associations.

The first cluster in Quentin's section associated his idealism with chaos and a degraded dependence on purely material aspects of phenomena; it depicted the ritual of forcing this dualism on the spontaneous moment, discrediting in the reader's eyes Quentin's notions and his longings for abstracted, superhuman sanctions. Quentin's second cluster puts distance between his view of evil and the reader's. The reader is made to envision all forms of dualism as comparable evils, while Quentin is clearly shown to the reader equating only the actively exploitative dualism with evil. In this third cluster, however, when Quentin seeks to withdraw into his passive, dichotomized abstraction from the moment, he confirms the reader's view of all dualism as an attack on the wholeness of the moment.

Quentin's encounters with the little boys and then with the little girl are both passive distortions of the immediacy of what he sees. The boys are a feisty bunch, jibing at each other and already discussing the world in terms their fathers would recognize. Quentin clearly perceives the banter, but he refuses to record its energy as the center of the reality he is confronting. He insists on placing it in an Arcadian context. The boys' energy and adult economic values are constantly at war with Quentin's pastoral scene. Their chatter about where the best fishing

place is, whether they would accept the new fishing pole or the twenty-five dollar reward for a big fish, their curiosity about Quentin's watch and what it cost all jar with Quentin's interpolations of his version of the scene around them. Quentin speaks of the delicacy and elegance of the swimming trout, the fishingpoles as "three slanting threads of yellow fire in the sun," the "dappled" shade. "We came to an orchard," he recounts. "It was full of bees; already we could hear them." He notes the flecks of sunlight on the boys' shirts. As one of the boys recedes toward an old swimming hole, Quentin watches his progress. "The first boy went on. His bare feet made no sound, falling softer than leaves in the thick dust. In the orchard the bees sounded like a wind getting up, a sound caught by a spell just under crescendo and sustained. The land went along the wall, arched over, shattered with bloom, dissolving into trees. Sunlight slanted into it, sparse and eager. Yellow butterflies flickered along the shade like flecks of sun" (p. 141). Meanwhile the boys are raucously arguing about whether or not to go fishing. Quentin steadfastly refuses to see the center of this moment in the human energy and rambunctiousness he narrates. He continues to try to force the instant mentally into a denatured setting, using an ideal abstraction of nature. It is directly after this that he walks into the bakery and meets the little girl.

From the moment Quentin meets her, she is totally silent; Quentin can and does interpret everything about her,

beginning with the reason for her entrance into the bakery and continuing from there. Quite the opposite of the boys, she is a totally malleable entity; her utter stillness leaves everything about her for Quentin to form. She is the perfect material for his ideal, though at first Quentin is clearly not aware to what degree he has created his idea of her. In the beginning he is enthusiastic about his project. He orders bread for her in the bakery though she has given no indication about what she has come to buy. He buys her ice cream and walks with her. After a relatively short while, however, he wants to be rid of her. He tries more and more desperately to get her to reveal by some sign the whereabouts of her home. His success at finding a solipsistic enclave for his abstractions, at first attractive to him becomes frustrating, and then terrifying. He urgently needs some contact with spontaneous reality outside his own mind. Finally he reaches an hysterical crescendo of exasperation, gives her a quarter, and runs. Although he experiences himself as having run a great distance, when he pauses for breath she appears before him. Quentin again takes up the search for her immanent reality.

The sudden appearance of the child's brother, Julio, brings with it a message for Quentin from the immediacy of his life. Not only is immanent reality right in front of him, not only does the failure to perceive it lie in his own abstraction from it, but adding insult to injury, in the immediate context, Quentin's dualism is indistinguishable

from the sexually exploitative dualism he detests in his mother and the Blands. The little girl who had appeared to him first attractively and then repulsively as a void not only speaks perfect English, but also knows very well how to get home. When her frantic and furious brother catches up with her she says, distinctly, "There's Julio" (p. 57), and when Julio orders her to go home, she does. What is more, Quentin's involvement in passive abstraction looks to the authorities and to Julio like an attempt at sexual exploitation.

In the text, there is no direct authoritative refutation of Julio's suspicions. The sequence of associations since the beginning of the section, has, however, strongly undercut the possibility that they could have a foundation. It is true that Quentin does call the little girl "sister" while he is indulging in incestuous feelings about Caddy during his walk, as well as recalling an experimental sexual encounter with a girl named Nathalie. It is also true that in both his detached reveries, and his immediate presence before the child, Quentin rejects all immediacy including the sexual impulse. He remembers pushing Caddy into the mud as a punishment for her sexual activities. Nathalie, whose name appropriately suggests birth, is dirty to him. He is not sensible of the child as a unique being, but as an occasion for the triumph of his abstractions. Indeed from the point of view the reader has been given, sexual intentions

are all but impossible for Quentin, who is unable to make contact with the immanent energy of the world.

Quentin's attempts to spend time with the children are failed attempts to validate his division. In the fourth cluster (pp. 165-86), these failed rituals are compounded. Quentin remembers how he tried to kill Caddy for her sexual indiscretions and failing that, how he tried to kill her lover. Quentin is at the time of his memories in Mrs. Bland's car; and while his mind is otherwise engaged, his body is hitting Gerald Bland, who responds by bloodying his eye. This useless channel for his energy with its self-destructive results is analogous to Quentin's misguided attempts to deal with Caddy's out-of-wedlock pregnancy which the reader sees him remember.

The irrelevance of Quentin's idealism manifests itself in his central concern with the heroics of challenging Dalton Ames, the man responsible for Caddy's pregnancy; he entirely neglects what should be central, the fate of the unborn baby. The destructiveness of Quentin's detached approach toward reality damages Caddy by expressing itself in his detached chivalric rituals. Insisting on a stereotypical code of honor, Quentin plays out a role with Ames instead of coming to grips with the immediate reality of Ames' relationship to Caddy. What the reader can see of Ames is that he comes closest of all the people in the novel to embodying the hero, the man of action. Despite the fact that he tells Quentin that all women are bitches, his rhetoric hides but

thinly his immediate concern for Caddy, which makes him the only character in the book besides Caddy herself who seems capable of concern for another. Ames wants to know if Caddy has sent Quentin to see him, if she is physically well, and if the family is making life emotionally hard for her. Unlike Benjy's concern, it is directed consciously and thoughtfully at Caddy, not at what comforts she provides; unlike Quentin's concern, Ames' solicitousness is unmoralized; unlike Mr. Compson's concern, it is involved, rather than ironically and alcoholically detached; unlike Herbert Head's, it has none of the aspects of mercantile purchase; unlike Mrs. Compson's concern, it is concrete, focused, and outgoing, rather than confused, abstract, and self-seeking. Reminiscent of his attack on Caddy at the branch, Quentin's reaction to Dalton Ames is a violation not only of Caddy's wholeness, but also of the immediate wholeness of the moment.

While Quentin is remembering his attempt to hit Dalton Ames, Quentin's body is hitting Gerald Bland. Knowledge that Quentin's eye is bleeding comes as a surprise both to him and to the reader. Shreve later tells Quentin that Quentin had hit Gerald while Gerald was, "Talking about the body's beauty and the sorry ends thereof and how tough women have it, without anything they can do except lie on their backs. Leda lurking in the bushes, whimpering and moaning for the swan, see" (p. 185). Quentin's intellect has not actually absorbed the immediate communication of Gerald's words. We have been privy to Quentin's memory, and none of

Gerald's story penetrated what we have seen. Nevertheless, as Quentin's mind is retrospectively, uselessly assulting the unitive possibilities in Ames, Quentin's own body has uselessly assaulted Gerald's dualistic encomiums of the body's exploitation. Quentin, out of contact with the immediate moment, is a prisoner of abstract chaos.

In the fifth cluster (pp. 187-97), Quentin is as good as dead. This last cluster of his section serves as a transition to Jason's section. The crucial information here is Mr. Compson's equation between Quentin's ideal shape "symmetrical above the flesh" (p. 196) and the materialist abstraction of money. Compson tells Quentin, "Watching pennies has healed more scars than Jesus" (p. 196), reversing Jesus' purification of the temple by throwing out the money changers. Indeed this inversion is the crown of the completely abstracted chaos of Quentin's existence. This ironic transfer of authority from the abstractions of idealism to the abstractions of materialism makes Mr. Compson a focus for the reader's understanding of the necessity of the vantage point provided the reader by the supra-rational structural organization of this story.

In general, Mr. Compson is not seriously considered by the critics as an important force in the novel. His presence in Quentin's last thoughts before his suicide discloses how Mr. Compsons' thoughtful slavery to rational dualism represents the untenable position in which humanity, obsessed with the centrality of reason, finds itself. What-

ever change reason makes, it forms a continuity with the tradition of dualism. The historical conversion from idealism to materialism is not only a continuation of the traditional dualistic assault on the moment, but it is a mark of increased confusion that portends an actually degenerated relationship between humanity and spontaneous reality. This exacerbation of the human dilemma marked by Mr. Compson at the end of Quentin's section is an interesting parallel to a moment in Night the Eighth of The Four Zoas. At this point, Urizen, the deity of repressive reason, is so confused about his relationship to reality that he finds himself embracing materialism, and turning to stone. This suicidal death is analogous to both Quentin's self-inflicted death by water and Compson's alcoholic termination of his life.[10] Both of these suicides embody the complicity between idealism and materialism in the continuity of dualism. Ironically, Quentin's and Mr. Compson's detachment from the despised flesh makes way for the triumph of Jason's materialist authority.

Jason's materialism is another assault on the integrity fnd wholeness of the moment, and again Caddy's immediacy is the focus of its explication. In Quentin's section, the reader sees a sequence of fragments depicting Quentin's failure to perceive immediate reality and his destructive influence on Caddy because of the central importance he gives to abstracted ideals. Jason's materialism is also shown to the reader in its destructive influence on Caddy and in its failure to perceive the wholeness of the moment.

Jason's materialism limits his perception to that which has dimension, and measurable mass. Non-corporeal traits like integrity, pride, and love cannot be perceived within Jason's limitations. Just as the unaccepted immediacy of the body destroyed Quentin, so the unperceived immediacy of the spirit foils Jason.

As Jason's section begins, he and Mrs. Compson are apparently addressing themselves to their immediate situation, discussing their failure to control Miss Quentin. Mrs. Compson is frantic because she fears that the school authorities will believe that she cannot control her granddaughter. "Well," says Jason, "You can't can you?" (p. 198). Apparently the unflinching realist, Jason will not settle for abstracted ideals.

In conjunction with Jason's "penetrating" attack on problems, his section begins with this plot situation and, more than in the preceding section, follows it through. Jason's conflict with Miss Quentin is sustained through his section and comes to a climax in the novel's fourth cluster in Jason's discovery of her revenge and in his efforts to even the score. Jason's section also has the appearance of being constructed of scenes, as is conventional in the novel, rather than of the fragments which have typified the address to the reader in the Benjy and Quentin sections. Nevertheless, what the reader soon sees is that Jason is quite detached from the immediacy of his situation, that the structure of his section is not organized around the plot conflict,

and that his apparent perception of life in scenes rather than in fragments is deceptive. The structure makes us focus primarily not on the action concerning Miss Quentin's revenge, but on what Jason sees but does not perceive. The relationship between Jason's mutilated perception and his conflicts with his sister and his niece, his conflicts in all his relationships are the primary focus in his section; Jason's narrative continues the novel's established pattern of focusing the reader's attention on the Compson's creation of their own tragedy by fragmenting the whole of life. Jason's monologue is subsequent to Quentin's in time, but the continuity between them does not lie in the temporal sequence; it derives from the extension of the damage to the family life that the Creation/Fall foretold. Quentin interposed morality between Caddy's energy and the world, causing the defiance that led to Miss Quentin's illegitimacy; Jason compounds the tragedy by placing the material abstraction of money between Caddy's immediate love and her child. This new division makes impossible the transmission of the love that qualified Caddy's defiance, and reduces the relationship between the dualistic limits, now materialist, and energy to the raw power struggle of Miss Quentin's defiance.

In the first scene of the opening cluster, Miss Quentin and Jason act out the roles of rebel and authority. Jason ostensibly is carrying out his mother's wishes that he make sure that Miss Quentin attend school more regularly. The interchange between them, however, has only pro-forma

relationship to this subject. The substance of their "discussion" shows the scene to be a power struggle in which everything is grist for the mill in which Miss Quentin asserts her energy and Jason asserts his materialist notions of physical control.

For example, as Miss Quentin is haggling with Dilsey for an extra cup of coffee, Jason arrives to discuss her more regular attendance at school. He incites her to rebellion by giving her ten seconds to put down her cup and come into the dining room. She responds to the provocation by telling Dilsey to whistle when ten seconds have passed and tries to return to begging for more coffee. Jason grabs Miss Quentin's arm; the cup falls to the floor and breaks. Physical destruction is a typical consequence of Jason's power struggles, as the clusters reveal. But that is not the only fragmentation of reality that results from Jason's authority.

A few pages on, Jason asks Miss Quentin what has happened to her books. "Of course I haven't any right to ask . . . I'm just the one who paid $11.65 for them last September" (p. 205). She tells Jason that she knows it is her mother's money that has paid for all her possessions. In a rage, she adds that she would tear the clothes off her body if she believed that Jason were actually supporting her. When she proceeds to rip at her dress, Jason is so enraged that he is nearly unconscious: "It made me so mad

for a minute it kind of blinded me" (p. 206). Jason is conscious of only fragments of reality.

Jason's early encounter with Miss Quentin sets the pattern for the section. His concern is always with control in the abstract, not with coping with any immediate particular situation. His weapons are always some sort of materialist measure he thinks of as reliable and absolute; they primarily involve money and time; but the results of his "control" always involve mental or physical damage to himself and to others.

After he leaves Miss Quentin, Jason structures his day by touching the bases which form his contact with his idea of reality. The clusters now explore how the measures of time and money, in which Jason places ultimate trust, give him no hold on reality. Jason's materialism is shown to be as much an <u>a priori</u> commitment as Quentin's idealism. As Jason begins his day, he reveals to the reader, though not to himself, that money operates as chaotically in his life as Quentin's ideals did in his, though Jason thinks that money is a bedrock of reality.

Jason's confusion begins when he tells Job, the old black man who works along with him at Earl's supply store. that he isn't worth his wages, and thinks to himself how trifling "nigger" labor is. Jason then leaves Job working and goes up the street for a coke with a travelling salesman, complaining bitterly and cynically to the salesman of the conspiracy of "Eastern Jews to use the stock market to

sucker the little people out of their money." Just as the juxtapositions show the reader that Jason is the trifler and not Job, so Jason is the real conspirator. After lodging his complaints with the salesman, Jason immediately sends a telegram to Caddy in pursuit of his own conspiracy to defraud Miss Quentin of her money. Money remains the focus of the next few pages, during which time it assumes various shapes for Jason though he is totally unaware of its metamorphoses. First it is a weapon against him when he discovers that his stock has gone up, but believes that the Eastern Jews will fix it somehow so that he will lost in the end (p. 210). Then it becomes a weapon in his hands as he describes how he uses it to keep him Memphis prostitutes in line (p. 211). Then thought gives rise to Jason's speculation on a definition of money as basically without value, "money has no value . . . it just belongs to the man that can get it and keep it" (p. 212). He is barely finished defining money in this way when a farmer comes into the store. Jason undergoes great exasperation because the customer will not understand that the thirty-cent hame string is superior to the twenty-five cent model because it costs more. Now Jason, reversing himself, defines money as the fount of value (p. 213). Each fragmentary thought about money appears as a global whole to Jason. The quick succession of "total" truths fail to alert him to his situation, to the revelation that he is lost in fragments.

The second cluster leads the reader through the

chaos of Jason's other principal unit: time. Jason remembers incidents from his earlier life in his second cluster, and again provides the reader with an understanding of the formlessness of his fragmented vision. Jason's memory keeps confusing the day Miss Quentin was brought as a baby to the Compson house with the day of his father's funeral. The confusion is so great that at points these events occur in his memory as the same day (pp. 214-18). Both Jason and the reader know that they are not simultaneous events in time, since Jason himself clearly remembers that it was Mr. Compson who brought the baby Miss Quentin into the house (p. 215). Only the reader knows that Jason occasionally perceives these two events as occurring simultaneously.

Both days appear twice at the beginning of the second cluster, and both times they melt into one. The first time Jason is thinking about how he told his mother that Caddy would try to see her baby even though she had promised not to when, as if the time between these events had melted, he is suddenly comforting his mother on the day of his father's funeral. "If you believe she'll do what she says and try not to see it, you fool yourself because the first time that was that Mother kept on saying Thank God you are not a Compson except in name, because you are all I have left now, you and Maury [her brother], and I says well I could spare Uncle Maury myself and then they came and said they were ready to start. Mother stopped crying then. She pulled the veil down and we went downstairs("p. 214). As

Jason continues to remember, the events regain their particularity briefly; then he slides them together again. He remembers Dilsey telling the family at large that she will take care of Caddy's baby and telling Jason to go to sleep so that he can get up in time for school in the morning, when time again telescopes and, continuously with his departure at Dilsey's suggestion the night the baby was brought home, Jason is comforting his mother before his father's funeral. "So I went out, then Mother called me back and cried on me awhile. 'You are my only hope,' she sayd. 'Every night I thank God for you.' While we were waiting there for them to start she says 'Thank God if he had to be taken too, it is you left me and not Quentin . . .'" (p. 218).

Juxtaposed to this group of fused memories is a memory of the funeral which explains why Jason merges Miss Quentin's arrival with his father's funeral. The reason is that the amalgam of these two events is the source of his power; this is hidden from Jason's conscious mind, which attributes that power to money and time. The last part of the second cluster shows this fact to the reader in Jason's meeting with Caddy, she heavily veiled and standing out of sight, at Mr. Compson's burial. At this meeting Caddy arranges with Jason to see her baby "for a minute" in return for one hundred dollars; she promises that she will leave town after seeing the baby in deference to her mother's decision that she be cut off from the Compsons completely

because of her shameful life. In the execution of this bargain, Jason lets her see the baby for one literal minute from the back of a speeding carriage. Thus Caddy is not only limited to one minute, but also to "seeing" the baby in detachment from whole, immediate contact with her daughter. As happened at the branch, Mrs. Compson is the hidden source of the division of reality.

Caddy does not leave town, and the next morning storms into Jason's place of business, accusing him of having lied to her. Jason is amazed at Caddy's reaction and believes that it is she who has broken her promise by not leaving. Finally, Jason strikes a bargain with Caddy to take care of Miss Quentin's material needs by accepting monthly checks from Caddy, even though it will be in secret disobedience of Mrs. Compson's orders, if Caddy will stay away and never try to see the baby again. This is an important heavily-charged interchange. It repeats with significant variation the pattern of Caddy's destruction which we saw earlier at the branch. Jason, the survivor, now transforms the new Quentin into the agent of Caddy's victimization, again at the instigation of his mother's confused rejection of Caddy, this time through the materialist exploitation of the physical fragment of human creativity and imagination.

Just as important is what this funeral fragment impresses on the reader about the way in which Jason's materialism attests to the power and presence of its complement,

the non-corporeal. Ironically, what Jason persistently takes for the sum total of reality is the strongest evidence for the reader of its fragmentary character. Jason sees his power over Caddy and Miss Quentin purely in terms of money and time; he trades Caddy a minute for one hundred dollars, and Miss Quentin's material welfare for more money. Jason's memory of this deal tells us that these measurable quantities are all he can perceive. He is genuinely mystified at Caddy's outrage at seeing the baby under the terms as he has construed them. "It never occurred to me she wouldn't keep her promise and take that train. But I didn't know much about them [women] 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 . . ." (p. 223). In the interchange between them, each accuses the other of lying. Caddy has no idea of the mutiliation of Jason's ability to perceive. Were it not for the cluster arrangement of Jason's section, the reader would have no idea of his mutilation either; Jason would surely appear to be torturing Caddy with full knowledge of what he was doing. The structure leads the reader to understand both that Jason in his fragmentation cannot perceive the wholeness of human energy of emotion which constitutes Caddy's love for her baby and that the time and money he consciously uses to bully Caddy are themselves proof of their fragmentary existence in reality. They have power as Jason uses them simply because in the division fostered by Mrs. Compson they con-

stitute the only, albeit reduced, channel for Caddy's wholeness of love for her daughter. This is further demonstrated as Jason's chapter concludes.

Following this important birth-death cluster, Jason's experiences lead the reader to understand the bitter irony that Jason's materialist absolutes have no power over anything but the creative link between Caddy and Miss Quentin. There are no material phenomena which he can influence; his control exists only as the torment of human wholeness. The first incident in the third and final cluster is one in which Jason is able to cheat Miss Quentin out of forty dollars sent to her by Caddy, using his position as the only link between daughter and mother. Aside from this act of control, all is chaos.

Following his victory over Miss Quentin, Jason is forced to give more money to his parasitic uncle because of his mother's wishes to support the "last" of her family line--a parody of Compson idealism. Then he finds that his stock has dropped thirteen points. After this discovery, he finds himself chasing Miss Quentin and her boyfriend to the edge of town in his car. He gets out and wanders around a field in search of them, only to find himself stranded in a patch of poison oak, with a headache caused by the hot sun. Returning to his car, he discovers that Miss Quentin has let all the air out of his tires. Walking all the way to town, Jason arrives in time to learn that his stock has dropped a total of forty points, and that if he had not been chasing

Miss Quentin he would have learned what was happening in time to sell without loss.

The closure of Jason's section sums up the absurdity of his fragmented belief in the absolute reliability of the abstractions of materialist measure. The penultimate scene, at the Compson dinner table, involves Miss Quentin, Jason, and Mrs. Compson; Jason attacks Miss Quentin through mock concern that she has been given a good helping of dinner. With exaggerated formality, he inquires as to her satisfaction with each item on her plate. Finally he describes his pursuit of her and her boyfriend as if he were telling the story of a friend's experience. Quentin knows what he is talking about, but it is thinly veiled for Mrs. Compson. Hurt beyond limit, Miss Quentin says, "Why does he treat me like this, grandmother . . . I never hurt him" (p. 276). Mrs. Compson replies, "It's his bread you and I eat. It's only right that he should expect obedience from you" (p. 276). Typically Jason asserts himself through materialist measure--here, the money he pays for the food. Typically it is only in the relationship to human wholeness that the material power is effective; we are surely not witnessing pain caused by dependence on food.

When Miss Quentin bolts from the table, Mrs. Compson and Jason proceed to discuss control again. Mrs. Compson tells Jason that Caddy too could never be controlled and that that was the beginning of the trouble. Only Quentin could control Caddy, in Mrs. Compson's opinion: "He seemed

to be the only person she had any consideration for" (p. 278). Mrs. Compson also blames her husband for what she calls Caddy and Quentin's wildness. "They would always make interest with your father against me when I tried to correct them. He was always saying they didn't neet controlling, that they already knew what cleanliness and honesty were, which was all that anyone could hope to be taught" (p. 278). This sums up the situation. The immediate chaos bred by the Compson rationalized idealism and the materialist desperation it caused the family resulted in Caddy's disappearance and Miss Quentin's rebelliousness. But the results have taught none of the Compsons anything. Mrs. Compson is unaware of what she reveals through her statement.

The final fragment that closes Jason's section reasserts his belief that he has the power to set everything straight, as he visualizes time and money as his salvation. "And just let me have twenty-four hours without any damn New York Jew to advise me what to do. . . . I just want a chance to get my money back. And once I've done that they can bring all Beale Street and all Bedlam in here and two of them can sleep in my bed and another one can have my place at the table too" (p. 280). These are the closing words of Jason's section. But they are not the final words of the Compson destiny.[11]

The last section of the novel completes the creation of the Compson tragedy. The first three sections structure the reader's understanding toward comprehension of the

destructive implications of a dualist system of values imposed on the Compson destiny by the terms set by the Compson Creation/Fall. Dualism is not the special fiat of the Compsons, however. Spoade and Dalton Ames are exceptional loners briefly glimpsed as total beings, but many other figures external to the Compson Creation are clearly acting with divided perceptions of reality: Mrs. Bland, Julio, the Cambridge authorities, the assorted men in the Western Union Office who, like Jason, are also playing the stock market. Nevertheless, the reader sees in the fourth section that the anatomy of the Compson's decay is not mirrored in the larger social context. Society at large continues, though the Compsons do not. In the final section the gap between the Compsons' tragic microcosm and the general comic macrocosm is delineated and explained. The macrocosmic society and the Compson tragedy are symbiotic.

In the final section we are shown the parallel fragmented systems of materialism and transcendence represented in society as a whole by law and religion. Paradoxically, although the core dualisms of the larger institutions are the source of the Compson tragedy, they are the source of comedy in the communal sphere. The clusters lead the reader to perceive a relationship between the two. The communal preserves the terms of the Creation/Fall through its fragmented but continuous institutions, thus barring the apocalypse that would free the oppressed energy and wholeness of mankind. Communal continuity means individual fragmentation,

a symbiosis producing an endless cycle of Creation/Fall. On this basis, each new individual birth is a new occasion only for a further entrenchment of the Creation/Fall. This ironic partnership between the Compsons and the communal is the subject of the fourth section.

This final part suddenly reverses our view. No longer is the reader looking out from the inside of an individual at the larger scene in the fragmentary way in which it can be understood from a single, isolated position. All at once, he sees the individuals from the view of the larger communal organization. The reader sees, through the juxtaposition of the final section to the first three, a point of view radically reversed from the solipsism of the novel's previous sections. They explored the possibilities of contact with external reality from the point of view of a particular solipsism. In the fourth section, the reader is shown that the communal is nothing more than a group of solipsistically isolated individuals linked together by legal and religious institutions whose survival depends on the maintenance of fragmented individual solipsisms. This is an ironic interpretation of the convention of communal wholeness.

The reversal is communicated to the reader through the three clusters of this last section. The first (pp. 281-317) shows Jason's discovery of Miss Quentin's theft and flight and Dilsey's participations in the Easter service. The second (pp. 317-24) shows Jason's attempts to apprehend

Miss Quentin, first with the help of the law and then by his own efforts. The third closes the novel with the resolution of the Compson destiny, which is also the resolution between individual and communal dualisms.

The major event of the first cluster is the Easter sermon. It is the climax of Dilsey's morning, a morning of the usual frustration caused by the Compsons, through which Dilsey navigates, as she tells us, the best she can (p. 332). Her ability to extract any order from the solipsistic members of the family is cause for the reader's admiration. Dilsey is involved in concrete relation to the world and at first seems to represent the bloody but unbowed survival of the concreteness and energy in the young Caddy. Dilsey's concrete opposition to Mrs. Compson's abstraction is immediately presented to the reader. Mrs. Compson nags Dilsey about making sure that Luster dresses Benjy to get him ready for breakfast. Dilsey, unable to marshal Luster for his usual duties, finally agrees to go up herself and do it although she is in the middle of making breakfast. Mrs. Compson watches Dilsey move herself from step to step with great effort, allowing her to struggle for a while on the staircase. Then she says, "Are you going to wake him up just to dress him?" (p. 287). Dilsey weathers Mrs. Compson's sadistic application of her theoretical order and returns to preparing the morning meal. She overcomes the problems posed by the broken Compson clock, computing the right time with a compensation for the three-hour loss the

clock routinely registers. She readies herself, her family and Benjy for church, providing for contingencies by insisting that Luster bring along an umbrella to protect his new hat. Dilsey also exhibits the expansive love associated with Caddy. When Luster tries to feel superior to the obviously disturbed Compsons, Dilsey tells him he has "jes es much Compson devilment" (p. 292) as any of them. She rebukes her daughter Frony for her reticence about Benjy's presence at the church because he is a "looney." Dilsey sayd, "de good Lawd don't keer whether he smart or not. Don't nobody but white trash keer dat" (p. 306).

The first cluster apparently presents Dilsey as a unified palliative to the Compson dualism, but all this changes when she is shown in relation to the church and the Easter sermon. Juxtaposed to these, her former poise and energy are transformed in the reader's vision into dependence on an illusion of unity which masks the evils of dualistic fragmentation. The emotion generated in Dilsey by the sermon is obviously sincere; there are, however, a number of disturbing elements in the sermon and in the entire scene of the service which call upon the reader sadly to identify Dilsey as a part of the evil in the Compson tragedy.

Our first introduction to the church Dilsey attends sets the reader up for a critical look at it. The narrative voice strongly intimates that the major characteristic of this church is unreality, theatrical illusion. "Notched into a cut of red clay crowned with oaks the road appeared

to stop short off, like a cut ribbon. Beside it a weathered church lifted its crazy steeple like a painted cardboard set upon the ultimate edge of the flat earth, against the windy sunlight of space and April and a mid-morning filled with bells" (p. 308).

This prologue leads us to the Reverend Shegog's sermon. It is a message filled with paradox. Like the church itself, the sermon is mainly characterized by illusion. The central image of the Easter message is a baby Christ menaced by the Romans.

> "Look at dem little chillen settin dar. Jesus was was like dat once. He mammy suffered de glory en de pangs. Sometimes maybe she helt him at de nightfall, whilst de angels singing him to sleep, maybe she look out de do' en see de Roman po-lice passin." He tramped back and forth, mopping his face. "Listen, breddren! I sees de day. May'y settin in de do' wid Jesus on her lap, de little Jesus. Like dem chillen dar. I hears de angels singin de peaceful songs en de glory, I sees de closin eyes' sees Mary jump up, sees the sojer face: We gwine kill! We gwine kill you little Jesus . . ." (p. 312).

In addition to the fact that this Easter sermon makes the crucifixion and the resurrection anti-climactic, the scene it presents is purely extrapolation. It is not from the Bible. Despite these irregularities, its power over the congregation is great.

The reasons for its effectiveness lie in the context of the novel. This sermon brings into focus part of the final vision of The Sound and the Fury. First, coming at this point, after the presentation of the Compson experience, this version of the story of Jesus becomes a distillation of

the rational idealism of the Compsons. Embodied in the metaphor of the baby and the soldier is a restatement of Quentin's division of reality into an ideal, innocent shape and the degraded violence of the physical world. For the reader, this ideal has been established as a major cause of the tragedy of the Creation/Fall. The congregation, on the other hand, is shown so unified by this hollow image of dualism that the reader finds the first indication of the possibility of bridging the solipsistic loneliness of the individual in a united response. If the imposition of the ideal on the world is the cause for the destruction of human wholeness, the universal effects of its tragic results are grounds for a kind of communication and unity. The sermon reaffirms the life of the ideal that seemed as far as the reader was concerned to die in Quentin's death. Its resurrection is addressed to the reader, as are the bittersweet implications of this kind of communication. Though Dilsey's strength is the best human manifestation possible in the term of the Fall at the branch, the reader is shown that it innocently feeds on the evil in the Compson destiny. It is carrion strength.

Second, the intimations of divine sanction for this message are a distillation of Mrs. Compson's confused and misleading veiling with divine authority of her own responsibility for Compson values. Dilsey looks to the minister to instill the "fear of God into dese here triflin young niggers" (p. 306). The Sound and the Fury has brought the

reader to this terminal scene equipped to reject this sentiment; the novel has continually impressed on the reader both the negative effects of fear on man's condition and man's energy as the positive source of order. Indeed, the real strength of Shegog's sermon is impressed upon the reader as its thinly disguised energy. Although the characters seem to perceive the sermon in terms of the metaphor it communicates, the reader can see that its effect on the group is accomplished solely through the energy of the minister. He says that it is his memory of Christ that makes him able to transcend the human loneliness and bring all his congregation together. He tells them, "I got the recollection and the blood of the Lamb" (p. 310). This is, for obvious reasons, a patent falsehood. Of course he does not remember anything about the scene he transmits, neither as an incident from experience nor from the Bible. Significantly Shegog's refrain claims as part of his authority two things that Blake believed to be symptomatic of the dualistic perversion of Christianity: memory and blood sacrifice. Blake believed that memory, promoted beyond its worth through the dominion of Urizen, stood as a barrier to man's wholeness by making man too subject to the dead forms created to fill past needs. Blake also believed that the blood sacrifice represented in traditional Christianity in the Crucifixion was a part of the sadism of dualistic Christianity. He believed that Pauline Christianity represented the sort of vision that was responsible for Christ's martyrdom.[12] De-

spite Shegog's claim, what is more, it is clear to the reader that it is not memory nor blood sacrifice that Shegog has to give to his congregation. It is his energy that is the effective force.

The reader is told that Shegog is a shabbily dressed, undersized man with a "wizened face like a small, aged monkey" (p. 309). But as he begins to speak his voice transforms the physical world. "It sounded too big to have come from him and they listened at first through curiosity, as they would have to a monkey talking" (p. 309). As he continues, the reader is made to focus on the way Shegog transforms reality through his energy.

> He was like a small rock whelmed by the successive waves of his voice. With his body he seemed to feed that voice that, succubus like, had fleshed its teeth in him. And the congregation seemed to watch him 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 in chanting measures beyond the need for words, so that when he came to rest . . . his monkey face lifted and his whole attitude that of a serene, tortured crucifix that transcended its shabbiness . . . a long moaning expulsion of breath rose from them, and a woman's single soprano: "Yes, Jesus!" (p. 310).

There are two visions of salvation here. For the congregation and for Dilsey it is the attitude of the serene martyr recalling the fleshless ideal located in the superhuman. For the reader it is the transforming power of human energy in the combined forces of Shegog's body and spirit.[13]

If Dilsey and her religion that gives her strength feed on the evil in the world, the law is subsequently

placed as a communal complement to religion in perpetuating the evil consequences of the Fall. The second cluster concerns itself with Jason and his pursuit of his "fleeing niece" (p. 322). Just as the church uses the one truly effective power, human energy, albeit in disguise as the divine ideal, to preserve order, so the law is able to ensure the continuity of fallen society through human energy in disguise. The irony that we see in Jason's encounter with the law in his pursuit of Miss Quentin is that, though Jason invests the law with Miltonic, cosmic immanence, the sheriff he encounters reveals to the reader that the law is an inert set of rules, completely subject to human intervention.

The sheriff refuses to respond to Jason's demand that the law aid him. He bluntly tells Jason that he believes that if Miss Quentin has taken any money it was probably hers to begin with, and that Jason has driven her to it. The sheriff then takes refuge in Jason's lack of evidence that there was ever any money in the house, and says that it is none of the law's business to aid him. The law is clearly in the hands of the human being administering it. The sheriff ironically uses the materialist requirement of proof as a brake on Jason's materialist tendency to use Miss Quentin as just so much matter to be dealt with. The situation is one of materialism neutralizing materialism. But Jason transforms the sheriff's response into a cosmic one, just as the congregation transformed the minister's energy.

Jason responds to the sheriff's inertia by visualizing himself as the insurgent Satan challenging God, "thinking of himself, his file of soldiers with the manacled sheriff in the rear, dragging Omnipotence down from his throne, if necessary, of the embattled legions of both hell and heaven through which he tore his way and put his hands at last on his fleeing niece" (p. 322). This is the complement to Shegog's visualization of the soldiers menacing Jesus. In both cases a human force is abstracted into a deity. Both religion and law represent dualism as a homeopathic cure for dualism: a little of the same poison that caused the problem. A morsel of the rational ideal is used to bridge the division caused by the imposition of the rational ideal. Some materialism is used to check the rapacious attitudes people have toward each other because of materialism. Thus, although in the particularity of the Compson situation duality is ruinous, in the cosmic world at large duality ensures continuity.[14]

Faulkner's vision is a vision of survival underneath which the tragic vision looms. There is existence, but no redemption. Paradoxically, human energy survives only as it destroys itself. This is the substance of the final closure of the novel (pp. 329-36). In the final cluster, Jason slams Benjy's world back into order by forcefully rerouting the buggy Luster has mistakenly driven to the right of the town monument. Benjy bellowing, Jason leaps in godlike fury to establish order. But, triumphant in its bravado, the

order achieved amounts to virtually nothing. It is to this barren order that the original creative possibilities of the Compsons have been reduced. A synecdoche of the tragic substratum of civilization, this scene contains negative space; it is the emblem of Caddy's absence. Her absence, the direct cause of Miss Quentin's degeneration, and thus the end of the Compson family is present in this image of sterility and empty order, whose center is a communal idol.

Blakean Mythology: The Christ Motif and the Apocalypse

In The Sound and the Fury, part of the mythology of individual and communal Creation/Fall is the Crucifixion; just as the novel redefines the Creation and the Fall, so it also redefines the Crucifixion. To begin with, the necessary order of the fragments and clusters redefines the place of man's energy with respect to Original Sin in the Fall. Instead of being its cause, energy is the victim of the Fall. Of necessity, this rearrangement redefines the Satanic; no longer is the Satanic to be seen as the use of energy, but rather as the agent of division of energy's wholeness. The crucifixion must also be affected by this revision. The imaginative insights of the clusters transform the Savior from the image of suffering, passive affliction by the hostile energy of the physical world, as Shegog portrays him, into immediate human energy tormented by the false divisions of dualism. The redefinition of the Crucifixion runs simul-

taneously with the necessary order of the clusters in harmonic parallel to the sequence growing out of the episode at the branch. The redefinition involves a juxtaposition between detached images of "Christ symbols" surrounding Benjy and Caddy's immediate energy and love, Blake's vision of the essential human Christ.

In the total imaginative transformation of the Compson destiny, Caddy emerges as Christ in the Blakean sense. She is, like Blake's Christ, forgiveness, creation, and wholeness. She is also, like Blake's Christ, perceived as Satan by the prevailing dualistic world. Under the burden of Quentin's morality and Jason's materialism, derived from the original confused abstraction of Mrs. Compson, Caddy is castigated and derided. She performs the Blakean acts of Christ in the context of the dualistic society's Hell and is condemned as Satan. As Blake formulates it, "In Hell all is Self Righteousness there is no such thing as the forgiveness of Sin he who does Forgive Sin is Crucified as an abettor of Criminals & he who performs Works of Mercy in any shape whatever is punished & if possible destroyd not thro Envy or Hatred or Malice but thro self Righteousness that thinks it does God service which God is Satan."[15]

The novel's particular address to the reader's imagination concerning the matter of the Christ figure is coupled, appropriately, with an attempt to liberate the imagination from dead symbols, an act which in the Blakean reference is an important part of Christ's saving function

in man. The Characters' notions about Christ illustrate their problems with energy and wholeness. They all visualize Christ, if they visualize him at all, as some manifestation of the physical world's victim. The existence of the traditional symbols of Christ in the text is a complex matter which has been dealt with too easily by some critics. Waggoner, among many critics, has pointed out the Christ symbols that surround Benjy, "he is thirty-three, the story he tells first culminates on Easter . . . and the jimson weed he sometimes plays with has another local name, angel's trumpet."[16] Waggoner, however, has not been careful about restricting his remarks concerning these symbols to the effect they have on the reader. There is no indication that the characters notice any of this. They think of Benjy's age only in terms of his retardation, and of the jimson weed as it pacifies him. Benjy's connection with Easter is not noticed by any of those around him. If these symbols have any function it is only with reference to the reader.

The novel emphasizes to the reader that the received forms that surround Benjy are irrelevant to the essential Christ. Further, it is because these empty symbols are all the Compson world possesses of salvation that Christ emerges for them in the image of passivity and impotence. In the course of Quentin's and Jason's section, the decorative forms with which the saving energies are traditionally associated are emptied of meaning. When Quentin looks at his watch after shattering the crystal and ripping off the hands,

he notes: "the watch ticked on. I turned the face up, the blank dial with little wheels clicking and clicking behind it, not knowing any better. Jesus walking on Galilee and Washington not telling any lies" (p. 99). The moralized fable has become for Quentin the senseless movement of gears: empty structure. By the end of the section, the senseless form has been replaced by money: "watching pennies has healed more scars than Jesus" (p. 196). By the end of Jason's section, the emptied form is totally peripheral. Jason first uses the Bible as a tool of his will, coercing Dilsey into cooperating with him in barring Caddy from her baby by using a passage from the Bible about leprosy (p. 224). Jason winds up his section by castigating the Methodist minister for not poisoning the pigeons around the church to prevent their drippings from impairing the operation of the church clock. "Talking about peace on earth good will toward all and not a sparrow can fall to earth. But what does he care how thick they get, he hasn't got anything to do. What does he care what time it is" (p. 264). Jason's ordering of priorities between the clock and the sign of the Holy Ghost, which is not in any way an immediate sign for him, marks the ultimate impotence of the traditional symbols. This is a tragedy both of the individual and the community. Empty, or perhaps not even present except as wisps in the consciousness of some characters, the received forms in their impotence are another reason for the congregation's experience of the truth through Shegog's metaphor

of the doomed baby. Dilsey, brought to tears by the metaphor, also perceives, darkly, a truth when she finds Benjy a cognate of that metaphor; for he is indeed impotent and empty like the received idea of salvation (p. 333). The series of signs to the reader of the emptiness of the received religious forms, and the image of Christ in particular, is summed up in the very last cluster of the novel when Dilsey puts Benjy into the carriage for the illfated ride around the monument. She gives him not a jimson weed to hold, but a broken narcissus (p. 333). In the context of the novel, Benjy represents, as Dilsey calls him, "de Lawd's chile" (p. 333). The reader's imagination is asked to transform this false identification into a true vision of a dualistic worship of self-enclosed, mutilated humanity.

The imagination is similarly asked to see Caddy, neglected and accused performing the essential acts of salvation: unity and love. A Blakean Christ, the scapegoat for the sins of her Satanic accusers, in fact she is endowed with a crown of thorns when Quentin rubs her head in the grass for her sexual adventures (p. 153). Later (p. 170) he slaps her face, to which she replies, "poor Quentin," a literal dramatization of turning the other cheek. Jason betrays her for her money. These forms are not empty, but part of Caddy's continuous outpouring of energy and love despite the evil mutilation by dualism of the world in which she lives.

Miss Quentin's rebellion is also addressed to the reader as a variation of the crucifixion. In Jason's sec-

tion, the mother and daughter are juxtaposed in scenes of Jason's gouging money from them through the power of their connection with each other. They react similarly. Jason himself informs the reader of the resemblances between their responses when he describes Miss Quentin's reaction to his victory over her, "she just stood there with her head bent and the pen shaking in her hand. Just like her mother. 'Oh, God,' she says, 'oh, God,'" (p. 233). There is some resemblance here between the desolation of these women and the desolation of Christ's "My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me?" (Mark: 15:34). The progression from Caddy to her daughter implies that in imaginative terms the Crucifixion is not a chronological event but an ongoing process, pitting energy against the repressiveness of abstraction, the resolution of which in Miss Quentin's departure is the final event of the particular tragedy of the Compsons' Creation/Fall.

But, if Caddy and Miss Quentin were debased and driven to leave the Compsons, they do not leave the reader. Their mere existence has been enough because, through the imaginative scope of The Sound and the Fury, perception about the truth of their existence liberates the reader's imagination. The reader's imagination is, as in Blake's works, the Ishmael-hero of the novel. When Blake's Ishmael tells his tale, however, it is one of full apocalyptic redemption. The terminus of The Sound and the Fury is not fully Blakean. Needless to say, if Blakean reversals of the

traditional interpretations of Biblical Creation, Fall and Crucifixion underlie the cluster structure relating the Compson history, the Faulknerian twist at the end is a reversal of Revelation. The Apocalypse doesn't take place; the imagination is liberated into a vision of its own defeat. The imagination's possible petrifaction by the vision of its own demise is forestalled by the novel's humor to protect it from the image of its own tragedy.[17]

The reader may experience consternation at the presence of humor at the end of the novel, but the final scene has a kind of slapstick quality which although unexpected, has been prepared for. Laughter is presented in the course of the novel as the only effective weapon man has in his fallen situation. In the Benjy section, T. P. laughs when he is drunk at Caddy's wedding; it is the first instance of laughter in the novel, a spontaneous reaction to the division brought about by the alcohol. There are only two other instances of laughter in the novel and they are also spontaneous reactions to division, but on these occasions to the more serious and permanent division of dualism. In Quentin's section, he laughs when the sheriff informs him that Julio intends to charge him with "meditated criminal assault" (p. 159). In Jason's section, Caddy laughs when Jason tells her that the situation regarding her baby is easy for her because, unlike Jason himself, for whom money and respectability are involved, "You haven't got anything at stake" (p. 227). All three incidents of laughter are described as hav-

ing lives of their own apart from the will of the person who laughs. Only T. P. allows his laughter full expression. Quentin and Caddy stifle theirs out of respect for the dualist insistence from their audiences that it is out of place. T. P.'s release through laughter and Quentin's as well as Caddy's stifled defeat should be seen in relation to the one direct statement about laughter in the novel, which is enunciated by Jason.

Jason associates laughter with successful defiance at the beginning of his section, when he says to Mrs. Compson that every time he tries to discipline Miss Quentin "You come butting in and then she gives us both the laugh" (p. 199). The sparing use of laughter and its crucial placement make each occasion of laughter and Jason's statement combine to prefigure the significance of the seemingly inappropriate tone at the novel's end.

Jason's own balance is maintained in the face of his confusion by his own cynical and hostile humor. Jason's division from reality is a constant source of trial to him which he cannot ameliorate through his destructively limited set of rational constructions. As an alternative to his enervating anger and violence, in the midst of his chaos, Jason uses humor to establish his balance. Examples abound on every page. One excellent example is Jason's caustic reaction to his predicament when he is chasing Miss Quentin. "I had gotten beggar lice and twigs and stuff all over me . . . and then I happened to look around and I had my hand

right on a bunch of poison oak. The only thing I couldn't understand was why it was just poison oak and not a snake or something" (p. 258). This is Jason's typical way of coping with his continually distressing reality. Laughter is continuity in the dualist-imposed discontinuity of partial perception. The end of the novel finds the imagination witnessing its own defeat; the comic tone allows the imagination occasion for laughter as its demise is reflected. Laughter turns the imagination into a Phoenix, rising from its own ashes, prevailing at the moment of its own defeat. This is a completely Blakean moment, even though as a closure it falls well short of the Blakean closure. It affirms the Blakean paradox of the imagination as Harold Bloom describes it: "The paradox of the Imagination, to Blake, is that it survives these wars . . . that have already slain the wholeness of man. It survives because it is one with the Holy Ghost; it is what remains of divinity in man."[18]

Thus, The Sound and the Fury is of the "devil's party" in the Blakean sense. It stands against the divisive tyranny of rationality. Never an encomium of irrationality, the novel rears up against dualistic abstraction as an affirmation of the most comprehensive of orderly human faculties, the imagination. From the vantage point of that faculty, reason is a limited human power whose inappropriate elevation creates Hell on Earth. In that context, Caddy is Satan to Dilsey, and a "whore" and a "bitch" to her

brothers. The reader, raised out of Hell by the imaginative scope of the novel, sees Caddy and her daughter as grains of Blakean hope.

Notes to Chapter III

[1]The concept of primary creation has been explored before in connection with Faulkner's work. Robbe-Grillet discusses Faulkner's use of the novel to create its own reality rather than to re-create mimetically a pre-existing reality. He also discusses the hostility in this fictional approach to memory as the mother of the muses (For a New Novel, trans. Richard Howard [New York: Grove Press, 1965], pp. 128-54). Robbe-Grillet extends this intuition far beyond what I believe is its applicability to Faulkner. He believes that the hostility to memory includes its destruction through the technique of the fiction, leaving only a present in which memory and the past do not exist. I believe that he misunderstands the purpose of cosmic creation in The Sound and the Fury, to apply his general theory to the case in point. In my opinion, the technique of primary creation in the novel is effective in showing the way in which man gives overwhelming reality to the two ephemera of memory and the past.

[2]Conrad Aiken, "William Faulkner: The Novel as Form," William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga Vickery (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1960), p. 653. Aiken's intuition is superior to any structural comment since. Unfortunately, most structural criticism of the novel refuses to pay attention to the actual order in which the pieces are presented. For example, Vickery claims that the structure of the novel is "reflected in the organization of events in Benjy's section the night of Damuddy's death" (The Novels of William Faulkner [Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959], p. 28). She is correct in perceiving that the relationships between the Compsons are reflected in the events of that night. The structure of the novel is not.

[3]I am not using the appendix which Faulkner wrote for the Portable Faulkner and what has since been appended to the text of The Sound and the Fury. It was written over twenty years after the novel, and I do not think that it provides us much comment on the novel as it does evidence for the contrast between Faulkner's discursive powers and his imagination.

[4]The logic of the order of The Sound and the Fury has drawn various comments from the critics. Vickery (p. 32) sees it as a progression from subjectivity to objectivity. Waggoner says that the order is a progression from concrete to abstract (William Faulkner: From Jefferson to

the World [Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1959], p. 60). Peter Swiggart thinks that the opening and closing monologues provide the framework of values by which to judge the events of Compson life (The Art of Faulkner's Novels [Austin: University of Texas Press], p. 88). Jean-Paul Sartre, without going into details, implies that the order is necessary to communicate a belief that man is lost in his past and that the future and present are thereby rendered absurd ("Time in Faulkner: The Sound and the Fury," William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, pp. 225-32). Carvel Collins thinks that the section corresponds to the Freudian organization of the mind: Benjy, Id; Quentin, Ego; Jason, Super-Ego. He believes that these three are juxtaposed against Dilsey's wholeness in the last section ("The Interior Monologues of The Sound and the Fury," English Institute Essays, 1952, ed. Alan S. Downer [New York: Columbia University Press, 1954], pp. 29-35). Richard Adams likes Collins' theory about the Freudian pattern. He sees the various pieces of the mind as a set of static attitudes juxtaposed against the underground stream of energy, Caddy as libido, that is finally thwarted (Faulkner: Myth and Motion [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968], pp. 225-26). Howe considers this question at length. His conclusions are complex, but ultimately betray the unstated implication that Faulkner could have stopped writing after he finished Benjy's section. He believes that Benjy's inability to impose value judgments makes him the most objective witness of the Compson history, his continuous presence, the most comprehensive witness. This makes him, in Howe's opinion the logical choice to begin the novel. Howe, having stated that Jason is too warped and Quentin too much in the past to be in Benjy's position, leaves unanswered and unasked a question which shadows this part of his explication: why these qualities do not disqualify Quentin and Jason from any narrative function (William Faulkner, A Critical Interpretation [New York: Random House, 1951], p. 158). Most serious of all the problems posed by these conflicting interpretations of the reason for the order of the monologues is that not one of them accounts for the necessity of presenting them in the sequence in which they occur. Vickery, for example, having said that the monologues progress from subjective to objective, fails to give any reason why this progression is necessary to the novel, or why a progression in the opposite direction would not be appropriate. The same problem obtains for each of these critical interpretations.

[5]William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying (New York: The Modern Library, 1946), p. 24. All subsequent citations from this edition will be accompanied with parenthetical page reference in my text.

[6]Different as Howe and Slatoff's views are, they

have both reached the conclusion that Mrs. Compson is silly (Howe, p. 158, and Slatoff, The Quest for Failure [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960], p. 153). Bloom discusses the Female Will using both Enitharmon's role in Europe and Enion's role in The Four Zoas as examples that recall Mrs. Compson (Blake's Apocalypse [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963], pp. 150-51, 197).

[7]The Creation/Fall occurs in Blake in The Book of Urizen, and at the beginning of The Four Zoas (The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. David V. Erdman, commentary Harold Bloom [New York: Doubleday and Co., 1970], pp. 69-82, 297-300). Bloom discusses this radical view of Creation (pp. 164-69, 193-209).

[8]The close relationship between the Compson Creation/Fall and Caddy's evil marriage has a Blakean parallel in The Four Zoas. In Chapter I of that epic, after Enion creates the natural cycle she creates Enitharmon and Los, whose marriage quickly follows the Creation/Fall. This marriage is blessed by Urizen, and indeed is part of the establishment of his usurpation of power. The wedding is characterized by exploitation, sadism, and blood sacrifice (Blake, The Four Zoas, pp. 300-06).

[9]Michael Millgate also discusses Caddy's promiscuity as a justified, unplanned defiance of impossible conditions (The Achievement of William Faulkner [London: Constable, 1966]).

[10]On the whole, the critics perceive Mr. Compson as just such a person as I have described, though he is not given much attention in the novel. "Father and son are, in any case, too much alike in their fondness for words, for abstractions, and in choosing to evade life" (Millgate, p. 96). Adams sums Mr. Compson up as an "attractive illustration of the aristocratic ideal, but he is completely ineffective" (p. 241). The Blakean parallel to which I refer, Urizen's confusion, can be found in Night the Eighth of The Four Zoas (Blake, p. 367).

[11]Critical evaluation of Quentin and Jason is quite uniform. All the critics discuss Quentin's idealism and Jason's materialism. In reference to Quentin, Howe thinks that Faulkner intended a nobility for Quentin that the author failed to achieve for him (pp. 167-71). Vickery and Adams concentrate on the rigidity which Quentin's idealism forces on him (Vickery, pp. 36-37); Adams, p. 225). Slatoff has an intuition parallel to Howe's that Faulkner seems to believe that he is presenting a tragic hero when in fact the reader experiences a candidate for the psychiatrist's couch (p. 153). Swiggart concentrates on Quentin's self-deception.

He believes that Quentin's ideals provide an escape from a reality that he cannot face (pp. 93-101).

Jason's self-seeking materialism is uniformly perceived by Vickery (pp. 41-42), Adams (p. 240), Waggoner (p. 55), Swiggart (p. 103). Slatoff qualifies his judgment of Jason because of his "trying life" (p. 153). None of these critics comes to grips with the significant order of either section, an order which defines the interrelationship between the two kinds of views. All the above critics contrast the two brothers. Only Millgate compares them: "When the action shifts to Jason and his vain pursuit of Quentin we notice that many of his experiences have something in common with Quentin's experiences during the last day of life--there are, for example, the journeyings back and forth, the moments of violence, the unsatisfactory brushes with representatives of the law--and we come to recognize that, for all the differences between them, both brothers display a similar obsessiveness and fundamental irrationality" (p. 101). Millgate's good intuition is betrayed by his vague contact with the text. In his involvement with impressionistic examples, he fails to note the fundamental, inadvertent collusion between the brothers in Caddy's destruction.

[12]Blake's description of the neglect of the true Christ is quoted from A Vision of the Last Judgment (pp. 544-55). Blake's belief in the perversion of Christ's sacrifice in conventional Christian teachings is commented upon by Bloom (pp. 389, 409, 411).

[13]My interpretation of Dilsey's place in the novel and of her relationship to the sermon is the single specific point in my theory most in opposition to general critical opinion. This is almost uniform in finding in Dilsey the unitive love that I think the novel locates in Caddy. There is also a good deal of criticism which describes the sermon in redemptive terms. Collins believes that Dilsey's wholeness is juxtaposed to the mutiliated Compson sons (pp. 53-56). Swiggart says that Dilsey's "mere presence, like Benjy's is a moral comment upon the behavior of the other characters" (pp. 105-6). Vickery (p. 48) believes that there is no doubt that Dilsey is an ethical norm, a challenge to Jason's world by her very existence. She adds (p. 49) that Dilsey's participation in the Easter service is the one meaningful ritual in the book, and talks of Dilsey's triumph of peace. Slatoff and Millgate, however, qualify their reading of Dilsey as a positive figure. Slatoff remarks that Dilsey is decent and loyal, but also ineffectual in the larger sense (p. 153), a point echoed by Millgate. Millgate discusses the temptation to find reassurance in Dilsey but concludes that her endurance lies in her submission to the "tedious, trivial and wilfully inconsiderate

demands made upon her by the Compson family . . ." (p. 101). Slatoff and Millgate's qualifications are well taken, but come nowhere near my reservations. My quarrel with received critical opinion is that Dilsey's reaction to the sermon places her, not as one in opposition to the Compson blight, but as a devoted participant in the communal solipsism that it depends on.

[14]The specific use of black religion and white law to make the point about the communal forces at work in the reduction of the Compsons to barrenness is an incipient presence of a theme that becomes very important later in Light in August and Absalom, Absalom!. It will be discussed extensively in the next chapters but should be touched upon here. The theme, barely present in The Sound and the Fury, concerns a falsely imposed division in the communal structure between black and white. The complementary relationship between black religion and white law here in the last section of the novel implies that there is a wholeness in their conjunction that the appearances of dualism deny. This is also indicated in the scene in Dilsey's church when during the sermon Shegog's voice is transformed from what is pointedly referred to as a white man's voice into what is directly presented and referred to as negroid dialect.

[15]Blake, p. 554.

[16]Waggoner, p. 44.

[17]Perhaps it may be useful to recall that Nietzsche also perceived laughter as a weapon. In Thus Spake Zarathustra, Nietzsche uses laughter to protect his superman by annihilating the "lesser man" in and around the superman (Thus Spake Zarathustra, trans. Thomas Common [New York: The Modern Library, n.d.]). Nietzsche had a great deal in common with Blake, particularly with reference to the integration of man's mind and body, but failed to be, in terms of Blakean thought, on guard against the danger of solipsism. Thus in Nietzsche, laughter typically is a technique of isolation. The Blakean horror of the self-enclosed personality is evident in Faulkner's use of laughter as a bond between imaginations.

[18]Bloom, p. 378.

CHAPTER IV

LIGHT IN AUGUST

As is the case with The Sound and the Fury, criticism of Light in August has bogged down with respect to its structure. Confusion has impaired understanding of the novel's wholeness, though its power has been widely admired.[1] In the interest of relieving this situation, the Blakean exploration of Light in August that will follow yields both a fully coherent structure and a unified vision. To avoid confusion, I shall proceed with my Blakean assumptions in the text of the chapter, and reserve other critics' interpretive structures for discussion in my footnotes, where I will make many specific comparisons. My exploration will show that the structure of Light in August is best considered neither in terms of the cog-and-wheel of the well plotted novel, nor the beads-on-the-string of the picaresque novel, nor even the Blakean inversion of the Creation that is The Sound and the Fury, but rather in terms of another Blakean inversion.

The elements of Light in August cohere structurally as a Blakean inversion of the apocalypse. As we shall see, during the course of the novel the destruction of the fallen world that is supposed to disclose the heart of light does not take place, but instead ironically discloses the renewed vigor of fallen existence. The scene fragments in Light in

August are structured to lead the reader to a vision of what has bereft Faulkner's fictional world of the revelation that should accompany apocalypse. The explanation lies in the characters' misguided, unintentional worship of a false deity, in Blakean terms, a transcendent general form. The consequences of their reverence are implicit and explicit crucifixion of the creative particularity of human life. The vision of Light in August reveals the inordinate respect paid to general abstractions as a kind of murder of the specificity of spontaneous life. The vision in Faulkner's novel equates this murder, as Blake does in his epics with the murder of the human Christ by the inappropriately deified limitations of reason.

The structure of Light in August leads the reader to a world everywhere involved in abstract Certainty which continually denies the particularity of life. This abstraction gives the illusion of explaining and organizing life while it obscures and mutilates immediate reality. Producing pseudo-form, reducing complexity to its own limits, Certainty makes a reduced abstract spectrum appear as if it were total reality. The reader's understanding of this principle, to which the characters relate as if to a Deity, is the purpose of this vision.

In Blake, the principle I am here calling Certainty exists as the Covering Cherub. Blake's description of the attributes of this deity as the point of redemption in Chapter 4 of Jerusalem sums up the revelation of the whole of

Light in August. Los, the redeemed artist, reaches the height of his powers when he is finally able to address the Cherub as a "fiend of righteousness":

. . . so he who wishes to see a Vision; a perfect Whole
Must see it in its Minute Particulars; Organized and Not as
Thou
O Fiend of Righteousness pretendest; thine is a Disorganized
And snowy cloud: brooker of tempests & destructive War.
You smile with pomp & rigor: you talk of benevolence &
virtue!
I act with benevolence & virtue and get murderd time after
time
You accumulate Particulars, & murder by analyzing, that you
May take the aggregate & you call the aggregate Moral Law:
And you call that Swelld & bloated Form; a Minute Particular.
But General Forms have their vitality in Particulars: & every
Particular is a Man; a Divine Member of the Divine Jesus.[2]

When Los can see that generalized abstraction is not only removed from the immediacy of the human moment, but also, given too much power, capable of destroying it, he is well on his way to redemption. The attentive reader may emerge from Light in August with both insights, but the characters, vehicles for his instruction, remain in the prisons of their categories. The revelations in Light in August are lost on the characters, but, as in The Sound and the Fury, hope for humanity lies in the possible enlightenment of the reader.

In order to illuminate this vision, the structure of Light in August organizes the exposition of events so that the role of abstract Certainty is of foremost importance, and so that its ramifications, unseen by the characters, are available to the reader.[3] The first section of this chapter will explicate the necessary structure of the novel that enables the reader to comprehend the role of generality and

abstraction; the second will examine the Blakean inversions of mythology that have baffled the critics of Light in August. Thus as part of his understanding of the role of Certainty, the reader is exposed to its power as the basis of the conventional, transcendent mythos, which the novel juxtaposes to the more humanizing Blakean concepts of divinity. This second section will also discuss the place of the laughter and humor at the end of this novel which affirm the Blakean power of vision in Light in August.

Structure

Light in August consists of four significant clusters. The first cluster, Chapters 1-5, focuses the reader on an omnipotent Certainty that makes abstract order both possible and important to the characters, though they are not aware of this ruling principle. The necessary order of the remaining clusters places the characters' Certainty so as to reveal its ramifications, which become more and more terrible. The juxtaposition of scene fragments at the beginning of Light in August inducts the reader into his travels through the world of the novel by making the role of Certainty the center of his perception and at the same time showing him how little consciousness the characters have of what the reader is asked to see as the center of their lives.

Chapter 1 begins in isolated tranquillity; it places the reader in the midst of Lena's quiet placidity. The reader's focus is then rapidly moved to the details of dis-

cord and discontinuity in Lena's past and present; consequently, her original serenity appears as a general and detached calm that ignores the particulars of her life. What is more, all the characters the reader meets are enveloped in that sort of calm. This serenity that does not correspond to details in immediate life is not just Lena's, but the perceived landscape of the novel's world. Only the reader seems to be aware of a myriad of details that exist apparently unperceived by the characters, as he is made aware that the novel's world is permeated by an abstract principle of Certainty that blots out all vivacious reality with quiet, generalized order.

In the opening lines the reader learns that "SITTING BESIDE THE ROAD, WATCHING THE WAGON MOUNT the hill toward her, Lena thinks, 'I have come from Alabama: a fur piece. All the way from Alabama a-walking. A fur piece.'"[4] Her thoughts are simple and quiet, but the confidence they might inspire is undermined by the reader's subsequent exposure to Lena.

The voice of the anonymous narrator, whose function is not to organize the sequence of events but rather to give details and particulars the characters cannot, or do not, see, communicates a series of anecdotes from Lena's childhood. First, the reader is told how Lena used to travel to a tiny town from her even more isolated country home and ask to get out of the wagon at the edge of the town, putting on her shoes to enter it on foot. Her father's assumption was

that Lena wanted to experience the smooth sidewalks of the town, but, as the narrator informs the reader, she is far away from the concrete details of her circumstances, "it was because she believed that the people who saw her and whom she passed on foot would believe that she lived in the town too" (p. 3). Lena's predication of abstraction as immediate reality in this anecdote is repeated in the next fragment that the narration conveys.

The succeeding anecdote is a thumbnail sketch of the summer when both Lena's parents died. Her mother, dying, told Lena to take care of her father; her father, dying, told her to go to the home of a brother whom she did not really know. Lena again is presented to the reader in a kind of tranquil abstraction from the particular details of her circumstance. Her serene obedience to her instructions seems to indicate her total enclosure within their narrow confines, to indicate her obliviousness to the particulars of her loss of every touchstone in her existence.

The history of Lena's present journey follows; it is as disconnected from her calm description of her journey at the beginning of the novel as her serenity was from the details of her circumstance on entering town as a child or facing the death of her parents. The reader learns that, living in her brother's home in a backwoods timbertown, Lena made a chance acquaintance with an itinerant mill worker that produced an accidental pregnancy. Though Lena's lover left town promising to send for her, word from him never

arrived. The reader further learns that in the last weeks of her pregnancy, Lena, knowing nothing about the whereabouts of her erstwhile lover, began her present journey to find him. But again the reader is impressed with the way in which lack of particularity characterizes Lena's tranquility. We see that without dwelling for a moment on the frustrating, inconclusive reality of her travels, she makes the abstract certainty of reunion with her lover, Lucas Burch, and their subsequent happy home and family the center of her perception.

As the chapter continues, Lena approaches the town of Jefferson, meeting people who sometimes remain anonymous for the reader and sometimes are specifically identified. Her encounters lead Lena to believe that she is about to meet Lucas Burch in Jefferson because people along the way have told her that a man named "Bunch" works in the planing mill there. This non sequitur, which guides Lena to Jefferson, emphasizes again how little particularity means to her calm, abstract organization of reality (p. 21). But as the people she meets along the way laugh at Lena for her obvious delusions, they too exhibit similar detachment.

For example, Henry Armstid, who picks Lena up on the road and takes her home for a rest before the last leg of her trip to Jefferson, simultaneously judges her lack of realism and exhibits his own. After thinking to himself in great detail about how the difference between men and women is exemplified by how differently they will treat a woman

like Lena, pregnant and unmarried, he calmly contradicts his generality with his particular remarks to Lena, while his detached belief in his abstract characterization remains unruffled. Assuming that men will be kind to Lena and that good women never will, he very unkindly digs at Lena about how obvious it is that she has been abandoned in her pregnancy by the father of her unborn child (p. 11).

The particular unkindness of this remark strikes only the reader, for Armstid continues to think about how kind men will be and Lena does not react to the barb in the remark.

Armstid then offers, kindly, to take Lena home for the night to ease the obvious burden of her trip, all the while thinking how his wife Martha, certainly a good woman in his eyes, will say something in opposition to his fait accompli. Nevertheless, when he gets to the house he abandons all responsibility for his "kind" act, leaving Martha to care for Lena, which she does. Again the reader sees a situation in which particularity is lost to the perceptions of the characters. The particular Martha whom the reader sees has little to do with Henry's abstractions about her, just as she seems to have little to do with Lena's abstract focus on life. While Martha is ministering to Lena's needs, she asks the young woman a number of questions which focus on the particulars of Lena's situation. All these particulars lead to the conclusion that Lena has been abandoned, but Lena will not focus on them or on what Martha is saying.

For example, when Lena tells Martha that Lucas had found out abruptly that he had to leave town, Martha asks if this happened on the night Lena told him about her pregnancy, but Lena refuses to respond to the question and does not even seem to focus her attention on what Martha has said (p. 16). All calm and Certainty, Lena tranquilly narrates the story of Lucas' departure, abstracting all the particulars until she makes them add up to her abstract belief, "I reckon a family ought to be all together when a chap comes. 'Specially the first one. I reckon the Lord will see to that" (p. 18). Later, when Armstid is alone with his wife, he again seems unable to perceive his wife's particularity. As she brusquely breaks a bank she has had for years, rifling the hoard of her hard-gotten egg money for Lena, a stranger, Armstid chattily asks what she is doing and on finding out makes a few bland remarks to the effect that she can do what she pleases with the money since she has worked so hard for it (p. 19). Blotted out by abstract order, which does not allow Henry to perceive Martha's kindness to a woman like Lena, the particularity is again lost, except to the reader.

Lena continues her journey to Jefferson, and the reader sees through her encounters with other townspeople more instances in which abstract Certainties appear to becloud the vision of the characters. This process is climaxed at the end of the chapter while Lena is riding in a wagon that will take her into Jefferson itself by the presence of a great column of smoke on the horizon. To the reader an

obvious sign of enormous destruction, its particularity is swallowed up by the peace and Certainty of both Lena and the anonymous man driving the wagon; neither reacts to the portent of immediate danger.

Chapter 2 continues the action begun in the first chapter, since it shows the reader how Lena arrived at the planing mill to discover that she is indeed meeting Bunch and not Burch, but this progress is less important than the novel's depiction of the characters' cognitive modes. The details of Chapter 2, as they are ordered, bear on the reader's awakening to how the abstract character of Certainty precludes perception of all unique immediate existence that is outside its narrow order. The chapter begins by detailing how Bryon Bunch and the men at the planing mill deal with the disruptive arrival of one stranger and then another; it finishes with Byron's attempt to deal with a third particular presence strange to the usual order of his existence, Lena Grove.

We learn that the first stranger, Joe Christmas, arrived at the planing mill three years before Lena. He is presented to the reader, in the few descriptive opening remarks about him, predominantly in terms of his particularity, his resistance to convention's absorption of the individual. "And the group of men at work in the planer shed looked up, and saw the stranger. . . . He did not look like a professional hobo in his professional rags, but there was something definitely rootless about him, as though no town nor

city was his, no street, no walls, no square of earth his home. And he carried his knowledge with him always as though it were a banner, with a quality ruthless, lonely, and almost proud" (p. 27).

The details of Joe's initiation into Jefferson life are the details of the closing of oblivion over his particular offense to the general quiet Certainty of the planing mill. Both Christmas and the men establish complementary modes of ignoring each other. The reader sees the particularity of Joe Christmas' insolent face and formal, worn attire provoke comment from his fellow workers, on whom his stubborn isolation from their general mass works as an irritant. The reader is also shown Joe Christmas ignoring the existence of the general forms of sociability of his fellows. Byron, eating lunch, looks up, sensing a presence, and finds that "A short distance away the stranger was leaning against a post, smoking. Byron knew that he had been there when he entered, and would not even bother to go away. Or worse: that he had come there deliberately, ignoring Byron as if he were another post" (p. 30). At this point nothing further is known about Christmas' particular existence, including where he lives, and this prevents him from becoming any serious challenge to the abstract, accustomed order of the town.

The arrival of another immediate disruption revivifies the issue of Christmas' anomalous presence. The reader learns that a man who called himself Joe Brown arrived six

months before Lena, a man whose disruption of peace and Certainty was loud, but trivial.

> The new hand went down in the sawdust pile with Christmas. With a lot of motion to it, telling everybody who he was, and where he had been, in a tone that carried within itself its own confounding and mendacity . . . nobody cared. . . . Because wherever he came from and where he had been, a man knew that he was just living on the country like a locust. It was as though he had been doing it for so long now that all of him had become scattered and diffused and now there was nothing left but the transparent and weightless shell blown oblivious and without destination upon whatever wind (pp. 32-33).

Brown's arrival is followed by a detailed account of the reaction of the men to his presence among them. To the reader it is a repetition of the pattern of their reaction to Christmas. Quietly and methodically laughing at Brown, they negate his meaning as a disturbance of the town's general protocol. Brown quits shortly after his arrival to sell bootleg liquor in alleyways. Though this action should be a disruption of general public order, the community's negation of Brown's worth as a person prevents his new occupation from seriously disturbing the accustomed tranquility. It is another joke. In addition, the town's inability to ascertain any particulars about whether Christmas--who left the mill before Brown--masterminds the distribution of the whiskey prevents Christmas' possible role from becoming an ineradicable disturbance.

Bryon's immediate knowledge of Lena's arrival is juxtaposed to this repetition of the patterns by which particularity is neutralized. Her entrance into Bryon's life

is set not only into the preceding context of Byron's and the town's ability to blot out particular disturbances, but also into the thumbnail sketch of the absolutely controlled abstracted Certainty of Byron's daily and weekly routines which directly precedes Lena's appearance. The narrator informs the reader that Byron, slightly past thirty, has never been in love and spends his time working, leading a church choir, and talking quietly to his only friend, a disgraced minister, Reverend Hightower. Working a full six days at the mill, Byron does not even take the usual Saturday afternoon off. His is a private existence with the mechanical order of an impersonal institution.

The reader then watches unmediated experience enter his life as Lena arrives at the planing shed. She enters and sees Bunch and not Burch; Byron sees an unexpected visitor. The details that follow all touch on how both Byron and Lena react to the particularities that disturb their general Certainties. Characteristically, for this fictional world, particularity is all but vaporized. Lena, in her disappointment remains "serene"; Byron's reaction to her unexpected interruption of his order is to methodically allow her a few minutes on the timesheet of his overtime that he keeps himself. Quietly they both seal up the fissures in the general abstracted orders they have both imposed on their own existences. Even if Lucas Burch is not there, and Byron is not carrying the staves from pile to planer, the general form of each Certainty remains intact.

Lena tells her story, in which Byron, like his predecessors, sees her blind self-delusion. Also like his predecessors he simultaneously and blindly exhibits his own. The reader knows, through the anonymous voice, that Byron has fallen in love with Lena at first sight, but as he engulfs his sudden passion in a quiet orderly narration of events for her, Byron has no immediate or particular sense of what has happened to him. His reaction is to speak to Lena only to give her a methodical explanation of why the mill and the town are deserted on this afternoon. Quietly, he tells Lena that there is a fire on an estate out of town. He implicitly attributes his own lack of excitement or panic about this event to the lack of consequence of the place itself and the people involved. The reader is watching Byron negate its disturbing quality just as he has seen all the other characters do in their reactions to immediate particularity. He quietly describes how the estate is owned by a Yankee family of no consequence to the community, and how Joe Christmas and Joe Brown, who are thought to live there, are also of no consequence (p. 46).

Although Byron's explicit description of Brown is derogatory, Lena has no trouble recognizing the drifting father of her unborn child under another name, as her knowledge of his particularity emerges unexpectedly from behind her general, abstract point of view. "Has he got a little white scar right here by his mouth?" she asks (p. 48). Byron's realization that Lena recognizes in his story the

man she is seeking causes him to recognize in himself unexpected agitation. "And he cannot look at her, and he sits there on the stacked lumber when it is too late, and he could have bitten his tongue in tow" (p. 48). Normally unseen by the characters, particularity has momentarily flared in the characters' vision. This scene advances the action of Lena's arrival and search, but the emphasis in the structuring of the sequence of details is on Certainty and its exclusions.

Chapter 3 also pushes forward the action of Lena's search. In this chapter, Byron arrives at the home of Reverent Hightower, his one friend, with whom he talks regularly. This indication of plot continuity, occurring in the last paragraphs of the chapter plays even less of a role in Chapter 3 than did Byron's meeting with Lena in Chapter 2. Instead, the plot action is again subordinated to an extreme, particular disruption which achieves a brief moment of liberation from the usual confines of general abstraction that is reminiscent of the abrupt flaring of particularity at the end of Chapter 2.

The chapter begins with Hightower looking out the window of his house onto a quiet back street. The details of this scene are followed by a very short matter-of-fact account by a townsman of the matter of Hightower leaving the church, as though it were nothing more than a routine event. The reader then learns that the tranquil general description of Hightower's history has covered up particulars of the

massive upheaval that Hightower's departure from the church entailed, when he reads a longer account told to Byron by a townsperson seven years before. Byron also reacts abstractly to his knowledge of the bizarre and outrageous particulars of Hightower's conduct and to the extreme reprisals taken by the town, as though what he has heard were ordinary and acceptable human behavior.

The reader learns through the story told to Byron that, to the consternation of his congregation, Hightower's sermons were not conventional. Hightower substituted for the expected dogma a violent, chaotic narration of his grandfather's death as a cavalryman in Jefferson during the Civil War (p. 53). Nevertheless, the congregation continued to act with general order and decorum as if what they were confronting did not exist as an irritant. They came every week to hear the recounting of the death of Hightower's grandfather in the war. Even when Mrs. Hightower showed signs of moral turpitude, being spotted "walking fast into a hotel" in Memphis (p. 54), the town sent her away for a rest cure without ever specifically acknowledging the motivation for their action. She returned, "like the ladies had wanted her to be all the time" (p. 56). Satisfied with their "new" minister's wife who adhered to their abstract expectations, they overlooked completely her former deviant behavior which they had barely admitted to themselves as a reality in the first place.

The demand that Hightower resign from their church

arose only when the newspapers carried the story of Mrs. Hightower's death by leaping from the window of a Memphis hotel. This signals the reader again that particulars are irrelevant in this fictional world. The town had never officially recognized the Hightowers' conduct; it could not abide the forceful liberation of those particulars from behind the camouflage of their comfortable generalities. As the narration continues, the rending of the generalized surface produces a reaction in the community to restore appearances; the town requires neither atonement nor forgiveness, but only the renewal of the abstracted cover-up: Hightower must not only resign, but disappear completely. Though hightower resigns, he will not disappear, and the town seems to become crazed with a desire to remove his individuality from the sphere of its existence. Abstract, unfounded rumors fly about Hightower's apocryphal commission of a murder, and about imaginary "unnatural," "ungodly" relations he has with his Negro servants. On the basis of this later gossip, the Ku Klux Klan administers beatings both to him and to his servants. Only Hightower's refusal to act on behalf of his individual suffering, his refusal to accuse the people who beat him, ends the turbulence. His particularity effaced, Hightower is allowed to remain dormant as a non-person on a back street of the town.

Byron's reaction to this agony of violence and death takes the same general form which has peacefully precluded all the characters' perception of specific details. He

simply evaluates the event as "a lot of people performing a play and now and at last they had all played out the parts which had been allotted them and now they could all live quietly with one another" (p. 62). Even Hightower has nothing to say in defense of his dismissed particularity; years later he defends general order, "And so it is not for me to outrage their believing nor for Byron Bunch to say that they are wrong. Because all that any man can hope for is to be permitted to live quietly among his fellows" (p. 64). Once again the text is a vehicle for the reader's perception of what the characters erase from their field of vision.

In the last moments of the chapter, Byron arrives to bring news of Lena's arrival. Entering the chapter at this point, he integrates Hightower's presence with Lena's. But more important, his arrival is established for the reader in terms of another rupture in the general pattern of the lives of both Byron and Hightower. The reader is made to understand that this is a night when Byron ordinarily would not be where he is, as Hightower finds to his astonishment that Byron is in town on a Sunday night (p. 66).

Particularity as an apocalyptic intrusion in this world dominated by abstract pattern in both thought and behavior is the central theme of the encounter that follows in Byron's unexpected visit in Chapter 4. Chapter 4 operates in great part to continue the story of Lena's arrival and search. Byron comes to Hightower's house to tell him about his recent acquaintance with Lena, and in telling his story

to Hightower he also informs the reader of the progress of Lena's adventures. The reader learns that Byron has taken Lena to his boarding house and installed her there. He also learns about the present status of Lena's lover, Burch-Brown. Byron has not taken Lena to him, ostensibly because the man is in trouble. It seems that the fire on the Burden estate has been accompanied by the murder of Miss Burden and that in response to the posting of a thousand-dollar reward for the murderer, Burch-Brown has accused Joe Christmas of it, of being part Negro, and of having lived with the woman Burch-Brown says he killed. Further, the sheriff is keeping Burch-Brown in jail as a possible accomplice, letting him out only to help search for his fugitive former partner.

All this is communicated to the reader; nevertheless, the structure of Chapter 4 is not constructed primarily for the most efficient and complete communication of this information. It uses these disclosures to dramatize the dynamics of the interrelationship among Lena, Burch-Brown, Christmas, and Byron, who are the main characters in the stories Byron tells to Hightower. In the central relationship in the chapter, that between Byron and Hightower, the reader again sees living individuality flare from the obscurity to which the generalized and conventional response to existence has relegated it.

As Byron begins his quiet, orderly narration of Lena's discovery of Brown's identity, the reader is told that Hightower is "watching Byron with a sort of quiet as-

tonishment. There is nothing militant in it, nothing of outraged morality. It is as though he were listening to the doings of people of a different race. . . . Yet Byron can see in the other's face something about to wake, of which Hightower himself is unaware, as if something inside the man were trying to warn or prepare him. But Byron thinks that this is just the reflection of what he himself already knows and is about to tell" (p. 70). Byron's placid narration and Hightower's serene detachment seem to make order and tranquility of the unexpected disorder of events. As the chapter proceeds, however, the reader sees a less detached, more particular involvement stir in Hightower's response to what he is hearing.

Byron tells Hightower about the lengths to which he is going to shield Lena from knowledge of Burch-Brown's whereabouts. As he does so, the reader is told that "there begins to come into Hightower's puzzled expression a quality of shrinking and foreboding as Byron talks quietly. . ." (p. 72). Byron's understated narration is explicitly juxtaposed to Hightower's decreasing success in receiving it in cool detachment when he comes to the part of the story in which he tells Hightower that Christmas is "part-nigger." "'Part Negro,' Hightower says. His voice sounds light, trivial like a thistle bloom falling into silence without a sound, without any weight. He does not move. For a moment longer he does not move. Then there seems to come over his whole body, as if its parts were mobile like face features, that

shrinking and denial, and Byron sees that the still, flaccid, big face is suddenly slick with sweat. But his voice is light and calm. 'What about Christmas and Brown and yesterday?' he says" (p. 78).

Byron's long narration of Brown's betrayal of his former partner for the thousand dollar reward brings forth from Hightower a momentary breakdown in his isolated reserve. As Byron finishes he looks across the desk at Hightower and sees "the man who sits there with his eyes closed and the sweat running down his face like tears. Hightower speaks: 'Is it certain, proved, that he has Negro blood? Think Byron; what it will mean when the people--if they catch . . . [sic] Poor man. Poor mankind'" (p. 87). Byron, nevertheless, ignores what he has seen happen to Hightower.

The major emphasis of the dynamic structure of Chapter 4 is on the battle between Hightower's general abstraction from particulars and some particular response that is rising in him. Hightower's particularity, having flared briefly before the reader's eyes, like the specific anguish of his history and Martha Armstid's agitation, is quickly blotted from the characters' perception.

The chapter ends with Byron, oblivious to Hightower, portraying Burch-Brown out hunting for Christmas, yapping just like two dogs the sheriff is using for tracking his quarry, and Lena arriving in Jefferson knowing nothing of Brown's situation. The last words of the chapter are hers, through Byron's report, "Here I have come clean from Alabama,

and now I am in Jefferson at last, sure enough" (p. 88). Though the plot has moved forward, the reader's significant focus is on the way the implacably opaque borders of Certainty have remained constant. Particularity flares in brief liberation, only to be lost again in general patterns of thought.

Chapter 5 is a narrative leap which examines the impressive outer reaches of the power abstraction has to shroud particularity. to Joe Christmas, hours before he kills Joanna Burden, the reader's focus leaps to confront a man radically cut off from general social order, tossing on a sea of confusion and chaos. Nevertheless even he is clearly cut off from his own particularity, a quiet transcendent Certainty dominating even his violent existence. The chapter is a turmoil of unrelated details, impulses, and thoughts, ferociously isolated in their individual existences. But behind and under all the multifaceted turbulence of the chapter, the reader is still made to see a general abstracted Certainty that dominates Joe Christmas' perception of his own life while its particulars run wildly in his brain.

The chapter opens with Christmas slapping Brown into unconsciousness because of his annoyance at Brown's drunken noise. Christmas' violence, puzzling to the reader, puzzles him too. His annoyance climaxes as he thinks of reaching for his razor to end forever the noise Brown makes. But Christmas holds back as his spontaneous rage is negated by

thoughts that imprint themselves on his consciousness like blueprints for his destiny: "Something is going to happen to me. I am going to do something. . . . This is not the right one . . ." (p. 91). Again, Joe is bombarded by his particular thoughts and desires and again they are short-circuited by a general certainty that possesses him, as though his perceptual center were being dictated to by a teletype. "God perhaps and me not knowing that too he could see it like a printed sentence, fullborn and already dead God loves me too like the faded and weathered letters on a last year's bill board God loves me too" (p. 91).

Next, the reader sees Christmas spend a haphazard day, sleeping and eating, unmediated and particular activities occurring without any order, while his perception is dominated by general abstraction, "Maybe I have already done it. . . . Maybe it is no longer now waiting to be done . . ." and "All I wanted was peace" (p. 97). As the day wears into evening, the reader sees Christmas wander aimlessly in the black and white sections of Jefferson. His disorder increases as the generalities of blackness and whiteness become gestalt images that overwhelm him as realities despite the lack of specific connection they have to his immediate situation. In the black section he feels terror of the "lightless hot wet primogenitive Female" (p. 100) and runs wildly from it to the white section. There he feels tranquillity, witnessing a card game on a veranda, watching "the bare arms of the women glaring smooth and

white above the trivial cards" (p. 100). Brandishing an open razor in the black part of town as he drifts through it again, he threatens a group of black people for no reason at all and wonders what is wrong with him (p, 102). But his introspection about the distance between the actual events of his moment and his response is negated as the generalized blueprints take hold again. Joe's whole world becomes a simple abstract Certainty as he starts toward the Burden house: "Then he rose and moved toward the house. He didn't go fast. He didn't think even then Something is going to happen. Something is going to happen to me" (p. 103).

From the implicit establishment of the pivotal role that Certainty plays in the world of Light in August emerges a discrete unit of chapters which narrate Joe Christmas' biography. Chapters 6-12 (the second cluster) are to the first cluster what particular disturbances have been to general patterns within the first cluster. Unexpectedly tearing into the situation in Jefferson as it now stands, Joe's life is another apparition of particularity addressed only to the reader (the characters cannot perceive it). Joe's evolution depicts the way in which an original, human, spontaneous particularity is twisted by the cultural forces of general forms of Certainty. If the reader has been concentrating on the way in which Certainty controls this fictional world, the second cluster now leads him to perceive the concomitant degradation it forces on human particularity.

The biography reports Joe's life from his childhood

to the present. The narration of his development is basically a vehicle for locating abstract Certainty behind every agony and conflict Joe faces in his spontaneous attempts at particularity. Each of Joe's attempted assertions of love and union is met with hatred, division, and even death because of the supremacy of the abstract and the Certain.

Chapter 6 begins the second cluster with a reiteration of the pattern of the first--tranquillity, disturbance, absorption. The steady blindness of the chatacters to this pattern, juxtaposed to the reader's growing awareness, forms a continuity with the first cluster. Here, the pattern is made significant for the reader as an attack on Joe's particularity. As Chapter 6 begins, Joe Christmas, aged five, is in the room of his orphanage's dietitian. His surreptitious appearance there accidentally coincides with the dietitian's secret tryst with a young doctor on the staff. The reason for the child's presence is a chance occurrence of the previous year; at that time, the dietitian's appearance, making him think of sweetness and pinkness, had prompted Joe to go on a secret foray to her room, where he found "by accident the toothpaste the dietitian used" (p. 104). Secretly stealing her toothpaste for a year, Joe is surprised on this occasion by the approach of the dietitian and the doctor and hides in the lady's closet. Joe, hidden, eats too much toothpaste and vomits, alerting the dietitian to his whereabouts.

The disturbance is anatomized for the reader as a

chance coincidence of similar desires. The reader sees that both the dietitian and Joe are seeking love in their own ways. The characters, on the other hand, perceive these occurrences through the abstractions of Certainty, and drift further and further from the specific details of the incident. Though Joe's presence in the room is based on the accidental discovery of the toothpaste, in Joe's mind that discovery becomes destiny: "On that first day when he discovered the toothpaste in her room he had gone directly there, who had never heard of toothpaste either, as if he already knew that she would possess something of that nature and he would find it" (p. 105).

At the same time, though Joe's presence in the room during the dietitian's tryst is pure coincidence, she behaves as if this were all part of some ingenious design in the child's mind. When she finds Joe in the closet, her first words are that he has been spying on her. The dynamics of the rest of the chapter all spring from the original character of this incident, the characters' theoretical denials of the particular meaning of individual events.

Neither the child nor the dietitian is able to cope with the reality of the situation. Each--the child waiting to be punished for taking the toothpaste, and the dietitian waiting to be reported--believes that the other is intentionally torturing him by inaction, while each is waiting for the other to determine events. The role of Certainty increases and the relation to the original event decreases

as the dietitian turns for aid to an old janitor who works in the orphanage, who has absolutely nothing to do with the event in the dietitian's room. The old man tells the dietitian that God has a destiny for the child and that her sin is only a means to His end. The child is a "nigger" and, now that the dietitian knows this, she must aid him in sending Joe to the appropriate institution (pp. 111-15). The reader is not witnessing mistaken judgment or simple malice, but the implementation of a theory that denies all the particulars of the original situation.

In fact, the dietition and the old janitor are not the final arbiters of Joe's destiny. The matron of the orphanage, one more remove from the particularity of Joe's conflict with the dietitian, has final authority. The matron, advised by the dietitian of Joe's "black blood," is terrified of revealing, by taking open action, the mistake that has been made of placing a black child in her white institution. Thus when she finds out that the janitor has spirited the child away to a black institution, she does not consider this any sort of rectification and sends the police to bring them back. Her idea of restoring order is to blot out the particular error she believes has been made; she hastens Joe's adoption by a white couple named McEachern, giving no history of the child to them, and encourages them to change his name to their own. The matron's final attempt to cover over her problem of particulars also attacks Joe's particularity as she seeks to remove all evidence of misman-

agement by removing the child's name as a perceived reality. As the chapter ends, however, Joe spontaneously fights for his particularity as he experiences it. While McEachern and the matron are approving the notion of a name change, he thinks to himself: "My name aint McEachern. My name is Christmas" (p. 127).

Crucial to the reader's perception of Joe's formation as an adult is the fact that Joe is constantly defending his particularity as he sees it, but that paradoxically, his spontaneous defense itself is always an inadvertent self-betrayal, performed as it is in a cultural context whose terms conceal the existence of particularity. For example, when in Chapter 7 the reader watches Joe's life with the McEacherns (his adopted parents) though the beginning of the chapter portrays Christmas' dogged resistance to his foster father, the unfolding structure carefully emphasizes that Joe's successful and increasingly violent defiance of McEachern's authority is not, as he thinks, heading him for freedom, but for Certainty and abstract order.

Chapter 7 begins with Joe's belief that "<u>On this day I became a man</u>" (p. 128). It shows McEachern's abstract and orderly treatment of his foster son, Joe, the treatment creating a rebel in its own image. Joe's initiation into manhood at the beginning of Chapter 7 shows him at eight years of age learning to achieve rigid order by imitating McEachern's calm, detached structuring of reality, but in the name of his own freedom. McEachern is, in the first scene,

trying to make Joe learn a passage from the Bible. He gives the child one hour to learn the prescribed portion. Joe calmly passes the hour without learning a word; McEachern quietly and calmly beats the child and allows one more hour. Joe and McEachern repeat this pattern all day long, completely detached from the particularity of their existences, neither eating nor sleeping. Finally McEachern departs for church and Joe is left feeling weak and triumphant, detached, almost as if dead. If McEachern's orderly abstraction from reality creates a rebel, Joe's abstracted rebellion in turn insults the dignity of his own concrete existence. While Joe is lying on his bed, his foster mother secretly brings him food, which he throws disdainfully on the floor, but which as soon as she leaves, he eats from the floor, "with his hands ate, like a savage, like a dog" (p. 136).

Such interlocking cycles of tyrannical order and despotic rebellion pattern the rest of the chapter. Joe's blind espousal of Certainty in his ostensible quest for freedom is responsible for the degrading chaos of the juxtaposed fragment of his fourteenth year (pp. 136-38). Inhumanity is as much the progeny of Joe's campaign for freedom as it is a part of McEachern's righteous tyranny: Joe is depicted in an encounter with a Negro girl he and a group of his friends are planning to use sexually.

Joe kicks and beats the girl when his turn comes, prompting a free-for-all fight among the boys. Afterward Joe feels as though he has gained his freedom, but the frag-

ment presents Joe beating the girl because the lack of abstract order and Certainty in the sexual feeling she in him threatened his idea of his freedom. "He entered the shed. . . . At once he was overcome by a terrible haste. There was something in him trying to get out, like when he had used to think of toothpaste. But he could not move at once, standing there, smelling the woman, smelling the Negro all at once; enclosed by the womanshenegro [sic] and the haste, driven, having to wait until she spoke; a guiding sound that was no particular word and completely unaware" (p. 137).

The next justaposition again shows the spiraling interaction of cultural inhumanity. At the age of eighteen, Joe is shown discussing a heifer with McEachern, who gave him the animal to reward him for his hard work. Joe tells McEachern that he has sold the cow, and McEachern is willing to approve of such a transaction on the condition that Joe has made a good bargain. Methodically questioning Joe, however, McEachern sets a trap to catch him in a lie and Joe falls into it. McEachern's sophistry reveals to him that Joe is lying about his purpose of selling the cow to buy a suit. Without any particularity as a basis for his assumption, McEachern extends this knowledge of the hidden suit to the abstracted proposition that the suit is in aid of whoring and hits Joe in the face. Joe accepts the blow from habit, because McEachern has a history of hitting him for generally assumed deviations. This time, however, Joe sud-

denly turns on his foster father, defiant, warning McEachern never to hit him again. Ironically, Joe's violence is at once a defense of his unique humanity and a general insult to human relations.

Chapter 8 moves backward in time to the source of Joe's need to sell the heifer for a suit. It is for the purpose of "lechery" and with a whore, as McEachern had thought. However, the revelation of the chapter is that the main attraction of the prostitute for Joe, ironically, is the way in which she and her milieu constitute abstractions detached from particularity. Though the chapter reveals that Joe seeks freedom from McEachern and a return to his particularity in a loving union with Bobbie, it also shows that his choice is paradoxically dominated by the Certain, the orderly, that he finds in and around the whore, Bobbie, making that choice an ironic alliance with McEachern.

When Joe meets Bobbie she is a waitress in Jefferson which covertly operates as a brothel. Joe's attraction to Bobbie is defined for the reader in terms of a vision of Certainty that greets his eyes. The narrator introduces the waitress to the reader as "prominently boned. . . . Her eyes were like the button eyes of a toy animal: a quality beyond even hardness, without being hard" (p. 150). The reader is also told that Bobbie is very small, and that this encouraged Joe because he felt more certain of winning a woman most men would not have preferred to a more sumptuously appointed female. The restaurant, which exercises a kind of

enchantment over Joe, is also described in terms of its definite, abstractly structured outlines. The prefabricated, rigidified atmosphere of the diner is particularly manifest in the cashier:

> There was about her a quality impervious to time: a belligerent and diamondsurfaced respectability. She had not so much as looked at them [McEachern and Joe], even when they entered and even when McEachern gave her the money. Still without looking at them she made the change, correctly and swiftly, sliding the coins onto the glass counter almost before McEachern had offered the bill; herself somehow definite behind the false glitter of the careful hair, like a carved lioness guarding a portal, presenting respectability like a shield behind which the clotted and idle and equivocal men could slant their hats and their thwartfacecurled [sic] cigarettes" (p. 152).

When Joe returns to the restaurant months later as if he were the pawn of some detached pattern, the narration again emphasizes the dead general orderliness that seems to exist there. As Joe enters the diner the reader is told that he was watched by the cashier, who seemed "as if she had not moved in the six months, not altered one strand of her hard bright brassridged hair or even her dress . . ." (p. 155). Nevertheless it is made clear to the reader that this graveyard of abstract form represents his particularity to Joe. On getting himself involved with Bobbie, in response to her question about his name, Joe tells her, "It's not McEachern . . . It's Christmas" (p. 160). This cryptic presentation of his identity echoes his response to the agreement between the orphanage matron and McEachern to change his name, thus linking Joe's view of his involvement

with Bobbie to his view of his resistance against the obfuscations of abstraction. But his view of his particularity is again presented ironically to the reader in a succeeding fragment as one that inadvertently fulfills the conditions of Certainty. Joe discovers, to his horror, that Bobbie is menstruating. It is made clear that Joe's reaction is to the lack of wholeness that bleeding involves. In his agitation, Joe runs into the woods, where he has a vision of imperfect form: ". . . as though in a cave he seemed to see a diminishing row of suavely shaped urns in the moonlight, blanched. And not one was perfect. Each one was cracked and from each crack there issued some liquid death colored and foul. . . . He vomited" (p. 165). Clearly Bobbie's menstruction is no longer a particular physical process to him, but a general menace to his dream of abstract perfection. The issue of his knowledge of Bobbie's profession is also presented so that the reader can see that the central significance to Joe in his discovery has to do with general form and not with the particularity of his situation. On becoming aware of Bobbie's moral delinquency, Joe becomes violent but finds himself able to resolve his dilemma by making of his involvement with a whore a sufficiently complete general gestalt. He assumes the gestures and mannerisms of the men who frequent the restaurant-brothel, getting drunk and loudly calling Bobbie his "whore" in the inner sanctum of this underworld microcosm.

Chapter 9 shows further how Joe's spontaneous de-

sires are betrayed by his own unintentional preference for Certainty. The victimization of his particularity at the hands of his foster father's fanatic belief in a detached omniscience and omnipotence is but one aspect of the terrible consequences of Joe's relationship with Bobbie. His own rebellious choice has, as the chapter shows, placed him with a group of people to whom generalized schemata are equally important. The chapter opens with Joe, having departed surreptitiously from the farm for the evening, followed, though he does not know it, by McEachern. McEachern's pursuit, in method and motive, is utterly devoid of contact with the particular situation. He does not know where Joe has gone, but mounts his horse and follows his foster son as if such knowledge were irrelevant. "He turned into the road at that ponderous gallop, the two of them, man and beast, leaning a little stiffly forward as though in some juggernautish simulation of terrific speed though the actual speed itself was absent, as if in that cold and implacable and undeviating conviction of both omnipotence and clairvoyance of which they both partook known designation and speed were not necessary" (pp. 176-77). Successful though McEachern is in finding Joe and Bobbie at the dance to which they have gone, ultimately McEachern's oblivious detachment from particularity and not his success is emphasized for the reader. Walking into the dance, and intoning, "away, Harlot," at Bobbie, McEachern is characterized as having no conception of who he is in his individuality, or

who Bobbie or Joe are, as he performs his purifying rites.

> Perhaps it did not seem to him that he had been moving fast nor that his voice was loud. Very likely he seemed to himself to be standing just and rocklike . . . while on all sides the sluttishness of weak human men seethed in a long sigh of terror about the actual representative of the wrathful and retributive Throne. Perhaps they were not even his hands which struck at the face of the youth whom he had nurtured . . . and perhaps when the face ducked the blow and came up again it was not the face of that child . . . since it was not that child's face which he was concerned with: it was the face of Satan, which he knew as well" (p. 178).

Following this, McEachern without a shread of awareness, walks right into the chair Joe swings at his head in counter-attack.

Nor is McEachern the sole example of detachment from particularity. Joe's counterattack on McEachern is similarly devoid of specific involvement in the actual moment. Joe, oblivious to the significance of what he has done, is completely taken up in discussing plans for their future with Bobbie, as if she already knows about them, while she is absorbed with having been publicly identified as a whore, with the exposure, in fact, of her reality. In the ensuing hours, McEachern disappears completely from everyone's awareness as a particular person, and Joe is beaten by Bobbie's associates as they take her away to parts unknown so that their particularity can once again disappear behind the veneer of respectability. Joe's blind clash with McEachern is ultimately most significant to the reader as the failure of Certainty to bring to anyone anything but a har-

vest of disorder and confusion. Abstract form is formless, riddled with hatred and death.

In Chapter 10 we see Joe, traumatized by the events of that night, wandering randomly for fifteen years, but ironically harboring in the center of his being a reverence for the abstract generality that is mutilating his life. With apparent freedom, Joe wanders from job to job, deserting one for another at his will. This random performance is counterpointed by his practice of confessing Negro identity to avoid paying white prostitutes. Endurance of the violent ejection from each brothel that follows each revelation of his tainted blood seems at first an economic subterfuge, but it is revealed as a deeper necessity. When a white prostitute in the North receives his news without concern, having just had sex, as she tells him, with a black looking black man, Joe nearly kills her. It is immediately clear that his ritual with the prostitutes has been to keep him in contact with an abstract ordering of life, and that his violence is a response to the blurring of abstract outlines he had thought were solid.

At the end of the chapter Joe finds himself at the outskirts of Jefferson, entering Joanna Burden's house stealthily, at night to steal food. Joanna's appearance in the kitchen as Joe is eating brings with it another apparition of general abstraction from the particulars of life. Her lonely discovery of a man at night in her home brings from her the detached response of general calm and bounty,

"'If it is food you want, uou will find that,' she said in a voice calm, a little deep, quite cold" (p. 202).

From the woman's monumental poise when she is confronted with an intruder emanates an aura of her departure from reality, because of the concentration on abstraction from the moment in the preceding part of the novel. The next chapters, 11 and 12, confirm Joanna's self-possession as pure evasion of immediacy. Joe's involvement with Joanna is the crescendo of contradiction between his spontaneous desire for his freedom and particularity and his hidden reliance on ordered abstracted Certainty. The procession of details in Chapter 11 places Joanna as the victim of a cultural evolution away from particularity.

The chapter begins with the establishment of Joanna's social role as a woman devoted to civic reform, whose nighttime contact with Joe is divorced from the mainstream of her life. Joe's view of the situation is again that his manipulation of his activities assures his freedom. Nothing he tells himself about his relationship seems to bear on its reality, however; even when he demonstrates to himself that he can turn the affair off and on at will by ceasing to visit her, he remains dependently as a resident in one of the cabins on her estate.

Joanna, attempting to encourage him to resume his visits, succeeds in winning him back by visiting him one night to tell him her family history and the story of her own life. Nothing she says has any specific bearing on any-

thing that mutually concerns them. Joe listens to this digression, without perceiving, as does the reader who has been prepared by the preceding juxtapositions, that Joanna is the culmination of a family burned out by its unilluminated reverence for abstraction. Their enormous pioneer energy, purged by their fight on behalf of abolitionist theories in the Civil War, left only their abstractions as Joanna's inheritance from the former vigor of her family. Joanna is, without learning from her own knowledge, able to point to the moment when she ceased to be a part of the immanent uniqueness of life. Taking Joanna to see the graves of her grandfather and brother, Joanna's father tells her that she is in the presence of evidence of a curse on the white race. As a result, Joanna says, "I seemed to see them [Negroes] for the first time not as people, but as a thing, a shadow in which I lived, we lived, all white people, all other people. . . . And I seemed to see the black shadow in the shape of a cross. And it seemed like the white babies were struggling, even before they drew breath, to escape from the shadow. . . . I saw all the little babies that would ever be in the world, the ones not yet even born--a long line of them with their arms spread, on black crosses" (pp. 221-22). Joanna's subsequent dedication to social reform is therefore predicated on a perversion of the particularity of life to the same degree as are the established forms of society. Joe is literally back in the arms of his enemy.

In Chapter 12, the reader sees how, as Joanna wallows in a sexual relationship with Joe, she continues her evasion of reality. She abstracts their encounter by insisting that they ritually tell each other in minute detail what they have done separately during the day, and goes on to insist on pro-forma catalogues of obscene expressions during their love making. She becomes obsessed with constructing scenarios to structure their involvement which take the form of hiding notes in trees, acting out scenes of fabricated jealousy, and playing games of hide and seek in the dark. From Joe's point of view, Joanna is crazy, but he maintains the illusion that he is free from her madness and independent of her clutches.

Always blind to the abstract threat to his particularity, Joe persists in thinking that marriage is the trap with which Joanna threatens him. Thus the steel jaws of Certainty take him by surprise, though the reader has seen their menace foreshadowed. When Joanna goes through menopause, she ceases all sexual activity, becomes more totally involved than ever in her civic work, and demands that in the name of God Joe take his place as a partisan of her cause. She wants Joe to go to a Negro college, become a lawyer, and help to alleviate the "curse." The existence of these two people at such a dramatic remove from the details of their actual lives is literally death for them. Joanna's aggressive imposition of her abstractions inevitably necessitates her attack on Joe's life. Her view of destiny, so

clearly detached from the actuality of her options, is paradoxically her own death, as Joe kills her in self-defense.

The blindness of the characters in the world of Light in August continues to serve as the thread of continuity between clusters. In the third cluster (Chapters 13-19), however, character myopia is juxtaposed against the possible apocalyptic awakening of three of the characters from the slumberous general forms, as well as against the reader's growing consciousness. The third cluster leads the reader to the emerging visions of Byron, Joe Christmas, and Hightower.

The pattern of Certainty destroying the particularity of humanity is resumed in Chapter 13, as the cluster begins with the reader's return to the Burden estate, the scene of the murder and fire. The entire population of the surrounding area has shown up to gape at the fire and at the corpse. Using this tragedy as "an emotional barbecue, a Roman holiday" (p. 252), the crowd is immensely stirred to an abstract concept of vengeance on behalf of Joanna, a woman whose worth as a person they had denigrated in her lifetime and whom most of them had never seen. It is once again impressed upon the reader that in all ways the particularity of the scene at hand escapes the characters. The sheriff, for example, is possessed by frustration at his inability to wrap this case up into a neatly formulated cause and effect generalization. Under this pressure, he casually has a black resident of Joanna's estate beaten to

get information which neither helps him nor needed to be obtained in this manner, according to what the characters themselves say. After the black man speaks under duress, the sheriff's deputy tells the sheriff that almost any man in Jefferson could have told him as much (p. 256). The murder and fire remain in a state of pristine unrationalized particularity until, with the news that there is a thousand-dollar reward for the murderer, Burch-Brown appears in town to betray his only friend for the price. In the cause of restoring the general order, the bonds of individual human decency and fraternity are casually violated.

At the same time, however, the succeeding fragment shows the smooth surface of abstraction splintering before Byron's and Hightower's eyes under increased pressure from impressions of immanent particularity. Byron, in a scene juxtaposed to the opening account of the town and the sheriff, continues to view Joe's situation abstractly, but, overwhelmed by his desire for Lena, is increasingly discontent to submit to Hightower's conventional moral platitudes about the inadvisability of involving himself with pregnant, unwed Lena. Hightower too is decreasingly comfortable with his isolation in general attitudes. Juxtaposed to the encounter between Byron and Hightower is another fragment in which the nameless terror that had surfaced in Hightower in the first cluster reappears. After his debate with Byron, Hightower, marketing, learns from a storekeeper that the sheriff expects to catch the "nigger" murderer shortly, and

the terror again comes on him (p. 269). He experiences extreme distress as he did in the first cluster. Here it is explored further than it was previously. Hightower redefines the loss of his church and his general isolation as his achievements rather than as penalties inflicted upon him, and in response to the terror keeps on repeating, "I wont. I wont. I have bought immunity" (p. 271). His isolation, a willful withdrawal with which he consoles himself, is barely effective in saving him from the particularity of the murderer, which the storekeeper easily blots out under the abstraction, "nigger."

In the last fragment of the chapter, Byron, further involved with Lena, meets Hightower again. Now Byron has come to tell Hightower that he has moved Lena out to Joe and Burch-Brown's former cabin and has pitched his own tent nearby. After Byron leaves, Hightower finds himself able to reconcile himself to Byron's insurrection against convention, but Hightower's acceptance ambiguously takes the form of another withdrawal into abstract, hollow form. Hightower immerses himself in Tennyson's poetry, which the narrator characterizes as "peaceful" and "dehydrated" (p. 78). This ends the chapter.

The third cluster begins focusing the reader on small, ambiguous, apocalyptic rumblings in the cultural foundations of abstraction. It continues in Chapter 14 to emphasize a cultural subordination of human particularity to generalities but here they are pocked by individual erup-

tions of consciousness. This chapter opens with a conversation between the sheriff and his deputy. The deputy reports to the sheriff about Lena's presence in the murderer's cabin, about Byron in his pitched tent, as well as about Byron's disclosure of Burch-Brown's real identity. Laughing, the sheriff and the deputy discount the significance of this information. They provide for the careful reader a conventional, oblivious contrast to his own view of Byron's situation as a radical challenge to society's oppressive imposition of general dicta like morality. Rather, the sheriff and deputy concern themselves with the juxtaposed report from a black church which informs them of the whereabouts of Joe Christmas.

The report is full of disturbance. It is the story of Joe's invasion of a church, abuse of the congregation, and blasphemy toward God. Concerned only with general order, the sheriff's reaction to this information precludes any human response to the violence that has actually taken place. The news serves only to orient his tactical approach toward a disturbance of the social mechanism. The reader is made aware that, as a counter in the sheriff's calculations, the event loses meaning, as the sheriff's strategy, formulated according to information about the church uproar, is made ludicrous by the false trails left by the fugitive.

The reader, on the other hand, has another view, prepared for by the series of juxtapositions leading up to this point in the novel. The report and a narrator's ad-

dendum refresh the reader's memory of Joe's ironic, abstracted inhumanity in pursuit of his particular freedom from the detached schemata that have threatened him. The messenger reports to the sheriff how Joe abused the parishoners; the narrative addendum discloses his vicious clubbing of a young man who was defending his grandfather against the intruder's violence, thus making clear that a mutual abuse of humanity is involved in the situation of flight and pursuit.

This serves as a basis for the reader's awareness of Joe's subtle evolution in the next fragment, which shows how Joe is tracked down and forced to surrender, but not by the ineffectual sheriff. The reader sees Joe's fugitive state of existence bring him once more into the conflict between his need for particularity and love and his unconscious preference for abstraction which betrays that need. Christmas' situation is described by the narrator in terms of its departure from the mechanical order imposed by abstraction. "Time, the spaces of light and dark, had long since lost orderliness. . . . He would never know when he would pass from one to the other, when he would find that he had beem asleep without remembering having lain down, or find himself walking about without having waked. . . . For a while he had been hungry all the time. He gathered and ate rotting and wormridden fruit . . . and gnawed ripened ears of corn as hard as potato graters. . . . He would eat enormous quanti-

ties of it, with resultant crises of bleeding flux" (pp. 291-92).

The reader sees that in this situation the man who had no compunctions about abusing the people at the black church becomes keenly aware of being cut off completely from others. At first Joe is quietly astonished at the terror with which the people he meets treat him while he is fleeing; after a while he explicitly interprets the rupture between himself and others as a perversion of a universal human bond. Remembering his entrance into a cabin filled with Negroes who fled at his approach, he thinks, "and they were afraid. Of their brother afraid" (p. 293). He misinterprets this rupture of the human bond, however, to be a result of his separation from the abstract form of society, when the reader can see that, on the contrary, his alienation from abstract form has liberated him for the first time to conscious awareness of the division between people that form fosters. Nevertheless the reader sees that Joe's misunderstanding of what has been revealed to him makes him desperate for general form. It becomes more important for him to know the day than to eat or to sleep. Once Joe reorients himself with the social abstraction of time, he feels all has finally been put to rights.

The reader sees that when Joe finds out what day it is he becomes like a man "who knows where he is and where he wants to go and how much time to the exact minute he has to get there in" (p. 295). The reader knows that Joe is com-

pelled to surrender because he mistakenly interprets his awakening to his particularity, and that Joe now tragically believes that to save his humanity he must surrender his life. Joe thinks of his freedom with despair, paradoxically more in conflict than ever with his particularity now that he has consciously experienced it. "'And yet I have been farther in these seven days than in all the thirty years,' he thinks. 'But I have never got outside that circle. I have never broken outside of what I have already done and cannot ever undo' . . ." (p. 296). Again the reader witnesses a partially apocalyptic release from general form.

Chapter 15 positions the reader in Mottstown, where Joe is about to appear in his abdication to Certainty. His destination is evoked for the reader as a seemingly impermeable abstract barrier against the particularity Joe seeks, as Joe is again portrayed seeking comfort and refuge from his very tormentor. Mottstown's milieu is defined for the reader by the presence in town of Doc Hines and his wife. They are described as an abnormal couple to whom the town turns a "blind eye." The town has seen only the male of the twosome, and they think that he is crazy. They joke about his inflated rhetoric: ". . . for all its apparent coherence. . . . It was that his words, his telling, just did not synchronise with what his hearers believed would (and must) be the scope of a single individual" (p. 300). Hines is, in other words, abstracted from the particulars of his life. But, although the narrative voice tells the reader that the

town thinks Hines is abnormal, it shows the reader that his peculiarities are not the anomaly in that town, but in fact the rule of behavior. The town's treatment of the Hineses exhibits the same peculiar removal from particulars. There is, of course, a racial caste system in the town's social structure which forbids certain types of relations between blacks and whites: but the reality that the Hineses are totally dependent on the blacks for their existence, as they can do nothing for themselves, and that it is almost exclusively to blacks that they relate during the course of their day, these the town excludes from its consciousness. Like Hines, the town refuses reality.

The reader's comprehension of the town's mistaken idea of both Hines and itself is re-enforced with Joe Christmas' calm appearance in town. First the reader sees that Doc Hines, learning of the arrival, has a hysterical tantrum and calls for the death of the man. As usual, Hines' hysteria is treated with a compassionate tolerance for the insane by the men of Mottstown. They group together to take him home so that he will not do violence to himself, crazy as they believe him to be. The juxtaposed fragment of the town's original discovery of Joe in their midst, however, shows the town's first reaction to have been the same as Hines'. Indeed the scene of the town's discovery of Christmas' identity reveals that the townsmen too have been completely detached from the circumstances facing them. Even though Christmas had stood passively waiting to be taken

into custody, Halliday, the man who recognized him, hit him and screamed as if Joe had been resisting; the rest of the men around had become inflamed with a feverish desire for a lynching. Only when the sheriff reminded the town of the reward for getting Joe safely to Jefferson did the town settle down, the only basis for their restraint an abstraction, not Joe's humanity or his particular behavior in the situation.

In the midst of the turmoil, Mrs. Hines appears, hinting of particulars about Joe's life soon to be disclosed that seem to send a rumble of uniqueness through the beams of abstraction once more. After asking her husband what he did thirty years ago with Milly's baby, a question about the import of which the reader can only guess, Mrs. Hines tries to see the prisoner, unsuccessfully. She pursues him to Jefferson, toward which destination Joe is taken while she is still trying to find the sheriff. A pure mystery in Chapter 15, Mrs. Hines' tenacity in following Joe is transformed in Chapter 16 into the long-delayed advocacy for Joe's particularity, for love in a world ordered by Certainty. Her claims bring to light the original particulars of Joe's life.

Chapter 16 opens with Byron's arrival at Hightower's house. He tells Hightower that he has Joe Christmas' grandmother with him and asks if Hightower will see her. She turns out to be Mrs. Hines, and Doc Hines is with her. Byron wants Mrs. Hines to tell Hightower the story of Joe

Christmas' birth, and Doc Hines chimes in on his own initiative with his version of Joe's natal scene. Byron is bringing Doc and Mrs. Hines to Hightower's attention to influence the old minister toward giving the prisoner an alibi, hoping that this will negate Burch-Brown's claim on the reward and sever Brown's tie to Jefferson. Byron is sure that with this turn of events Burch-Brown will leave town and Lena will be his. In this scene evasions of unique existence seem to become tenuous as if about to give way. The horrors inflicted on humanity by abstraction's centrality to human perception seem to lie in the past, the present shuddering on the brink of apocalyptic revelation. Even though Byron's motivation in bringing the story of Joe's life to Hightower's attention seems to include an abstract exploitation of Joe, Hightower's evasion of human responsibility in the name of abstraction seems to be about to end.

From the antiphonal narration that Doc and Mrs. Hines give, it becomes clear that Hines, believing his daughter to have violated the color bar in conceiving Joe, murdered her lover and allowed her to die after the birth of the baby, holding his wife at gunpoint to prevent her from aiding their daughter. It is also clear that Hines' fear that his grandchild was part Negro was another example of postulation of general abstraction as reality, since there was no particular evidence that the lover was black. This then is the basis on which Joe was placed in the orphanage,

where Hines, as janitor, counseled the dietitian, leading to Joe's adoption by McEachern.

Byron's exploitation of Hines' gross crime of inhumanity to win Lena forms a continuity with the detached horror of the past, as Byron approaches Hightower with a mercantile metaphor of the tragedy that reduces it to an abstraction that will serve his own needs. Byron calmly reasons: "I mind how I said to you once that there is a price for being good the same as for being bad; a cost to pay. And its the good men that can't deny the bill when it comes around. . . . And it wont be like you haven't done it once before. It oughtn't to be so bad now as it was then" (p. 344).

Although Hightower meets Byron's request on the abstract terms that Byron is unintentionally setting and clings to his abstract isolation, refusing Byron's request, the reader can see that Hightower is all but unstrung by the revelation before him of the horrors of denying the particular claims of life. A renewed vision of particularity seems to be in the offing.

The birth of Lena's child in Chapter 17 seems to present the natural opportunity for the spiritual rebirth. Again, however, these raised expectations are ambiguously met. Instead of plunging into the moment at the birth of the baby, Mrs. Hines, who is present, is shocked into an illusion that she is holding her own grandchild. The doctor, arriving after Hightower has successfully officiated at

the delivery as midwife, sees Doc and Mrs. Hines, Lena, and Byron, and, overwhelmed by the abstract correctness of the configuration, believes that he sees the baby surrounded by parents and grandparents. For Doc Hines the event is totally obliterated by his involvement with his now-grown grandson.

Hightower responds to the new life by going into an abstract, euphoric celebration of birth and life which takes the form of a pastoral encomium for nature, Byron, and Lena. This culminates in his moralistic adjuration to Lena to send Byron away and never see him again.[5] Lena herself struggles with the moment of contact with life she has experienced in the birth: but instead of strengthening her sense of the immanent, it seems to make her vulnerable to abstract detachment from her particular situation. Mrs. Hines' prattle about the baby as her grandson actually confuses Lena. She tells Hightower: "She keeps on talking about him like his pa was that . . . the one in jail, that Mr. Christmas. She keeps on, and then I get mixed up and it's like sometimes I cant--like I am mixed up too and I think that his pa is that Mr. Christmas too" (p. 359). In response to Hightower's demand that she send Byron away, she says that Byron has already gone, and cries at the thought that she may never see him again. Her feelings about Byron do not abate her abstract belief that she and Burch will ultimately be together.

Byron, on the other hand, at the cry of the baby's

new life, is brought to a partial revelation of the ridiculous division between abstract Certainty and his particular life when he realizes that despite everything he has been thinking only abstractly of Lena. Despite her emphatically obvious nine months of pregnancy, Byron has been thinking of Lena as a virgin. "It was like me, and her, and all the other folks that I had to get mixed up in it, were just a lot of words that never even stood for anything" (p. 352). In the context of this novel, Byron's realization is almost an apocalyptic moment. His response, however, is, as has happened with all other moments in the novel, to coerce his direct experience back into the limitations of generality. He believes that his new knowledge necessitates his moral obligation to arrange for Lena and Burch to get together. It seems at this point that no particular can assert the claims of particular humanity.

Suddenly, in an accidental confrontation with reality, hopes are again kindled. When in Chapter 18 Byron engineers a meeting between Lena and Burch, Burch bolts. Byron confronts Burch to try to beat him into doing the right thing; Byron, however, is a small man and Burch a large powerful one. Burch bloodies Byron in a matter of minutes and hops aboard a passing train. But Byron's willingness to confront the details of his life with his moral abstractions produces the first real encounter with particularity. As he returns to Lena after the fight, he tries to structure an abstraction predicting the form of their re-

union, and cannot. As he rides his mule toward the cabin in which Lena is staying, "It is as though he has already long since outstripped himself, already waiting at the cabin until he can catch up and enter. And then I will stand there and I will . . . [sic] He tries it again: And then I will stand there and I will . . . [sic] But he can get no further" (p. 387).

The announcement of Joe's death reaches the reader almost simultaneously with his witness to Byron's vulnerability to the particularity of life. Before Byron gets to Lena, he is told by a stranger that, while he has been up at the train tracks, "That nigger, Christmas. They killed him" (p. 387). The simultaneity of the events is structured into the novel so that Byron's minor liberation is dwarfed by the major closing off of possibility, Joe's death. Byron's inch toward love and life is placed in perspective by the chasm that continues to exist between Certainty and humanity.

Renewed explication of the chasm is the central emphasis of the next chapter, 19, which is about Joe's death. The progress of this climactic chapter uses the abstract way in which the community understands Joe's death to illustrate the gap between the way the characters continue to see the situation and the way the reader has come to see it. The chapter begins with communal blindness, epitomized by the town's leading intellect, Gavin Stevens. It ends with the death scene directly before the reader portraying the casual rending of the bonds of humanity. Once

more in the complexity of the vision there are glimmers for the reader of character ability to perceive and encounter love and life.

Chapter 19 opens with the statement that ". . . what the town wondered was not so much how Christmas had escaped but why when free he had taken refuge in the place which he did, where he must have known he would be certainly run to earth, and why when that occurred he neither surrendered nor resisted" (p. 388). The house to which he had run was Hightower's. The major theory about the community's central concern is the main focus of the first section of this chapter. It is formulated by Gavin Stevens.

Stevens' theory is that Mrs. Hines, who, as we learn from him, saw Joe Christmas in jail just before he was taken to the courthouse, told Joe to make his escape and to go to Hightower's house. Joe's mixture of black and white blood was the foundation for the manner in which he carried out Mrs. Hines' instructions. Stevens believed that Mrs. Hines' meeting with the minister had provided her with her first chance to be coherent about the loss of her grandson, because Hightower had actually listened to her story. Stevens theorizes that Joe's belief in her story gave him the impetus to make the break, but that the conflict between his black and white blood prevented his escape from successfully terminating in sanctuary.

> But his blood would not be quiet, let him save it. It would not be either one or the other and let his body save itself. Because the black blood drove

> him first to the Negro cabin. And 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. And it was the white blood that sent him to the minister. . . . Then I believe that the white blood deserted him for the moment . . . allowing the black to rise in its final moment. . . . It was the black blood which swept him up into that ecstasy. . . . And then the black blood failed him again, as it must have in crises all his life. He did not kill the minister. He merely struck him with the pistol. . . . He crouched behind that overturned table and let them shoot him to death . . . (pp. 393-94).

Stevens' monologue is a wonder of pseudo-coherence. It is a faithful mimesis of the mind ordered by Certainty. It has no use for the particulars of the event. With confidence in his logic, Stevens outlines a full theory. There is black on one side, white on the other, but there is no particular reason to believe in the inherent "blackness" of one action, the inherent "whiteness" of another. Worse, his whole explanation is based on what Mrs. Hines said to Joe in jail and, "of course I dont know what she told him. I dont believe that any man could reconstruct that scene" (p. 392). Nevertheless, basing his Certainty on what he knows that he does not know does not worry Stevens. He continues heedlessly to the final period of his abstraction.

Because of the structural juxtaposition, however, the informed reader is not only sensitive to the evasion of particularity in Stevens' theory in a way that the characters are not, he is also able to interpret the effect of Mrs. Hines' visit because of his knowledge of relevant particulars. The reader's knowledge that Mrs. Hines spoke to

Joe shortly before he ran from the authority of the town does illuminate the foundations of Joe's flight, but not as Stevens thinks. The reader understands that Mrs. Hines' identification of herself and of Doc Hines tells Joe that everything that he has thought of as his own particular identity, his name "Christmas," and his black blood, are all abstract inventions, and that his acceptance of responsibility for defending them by surrendering to the sheriff is misguided. What he really is exists in his unique presence in the moment, and everything else is a theoretical web of subterfuge. Thus the reader alone is able to see that Joe's escape from the sheriff is not, as Stevens thought, some interplay between black and white, but, Joe's first and only free, apocalyptic act of particularity.[6]

The chapter then shifts abruptly to a juxtaposed biography of a character never mentioned by Stevens: Percy Grimm. The appearance of Percy Grimm reveals, complementing Stevens' life of the mind, the active life formed completely by Certainty. The question of why Joe met his death in Hightower's house, the Stevens theory of black and white, both recede into the distance as the reader sees Grimm's participation in Joe's death, completely deleted from Stevens' account, providing a visionary complement to Stevens' account of Joe's first real act of freedom from Certainty.

A citizen of Jefferson, about twenty-five when we first see him in the account of Joe Christmas' death, Percy

Grimm is a young man obsessed with the Certainty of order, who does nothing but worship abstraction through his participation in the National Guard, "completely freed now of ever again having to think or decide" because no detail of life is relevant next to his abstract, "sublime and implicit faith in physical courage and blind obedience, and belief that the white race is superior to any and all other races and that the American is superior to all other white races and that the American uniform is superior to all men . . ." (p. 395).

The chapter then goes on to tell the reader that when Joe Christmas was captured, Grimm organized a group of vigilantes which no official organization would sponsor but which, ad hoc as it was, became the supreme organization in town because of the magnitude of its sense of Certainty. It is into this setting that Joe's break from the sheriff is placed for the reader, not into any context of blood. The occurrence of the break is prefaced for the reader with a discontinuous reference to the sheriff's protest, voiced after Joe's death, that he was not prepared for any trouble because "Stevens done told me he would plead guilty and take a life sentence" (p. 401). A significant omission from Stevens' account of Joe's death, this brings to the fore precisely at the moment of Joe's run for freedom both Stevens' inaccuracy, despite his calm assurance, and his particular misunderstanding about Joe. The pattern of black and white is irrelevant. Joe breaks because he will con-

sider himself neither guilty nor bound for life, having gained knowledge from Mrs. Hines that has dispelled his obsession with abstraction.

The narration of Grimm's pursuit of Joe reveals what Stevens has missed completely. The whys and wherefores of Joe's erratic movements after his escape do not lie in Joe himself, let alone in his blood. In witnessing the chase, the reader sees that all of Joe's movements are controlled by the methodical, systematic chase which Percy Grimm gives Joe; Joe himself is almost incidental as the sequence of the chase unfolds. At each moment of the chase, the reader sees Grimm's calculations of the possibilities for Joe's frantic movements give them a shape which Joe's desire for freedom does not give them, forcing Joe into options instead of allowing for free flight.

With a "blind and untroubled faith in the rightness and infallibility of his actions" (p. 402) Grimm maneuvers Joe, "thinking swiftly, logically with a kind of fierce and constrained joy" (p. 402). He maps out a strategy for Joe, who, he theorizes, must get out of unimpeded sight, must try to get into a ditch near a house, or go around the side of it. Grimm, limiting Joe's possibilities by virtue of his own logic, does not correctly guess which option Joe will exercise. But it is no matter; he has won by designing the situation as a game.

Maneuvering Joe into Hightower's house, Grimm and his comrades find Hightower bleeding on the floor where

Christmas has left him, hardly evidence for the accuracy of Stevens' theory that Joe went there for sanctuary on the advice of his grandmother. What is more, the reader sees that Joe did resist, contrary to what Stevens said and believed to be the truth about Joe's death.

Just before Grimm shoots Christmas, Hightower raises his bleeding head from the floor and tries to intercede with the alibi which Byron had previously tried to elicit from him. He tries to convince the vigilantes that Christmas was at his house on the night of the murder. The reader sees Hightower's reversal as one more awakening under the pressure of unavoidable, unexpected contact with particular reality. Hightower's assertion of his human bond with Joe is a triumph in the reader's vision that implies another apocalyptic moment, but again it is qualified. Hightower succeeds neither in saving Joe nor in being understood by the other characters.

Grimm's attack on Joe is a fully-charged icon, set into the context of the vision toward which the structure of the novel has been leading the reader. Grimm, zealous and vitalized by the Certain order he sees himself fulfilling, kills Joe, as Joe is emerging into the first real particularity he has known, and also castrates him. Grimm thus incarnates the relationship between Certainty on the one hand and life, creation, and love on the other, at its extreme point of conflict. Abstraction murders and mutilates human existence by reducing it to nothing but impersonal

mechanism. Grimm also misunderstands Hightower's human charity to Joe in this framework. His response to Hightower's plea for Joe is "Has every preacher and old maid in Jefferson taken their pants down to the yellow bellied son of a bitch" (p. 405).

Grimm's failure to understand Hightower is compounded by the failure of the other characters to understand Grimm's act or Joe's death. The death scene does agitate the men who have accompanied Grimm as vigilantes; one vomits. Nevertheless, their horror leads not to a rejection of Grimm, but instead to a harmless apotheosis of the terrible icon they have witnessed. They immediately abstract what is before them into the tranquil abstraction of apotheosis. As the blood rushes out of Joe's body, "upon that black blast the man seemed to rise soaring into their memories forever . . . in whatever peaceful valleys, beside whatever placid and reassuring streams of old age . . . it will be there, musing, quiet, steadfast, not fading and not particularly threatful, but of itself alone serene, of itself alone triumphant" (p. 407). The characters negate all perception of the specific details involved in this travesty of justice. As the act exists in the apotheosis, the brutal violence has disappeared from perception. As Joe exists for the witnesses in apotheosis, his particularity is stripped from him. His identity is generalized into "the man."

At the end of the third cluster, Joe is dead and yet, out of the complex details that surrounded his life and

death, Byron and Hightower remain, perhaps renewed by their forceful collision with reality and the attendant flickers of the claims of love and particular life. The fourth cluster, however, ends the vision by dashing these hopes.

Chapter 20 finds Hightower delving back to the beginning of his commitment to abstract order. In the attempts he plunges back into the history of the Hightower family. As in the Burden history, the Hightower line, comprising both energy and abstraction, dwindles to abstraction. But the frontiers of Hightower's history are pushed back to the original division from reality into abstraction and the reader is led to understand that this original betrayal of the particularity of the world has led to a cycle of shame that keeps man locked into abstraction.

Hightower's memories begin with the conflict between his energetic, disorderly grandfather and his methodical, abstracted father. Hightower thinks how his father's abstracted attitude has roots in American history that precede his grandfather: ". . . some throwback to the austere and not dim times not so long passed, when a man in that country had little of himself to waste and little time to do it in, and had to guard and protect that little not only from nature, but from man too . . ." (p. 415). Hightower characterizes this tradition of guarded retreat from the flow of life as negation of the particulars of reality. "The very fact that he [Hightower's father] could and did see no paradox in the fact that he took an active part in a partisan

war and on the side whose principles opposed his own was proof enough that he was two separate people one of whom dwelled by serene rules in a world where reality did not exist" (p. 415). The Civil War purges the Hightower line of the grandfather's unruly energy, and converts Hightower's father from an abstract vision of life to a material reduction of humanity. Affected by the reality of the bodies to whose souls he was supposed to minister, Hightower's father became a doctor during the war and continued in this profession when it was all over. Hightower was the progeny and victim of this conversion.

Hightower's father's original attitude had isolated Hightower's mother from aid during the war. This isolation resulted in severe malnutrition, making her an invalid for life. On her husband's return from the war, his conversion to the material ministry to the body enabled him to treat the condition he had created in her. His change kept her alive and enabled her to give birth to Hightower, but not without penalty for the damage done during the war. Hightower was weak as a result of his mother's physical weakness and feared his physically robust father. Hightower culminated his line with another withdrawal into abstraction as he attempted to protect himself from the overwhelming reality of his father's physical presence. The tales of his grandfather's military career became his refuge because they removed him from the fearsome moments of his immanent life. "No horror here because they were just ghosts, never seen in

the flesh, heroic, simple, warm; while the father which he knew and feared was a phantom which would never die" (p. 418). His withdrawal continued when in his manhood the church became another refuge from particularity. Out of this gathering of fragments of the particulars of his family history, and approaching the vision that the novel is creating for the reader, Hightower emerges with a vision of the Certainty he has erroneously served.

He sees his distance from life and how it developed, how his obsession with his grandfather is a distortion of his need for life. He realizes that in looking at this abstraction he has served he must also face his own responsibility for the loss of his congregation and for his wife's death by suicide. He sees that in using the church to withdraw from humanity he has been a part of that religious tradition that has "removed the bells from the steeples. He seems to see them, endless, without order, empty symbolical, bleak, skypointed not with ecstasy or passion but in adjuration, threat, and doom. He seems to see the churches of the world like a rampart, like one of those barricades of the middle ages planted with dead sharpened stakes, against truth, and against that peace in which to sin and be forgiven which is the life of man" (pp. 426-27). He sees that he has substituted death for love, "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" (pp. 427-28).

But out of all this progress there emerges an accusing, harsh, cold "final and supreme Face Itself, cold, terrible because of Its omniscient detachment" (p. 428). This Face accuses Hightower of his particularity as if it were indistinguishable from the sin of selfishness, of serving, not "My ends, but . . . your own" (p. 428). The shame of himself that this accusation summons up in Hightower makes him unable to maintain the perception that would have made him truly able to communicate human love. The outer walls of the temple of abstraction, upon crumbling, have revealed to the reader an inviolate inner sanctum.

As Hightower writhes beneath the accusation of the detached Face, his creative thinking grinds to a halt. Words flash in his mind as he fights for his new attachment to life. "I dont want to think this. I must not think this. I dare not think this" (p. 429). But Hightower's shame overwhelms him, and he does find his thoughts cutting him off again from reality and from love. Throwing away all the particulars he has amassed, he opts for abstracted thoughts about his grandfather in order to move the responsibility for his own shame to his dead ancestor. The reader knows as a result of the preceding particulars that Hightower's allegation that his grandfather and not he is responsible for the grief he has caused in the world does not hold up. But suddenly Hightower accounts for his deeds in this

way. ". . . 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 . . . [sic] the debaucher and murderer of my grandson's wife, since I could neither let my grandson live or die . . . [sic]" (p. 430).

At this withdrawal, the world undergoes apotheosis. Hightower sees the people of Jefferson, the characters who had major parts in the events of Joe's death and in the birth of Lena's baby, in a design, a halo, peaceful and utterly still, "as though they have escaped into an apotheosis" (p. 430). There is one moving spot in the serene halo; it is a struggle between two faces. Hightower cannot at first recognize the participants in this peaceful struggle. When he realizes that they are Christmas and Grimm, he withdraws further from life. This withdrawal is made more explicit; at Hightower's recognition of the faces, he turns his back on the living world. Here the reader sees a tragic symmetry; Hightower leaves life through the phantom image of the moment through which he has just entered life, the conflict between Christmas and Grimm. He feels himself "losing contact with the earth, lighter, and lighter, emptying, floating" (p. 431). The air is filled with "the lost and unheeded crying of all the living who ever lived" (p. 431). Hightower, instead of paying heed to the living, withdraws to his isolated Certainty in his phantoms of his grandfather.

Here indeed is a Blakean satire of the conventional role of the Deity in the revelations of the apocalypse. This vision portrays it as an impediment to release from the fallen world.[7]

The same blighted redemption fills the reader's last view of Byron's "brave new world." Chapter 21 finds Byron trying to live out his small, tardily-arrived-at freedom from abstract Certainty, taking his chance with Lena. With terrible irony, the last chapter of the novel reveals the doom toward which Byron is headed to be the abstraction of Lena herself. Lena involves Byron in a quest for the unattainable through her spiritual entrapment in a Certainty to which Byron will never be admitted because it transcends the particularity of Burch's foolish unreliability and Byron's loving commitment. Byron is figuratively castrated. This last revelation is conveyed through the eyes of a stranger whose dramatized relationship to his wife parallels Byron's to Lena, though the stranger does not know it. Byron's plight is an icon of human union under the rule of Certainty.

The good-natured speaker, a furniture dealer, gives the reader a last view of the world of Light in August, in an anecdote he is telling his wife while they lie in their bed. Telling a tale of Byron's sexual shame, all the while asserting his own virility to his wife, the salesman reveals his own subordination to Certainty while he laughs at Byron. The story he tells his wife is a constant stream of sexual innuendo hinging on WHAT BYRON WAS GOING TO DO. The wife's

refrain of variations on "What happened then?" punctuates the narrator's anecdote. He answers her in terms of their sexual relationship, "I just showed you once. You aint ready to be showed again, are you?" (p. 437). Similar statements abound in his repertoire.

The central incident of the salesman's story is Byron's attempt to work himself up to a sexual conquest of Lena. Byron does, in the course of events, quietly betake himself to Lena's bed, and the outcome fills the furniture dealer with shame for Byron, himself, and all men, as he sees Lena, from her sleeping place in the back of the truck, lift Byron "and set him back outside on the ground like she would to that baby . . . and she says, 'You go and lay down now, and get some sleep. We got another fur piece to go tomorrow'" (p. 441).

Byron is missing the next morning, but Lena calmly continues to care for the baby without noticeable agitation. The dealer's shame turns to fear, for Byron has left him holding the baby, as it were, and he can think of nothing but how to dispose of Lena. When Byron suddenly appears at the side of the road, the dealer's fear yields to laughter. The dealer now sees the situation in terms of the eternal triumph of women and formulates his final view of the situation. He now believes that Lena is just travelling as far as she can before taking on marriage with Byron and submitting to a settled life.

The salesman's delight and amusement with his happy

ending is subverted by the text. When Byron reappears, he says to Lena, "I done come too far now. . . . I be dog if Im going to quit now." Lena replies, "Aint nobody never said for you to quit" (p. 443). The reader is made to see that Lena's reply is an invitation to Byron to keep going in circles after her, rather than an encouraging sign that she will finally relent, as the dealer's final words, a description of Lena crossing the state line into Tennessee, inadvertently reveal to the reader that Lena, locked within the pattern of her Certainty, will never make fruitful the chance Byron has taken for her. "I says, Saulsbury, Tennessee, and I looked back and saw her face. And it was like it was already fixed and waiting to be surprised, and that she knew that when the surprise did come, she was going to enjoy it. And it did come and it did suit her. Because she said, 'My, my. A body does get around. Here we aint been coming fron Alabama but two months, and now its already Tennessee'" (p. 444).

The salesman's delight with Lena's calm surprise is misplaced, for that poise bodes ill. First it is completely independent of Lena's involvement in life. Even the salesman can see that she has it ready before the fact. The reader is aware, as the salesman is not, of the significance of this seemingly harmless posing. Second, the reader is aware, as the salesman is not, that the "we" coming from Alabama for two months does not include Byron, and that this is evidence that to Lena, Byron is nothing more than an

irrelevant satellite. Thus Byron has escaped from the prison of his mind to land outside the fortress of Lena's body, guarded by a consciousness which will continue to be indefinitely sealed.

In addition, the text shows the reader that the salesman, believing himself to be more of a man than Byron because he has asserted himself sexually with his wife, is equally isolated. Laughing at Lena's rejection of Byron, the salesman does not see that he is equally rejected by his wife, who is hostile to him throughout the narration. She makes very slighting remarks about their sexual relationship, and she is never once amused by the anecdote that the salesman is telling for their mutual pleasure. Rejected sexuality is the totality of his union with his wife, as is examplified by her reaction to the anecdote. Though his laughter rings all over the narrative, the salesman does not know that he is alone.

The completion of the searing events of the story by the furniture dealer's detached account has baffled many critics. From the Blakean standpoint, the salesman becomes the final proof of the gap between what the events of the novel have taught the characters and what they have taught the reader. The reader knows as the salesman does not that the salesman's "objective" laughter at what he construes as the humorous tyranny of Lena over Byron is itself the object of the reader's laughter. The reader understands that what the dealer sees in Byron should be a <u>de te fabula</u> for the

salesman, if he perceived the common humanity of himself and Byron and Lena instead of viewing their action as part of a show from which he is detached.

Thus the reader is left, not with the tragedy of abstraction's murder of specific humanity but with the comedy of the cosmically absurd self-parodying mechanism of abstraction that separates itself off from specific humanity. This cosmic joke snatches triumph out of defeat for the reader. There has been at last no apocalyptic revelation for the characters. The interplay of the many lives in Light in August has tugged and pulled at a seemingly puncture-proof abstract balloon. But the reader has seen at the center of the characters' fallen existences not a damnation by divinity but instead a laughable human blindness. This deflation of the villain behind fallen human tragedy also postulates a more hopeful outlook for human redemption, despite the characters' inability to achieve it. The novel goes even further, however, in denying any theological sanction to the characters' experiences of tragedy and defeat. Structural juxtaposition also reveals that what the characters perceive as divinity, as the more than human in their lives, is in fact a matter of a perverse rational iconology that camouflages the divinity immanent in the world.

Blakean Mythology: The Anti-Christ and the Female Will

Critics sensing a mythical dimension in Light in

August have hitherto sought for it in supposed references to conventional Christian or pre-Christian mythology in the text. Some have seen Joe Christmas as a Christ figure because of his initials, his age, his appearance on the orphanage steps on Christmas day, and the suggestion of the resurrection some have found in the scene of his death. Others have looked upon him as an Oedipal figure because of his relationship to McEachern and because of his involvement with women older than himself. Some have tried to extend this investigation to Lena, searching for her function either as an analogue of Mary or Mary Magdalene, or of some pre-Christian earth mother. All these attempts and others like them have led to a jumble of mythologies which fail to demonstrate any bearing on the meaning of the whole novel. If, however, Blake's mythology of the murder of the particulars is used to explore the characters, the siren call of apparent conventional mythology ceases to lure the critic onto the rocks of inanity.

One of the illuminations of Los, the artist redeemer, at the end of *Jerusalem* is of the evil involved in misconstruing a particular as a universal. "No individual ought to appropriate to Himself / . . . any of the Universal Characteristics / . . . / Those who dare appropriate to themselves Universal Attributes / Are the Blasphemous Selfhoods & must be broken assunder" (p. 247). What Blake means here is that it is destructive to perceive divinity within the limitations of that which has individual shape and form.

In Jerusalem, the Covering Cherub and the Female Will represent the perverse exaggeration of the particular, its bloating into a universal. They are defeated by Albion's sacrifice of himself for Jesus, a reverence which places cosmic, limitless energy of love and imagination instead of the distorted specific at the center of the universe. Blakean mythology illuminates the progressive bloating of particulars into universals in Light in August, though in Faulkner's vision as opposed to Blake's these perverse divinities vanquish everyone but the careful reader. In Light in August energy is eclipsed by the false divinity. This mythology is presented through the mysteries that dominate the characters of Light in August, mysteries which the reader can see are incomprehensibly powerful only because they pervert the limited into the divine and fragment the world of experience to the confusion of all the characters. Thus, at the same time that the fictional world is out of touch with the particulars of the moment of existence, the generalizations with which it is obsessed are particulars bloated beyond the moment into a perverse idea of universality.

Such exaggeration of a detail occurs immediately in the novel as the reader learns about Lena's childhood practice of walking from the town limits in her shoes to create the impression that she lived there (p. 3). The hyperbolic importance she gives to her presence on the sidewalk in shoes suggests the imputation of a universal interpretation

of a very accidental, limited detail. Similarly, shortly afterward, we learn how Lena, having no specific idea about Burch's whereabouts, leaves to find him. Completely removed from the particulars of her journey, she nevertheless finds inappropriate meaning in certain details of her departure. She makes a point of leaving as though certain details contained within themselves the immanence of secrecy and illegitimacy she sees in her departure. She leaves her brother's house at night by going out the window, although we are told "She could have departed by the door, by daylight. Nobody would have stopped her" (p. 6). This ritual exaggeration of highly selective detail calls attention to itself in a landscape that is portrayed very much in terms of the way the characters are out of touch with significant details in their situation.

This lack of proportion surfaces intermittently as the reader becomes acquainted with the novel. For example, in Chapter 2 the narrator's description of the town's attitude toward Joanna Burden focuses on its inappropriate emphasis on certain details.

> She has lived in the house since she was born, yet she is still a stranger, a foreigner whose people moved from the North during the Reconstruction. A Yankee, a lover of Negroes, about whom in the town there is still talk of queer relations with Negroes . . . despite the fact that it is now sixty years since her grandfather and her brother were killed on the square by an exslaveowner. . . . But it still lingers about her and about the place: something dark and outlandish and threatful, even though she is but a woman and but the descendant of

> them whom the ancestors of the town had reason (or thought they did) to hate and dread (p. 41).

There may be many ways of describing the town's unreasonable fixation about the Burden estate, but the significant contextual setting of the town's prejudice emphasizes the fixation on detail in a social pattern which otherwise cuts perception off from the specifics of the moment.

Similarly, in Chapter 3, Hightower's obsession with the details of his grandfather's career in the cavalry transforms these particulars into universally significant statements as he makes them the center of his sermons, while at the same time the community in which he lives is devoting itself to blinding its perceptions to what he is doing. In addition, despite the lack of relationship to his wife, he supports a shelter for wayward girls in Memphis with such passion that upon losing his church, "the bitterest thing which he believed that he had ever faced--more than the bereavement and the shame--was the letter which he wrote them to say that from now on he could send them but half the sum . . ." (p. 50). The existence of the women in the institution with whom he has no immediate contact are specifics which assume major shapes in his consciousness.

When the town wishes to rid itself of the reality of Hightower's existence, details again become monumentally significant in a way that mutilates the wholeness of the actual moment of reality. The distortion is the only foundation of what the town comes to perceive as a holy truth.

The town punishes Hightower on a pretext of miscegenation which to the reader is clearly a charge based on the swollen exaggeration of a particular part of Hightower's circumstances into an unrelated Certainty. "He still kept a cook, a Negro woman, He had had her all the time. But they told Byron how as soon as his wife was dead, the people seemed to realize all at once that the Negro was a woman, that he had that Negro woman in the house alone with him all day. And how the wife was hardly cold in the shameful grave before the whispering began. About how he had made the wife go bad and commit suicide because he was not a natural husband . . . and that the Negro woman was the reason" (p. 61).

Similarly, Joe, in Chapter 5, unable to sleep and impelled by a Certainty that negates all the details of his life, nevertheless experiences a surge of mythologized hatred for women for which he has no particular correlative, but in the grip of which he finds certain details intensely significant. Thrashing about, Joe finds himself wanting to sleep in the old stable in order to surround himself with the odor of horses. "He was thinking, aloud now, 'Why in hell do I want to smell horses?' Then he said, fumbling: 'It's because they are not women. Even a mare horse is a kind of man'" (p. 95). Joe is in thrall to the same perverse universal as the black part of town fills him with terror of nothing in particular, and a game of cards on a porch in the white part of town seems to him to represent all he ever wanted in life (p. 100).

The first five chapters in Light in August, which I have called the first cluster, call attention to the perverse mythologizing of selected details in this fictional world at the same time that they call attention to the characters' division from particulars of their moments of existence. In Joe's biography, the second cluster, the weight, seriousness, and effect of this process of mythologizing are measured against the effect they have on the development of Joe's life. Hines, McEachern, and Joanna are the shaping forces in Joe's life. Each approaches Joe with claims of divine authority. But in each case, although the reader sees that the assumed divinity is nothing more than a variant of the kind of reasoning that prompted Lena to put on her shoes so as to be perceived as a townsperson, the reader is also aware that this kind of mythologizing has far-reaching consequence.

Hines' hysterical tirade to the dietitian is, as the reader can see, nothing but an allegorization of women and blacks, an abcess of particulars with no immanence. Hines' assumptions about Joe's black blood, which are completely unfounded, are again set into a context in which all effort is devoted to negating perception of particulars that are in the situation. In counterpoint, Joe is a "sign" to Hines, "I knowed he would be there to catch you when God's time came. I knowed. I know who set him there, a sign and a damnation for bitchery" (p. 111). Regardless of the perverse hyperbole involved, Hines does affect Joe's life.

Similarly, McEachern's fanatic conception of himself as a universal force, exemplified by his delusion quoted above that he is the earthly form of archangel Michael, is both a demented mythologizing of his particular existence and an operative force working on Joe's fate. In the same way, Joanna's universalization of blackness and whiteness is available to the reader as a distorted deification of particular attributes. Again, the twisted perception holds sway. Their several madnesses, only extensions of perverse inflation of specific details, are the only extant theology in this world.

Significantly, Hines, McEachern, and Joanna present their mythologies solely in terms of opposition between God and Satan. Nowhere in their cosmologies is there any reference to Jesus. That name exists only in the social underworld in which Joe briefly stays with Bobbie, among the gangsters (pp. 149-91). All reference to Jesus' name here ironically degrades the love that that name conventionally implies. Every time Max, Bobbie's pimp, derides the possibility of any selfless and giving connection between people, he invokes the name of Christ. For example, when Bobbie tells Max that the reason why she has preferred Joe, a man with no money, is that she likes him, Max responds "It's Romeo and Juliet. For sweet Jesus!" (p. 167). At another point, Max offers the inexperienced Joe "something on the house." He makes fun of Joe both for the boy's failure to understand what is meant, and in the parody of gen-

erosity that this offer implies. "'Never tried anything on the house,' Max said. 'For sweet Jesus.'" (p. 169). Joe also picks up this mannerism, but, when he uses the expression, he displays his limited conception of the human bond that Christ implies. When Joe, in Bobbie's room, sees and touches an undressed woman for the first time, he also invokes the name, "Jesus. Jesus. So this is it" (p. 170). "It," the supreme human experience, is represented for him by the sexual. It is, of course, quite common for "Jesus" to be used as an expletive but, in the context of this novel, in its significant absence from other scenes, it is clear that the reader is not meant to view these outbursts as a casual mimesis of colloquial speech. The carefully restricted use of this name points to a deflation of divinity just as Hines, McEachern, and Joanna imply a distorted, inappropriate deification.

Rather than seeing the implementation of conventional mythology, therefore, the reader sees, in the second cluster, an intense examination of the peculiar relationship between particular and universal that the first cluster has brought to his attention. There is an insistence on the seriousness of their puzzling manifestations rather than an explanation of them. In the third cluster, Chapters 13-19, the deflation of Christ implied in Joe's biography is further explored to reveal the neglect of true deity while the exaltation of a mad theology of distended particulars is once again in evidence. Hightower and Byron debate the

morality of Byron's actions toward Lena, but in terms of Lena as Woman (pp. 276-77). Joe envisions life and death in terms of Blackness and Whiteness (p. 297). Hines, a white man with demonstrably impaired mental faculties, preaches the superiority of all whites to all blacks (p. 301). The two main episodes of pathological theology, however, are Hightower's encounter with the Hineses and Grimm's murder of Joe. These lead to the reader's dramatic awareness of the neglected particularity as the true divinity, a force, a bond, not a limited image, shape, or name.

When Byron confronts Hightower with Doc and Mrs. Hines, the story of Joe's origin emerges. As the reader learns that Joe is Hines' grandson, he discovers that Hines killed Joe's father and mother and has spent his life in dedication to Joe's destruction as well. The story of Hines' homocidal rage toward those who should be objects of his devoted love is, as the reader comes to see, predicated upon a belief that Hines shares with his wife in the particular details of the immediate world as a divine allegory. Both Hines and his wife see all the specifics of their lives in terms of universal abstraction. Mrs. Hines, for example, telling Hightower about the birth of her own daughter, interprets the event as though its reality lay not in itself but in its signification of a "higher" existence.

> On the very night that Milly was born, he was locked up in jail for fighting. . . . He said he had to fight because he is littler than most men and so folks would try to put on him. . . . But I told him

> it was because the devil was in him. And that some day the devil was going to come on him. . . . That's what I told him, the next day after Milly was born and me still too weak to raise my head, and him just out of jail again. I told him so: how right then God had given him a sign and a warning: that him being locked up in a jail on the very hour and minute of his daughter's birth was the Lord's own token that Heaven never thought him fitten to raise a daughter (p. 326).

Hines' recollection of Joe's early life is equally given to placing the center of existence in details that are inflated beyond their reality in the flow of immanent life. One of Hines' many distortions is exemplified by his description of the dietitian's predicament in the orphanage,

> and old Doc Hines said, "How is the fornications of a slut a part of Your purpose too?" and God said, "You wait and see. Do you think it is just chanceso [sic] that I sent that young doctor to be the one that found My abomination laying wrapped in that blanket on that doorstep that Christmas night? Do you think it was just chanceso [sic] that the Madam should have been away that night and give them young sluts the chance and call to name him Christmas in sacrilege of My Son? So I am gone now because I have set My will a-working and I can leave you here to watch it." So old Doc Hines he watched and he waited. From God's own boiler room he watched them children, and the devil's walking seed unbeknownst among them (p. 335).

In the desecration of life fostered by Hines' view of the world, the name of Christ is important, but not the immediacy of human suffering. This is dramatized by Hines' story and afterward by Hightower's reaction. It is made clear to the reader that Hightower has had an immediate reaction in the moment of hearing this story. While Mrs. Hines is pleading with Hightower to come forth with an alibi for her grandson, Byron almost takes hold of the significance

of Hightower's humanizing empathy, as he looks at the minister and thinks, "It's right funny. You'd think they had done got swapped somewhere. Like it was him that had a nigger grandsom waiting to be hung" (p. 309). But ironically, no one present speaks to this immediate fraternal love in Hightower. They all address the notion of a higher good: Byron in his appeal to Hightower to pay the price of being a good man, and Hightower in his refusal on the grounds of the questionable morality of Byron's liaison with Lena for which he knows Byron is exploiting this situation.

The relationship between Hightower's undeciphered fellow feeling and the persistent mythologizing of details is transformed into the counterpoint between true and false gods in the Blakean sense by another confrontation in Hightower's house. Joe's death scene at the end of this cluster presents the reader with Percy Gromm, Joe's assassin, as another in the series of characters who distort their immediate moment into a phantasm of cosmic transcendence. This time, however, the deformation of the moment is presented to the reader with the implication that if crucifixion is to be understood at all by humanity it must be understood as the act of mythologizing that at first appeared innocently in Lena's use of her shoes.[8]

Grimm is described to the reader first as a man committed to sacrificing life to the mythological detail, a man with "sublime and implicit faith in physical courage and blind obedience, and a belief that the white race is superior

to any and all other races and that the American is superior to all other white races and the American uniform is superior to all men, and that all that would ever be required of him in payment for this privilege, would be his own life" (p. 395). In his participation as Joe's nemesis he is evoked for the reader as an individual swollen past his immediate existence into the role of a priest of an abstract deity he conceives of as The Player. Grimm is shown pursuing Joe in the service of this deity by transforming the details of the chase from free moving elements of the moment into a highly structured, divine playing field on which all specifics have cosmic significance. As Grimm tracks Joe, the reader is told that "He did it as though under the protection of a magic or a providence or as if he knew that Christmas would not be waiting there with a pistol" (p. 404). Again, "He was moving again almost before he had stopped, with that lean, swift blind obedience to whatever Player moved him on the Board" (p. 405). And again, "The car which passed him and lost him and then returned was just where it would have been, just where the Player had desired it to be" (p. 405).[9]

Just before Grimm kills and castrates Joe, having cornered him in Hightower's house, Grimm accusingly identifies Hightower's attempted intercession as "Jesus Christ" when he burst forth with the expletive as Hightower abruptly volunteers an alibi for Joe. No character, but Hightower's spontaneous act of human love and fellowship opposes Grimm's

cosmic magnifications that detach life's actualities from its flow. As in Blake, guilt is imputed to true divinity by the vituperative false gods.

Joe's death is indeed evoked for the reader as a transformation of the immediate, living body into a detached abstraction of a universal. The reader is told that when Joe dies, seeming to the witnesses to soar out of his real body, he becomes a cosmic image in their minds: "upon that black blast [his blood] the man seemed to rise soaring into their memories forever and ever" (p. 407). As Grimm castrates Joe, he says, "now you'll let white women alone, even in hell" (p. 407). Grimm having destroyed the immediacy of life with his act of murder, Grimm's statement is less a justification than evidence that the bloody particulars of murder have been rendered invisible by the bloated universals of Womanhood, Whiteness, and Hell.[10]

Hightower's direct encounter with the false universal follows, re-emphasizing for the reader that the false extrapolation of details into universals is the anti-Christ. What is more, the final triumph of the false god is presented in imagery parallel to the presentation of Blake's anti-Christ, the Covering Cherub. Hightower's plunge into memory and thought brings him into the immediate proximity of his deity. It is portrayed as Christ's oppressive opponent, and Its triumph here is described in terms of Its successful employment of guilt and shame to forestall the balm of forgiveness and love with which, if Christianity is to be pos-

sible, Christ must have the power to heal. The deity appears to Hightower as the Supreme Face, the exaggeration of what is rightly a specific of immanence, as the antagonist of Hightower's nascent commitment to the "shape of pity and love" (p. 428) that is born out of his painful harrowing of his history of mistaken alienation from his fellow man. This deified, isolated fragment accuses Hightower of isolated selfishness, making Hightower remember, with shame and guilt, how he made "it appear that he resigned his pulpit for a martyr's reasons, when at the very instant there was within him a leaping a triumphant surge of denial behind a face which had betrayed him, believing itself safe behind the lifted hymnbook, when the photographer pressed his bulb" (p. 428). This reference to a Satanic smile on Hightower's face caught in a photograph when Hightower walked out of his church for the last time implies a complex relationship between Hightower and the human error of inappropriately perceiving divinity. His misguided reverence for the deified, isolated detail is evident in the power of the Face's accusion holds for him. This "deity" paradoxically holds him guilty of his reverence for It as It, castigates him for the desire to withdraw from direct experience that made his forced resignation from the pulpit a joy to him. This cosmic oxymoron forces Hightower to abandon reality, and he is once again possessed by the apotheosis of details in two shapes, the halo of faces involved in the events of Joe and Lena's stories, and his grandfather's cavalry charge.

These hallucinations parallel the twin idols of religion and war revealed in the inner chambers of the Covering Cherub in Blake (Jerusalem, p. 229, and Milton, p. 140). As in Blake, humanity's failure to revere the immanence of Christ's love and forgiveness results in its being caught helplessly in the web of a rational tyranny which views all life as detached images, whose strongholds are a false destructive religion and the chaos and inhumanity of war.

Lena's survival and triumph at the end of Light in August is portrayed as the final triumph of the deification of particulars over the life of immanence. Her ability to represent for Byron a specific he will worship forever although she is unattainable for him is a final blasphemy of inappropriate universalization. This magisterial dominion of Woman is a perversion of the particularity of the female which finds analogue in Blake. In Blake's epics, the triumph of the anti-Christ assures the domination of the Female Will. Although this never takes place in the epics because Blake never seemed seriously to entertain the notion that Christ would not ultimately triumph, whenever the Cherub seems to gain the upper hand, the Female Will also appears in the ascendant (Jerusalem, pp. 200-29). The notion of Byron's predicament as an abstract female victory is emphasized by the salesman's repetition of the phrase, "You can't beat a woman" (pp. 443-44). The purposeless chaos of particularity that results from the Female Will is in the last lines of the book, as Lena speaks of her delight at the

progress she has made. "My, my. A body does get around. Here we aint been coming from Alabama but two months and now its already Tennessee" (p. 444). Nevertheless the reader sees no progress here, but the random motion of flotsam.[11] If the characters' plight is desperate, however, the reader's ability to perceive that it is and why it is in such a sad state of affirs is the Blakean hope that emerges from Light in August.

Notes to Chapter IV

[1]The actual structure of Light in August has been treated only by Ffancois Pitavy (Faulkner's Light in August, revised and enlarged edition, trans. Gillian E. Cook [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973]). Pitavy has tried to analyze the progression of chapters in terms of significant units, as I have, while the other critics have discussed the general impact of the elements without considering the order in which they are presented. Pitavy has grouped the chapters into ten significant units: 1-4, 5-12, 13, 14-15, 16, 17, 18. 19, 20, 21 (pp. 13-35). What he has done, however, is to trace in his units image patterns and other recurrences which make them cohere internally but do not account for any connections between them. Thus at the end of his critique, Pitavy cannot account for their significance in terms of an overall meaning. The other major critical treatments deal with what Waggoner has called the "strategy" of the novel (William Faulkner: From Jefferson to the World [Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1959], p. 103).

Irving Howe, Olga Vickery, Joseph W. Reed, Jr., Walter J. Slatoff, Richard P. Adams, and Hyatt Waggoner talk about the general impact without discussing the units. Vickery, Howe, and Reed discuss the effect in terms of the exploration of the social and the private. Howe writes that the central concern in Light in August is with "the relation between a man's social role and private being" (William Faulkner: A Critical Study [New York: Random House, 1951], p. 201). The problem with his formulation is that he does not explore relation in terms of what the book presents. What is the book saying about Doc Hines' social role and private being? Why does it introduce him anonymously in Chapter 6 and cause him to disappear and return, named in Chapters 15 and 16 in order to say it? Questions of this sort, which can be asked about all of the characters in the novel, are not answered by Howe's critical formulation.

Vickery tries to discuss the novel as the presentation of the illusory and destructive nature of society's categories. She believes that Joe's life demonstrates their destructive power and that in Chapter 20 Hightower comes to realize the interdependence of the private and the public which the categories have falsely separated (The Novels of William Faulkner [Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959], pp. 66, 72-74, 79). Her theory is ineffectual, however, in accounting for Lena's presence in the novel and for the presence of an anonymous furniture dealer as the narrator of the final scene. If illumination has been achieved in the preceding chapter, what need is there for

our parting look at Lena? Further, Vickery believing that the novel is pointing to a myth created for Joe by the social categories, tries to substantiate this by tracing the development of the myth in Chapters 6-12. She does not, however, explain why the novel acquaints the reader with the creation of that myth in Chapter 16, long after the development she traces.

Joseph W. Reed, Jr. formulates a critique that splits in two because he cannot integrate impact with rhetorical structure. He divides his argument between a concern for the past and a concern for the distance being built in the novel between the reader and the idea of community. He believes that the novel arrives at the conclusion that only those who can come to grips with their past can survive (Faulkner's Narrative [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973], p. 113). He also discusses how, as the reader accumulates more evidence, allegiance with particular individuals increases and the rudimentary alliance with the town, with which the reader began, decays (p. 143). He does not, however, explicate a relationship between the theme of harmony with the past and the movement in the novel to distance the reader.

Walter J. Slatoff does not talk about the structure, but about a conflict between details in the novel which he has no way to resolve. Nevertheless he remains vague about his intuitions. One of his major points is that there is a general feeling about the book that it is progressing toward some illumination, but he does not explain the structuring of that progression. He is specific only about his disappointment, when he arrives at Hightower's interior monologue in Chapter 20, which is in the position of the expected illumination. "It is, after all, what he [the reader] has been waiting for. At the same time it is anything but triumphant and affirmative when we consider that this very vision is a kind of madness which has emasculated and destroyed him and that his welcoming of it means he has again retreated from himself and the world" (The Quest for Failure [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960], p. 193).

Richard Adams comes close to discussing the structural basis of the novel's impact. His thesis, like mine, is that the novel shows how people's abstract beliefs are artificial obstacles to the motion of life (Faulkner: Myth and Motion [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968], p. 88). He says that, toward this end, the separate stories about incomplete people unite to form a picture of complete humanity (p. 95). This criticism fails, however, to explain how the unification is accomplished through the scenes the reader sees because it relies on a stereotypical grouping that exists in the criticism, but not in the scenes the novel presents. An examination of Lena in the opening scene does not reveal someone so fully immersed in the flow of

life . . . as to seem almost subhuman" (p. 95). On the contrary, on examination, as I have shown in my explication, she is a person in the midst of the flux of life, but possessed, like all the other characters, by abstractions. Close reading breaks up all of Adams' stereotypes. Thus the structure of the novel itself defeats Adams' thesis about its impact.

Waggoner believes that the novel indicts Southern Christianity as a crucifying force (p. 101). But Waggoner does not account for how Lena's part in the novel supports this conclusion. He also does not explore how the novel connects Christianity with the racism that is clearly a part of Joe's death, which Waggoner calls a crucifixion. This is especially important, since one of the major exponents of crucifying Christianity, McEachern, has no obvious connection with racial prejudice against blacks.

[2]William Blake, The Poetry and Prose of . . ., ed. David V. Erdman, commentary Harold Bloom (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1970), p. 249. All subsequent citations of this edition will be accompanied parenthetically with page reference.

[3]My use of the Blakean notion that abstraction destroys the particulars of life because it makes them interchangeable and destroys uniqueness succeeds in illuminating Light in August where many critics have failed. Their reduction of the novel in their very attempts to find one abstraction that will explain it attests to the validity of such an approach as my use of the Blakean framework. Slatoff, for example, is sensitive to the problems Light in August presents for abstraction. His conventional orientation toward the central importance of consistent abstraction has led him to reduce Light in August to a pile of rubble. One instance of the failure of his conventional approach is his attempt to determine Joe's main problem. He tries to trace in the events of Joe's life one consistent, overriding concern, and he cannot. After eliminating racism and Protestantism, because these problems are not in evidence at all Joe's crucial moments, Slatoff tries women. These, he finds, are an everpresent problem, except that, as Slatoff points out, when Joe is surrendering to the authorities, after the murder, he is not thinking of any of his usual bugbears. He is thinking, as Slatoff points out, of the unbroken circular pattern of his life (pp. 182-85). I have commented on how all these problems share an element of abstraction, which is consistent only as it continually manifests itself as a threat to humanity.

The theme of Peter Swiggart's chapter on Light in August is the repressive evil of Protestantism as the central concept of the novel (The Art of Faulkner's Novels [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962]). But Swiggart's

faithfulness to this concept diminishes the richness of the novel. Although McEachern and Hines can be considered examples of Protestant tyranny, Joanna's problems are more complex. What is more, it is hard to see how the treatment Lena receives attests to the power of Protestant repression. Clearly at the end of the novel, the salesman takes a rather benevolent tone toward what would drive a Calvinist to hysteria. Even Percy Grimm, who acts in a way that may be considered as a paradigm for the self-appointed elect, has little actual relation to any religion. His generally abstract actions are accounted for better within the Blakean framework.

Reed, in discussing his interesting perception of the distancing of the reader, which I have also perceived, is hobbled by his use of conventional thought. I believe that I have been able to preceive the real character of the distance because I have used Blake as a point of comparison. I show that particularity is made more accessible to the reader as he draws away from identifying with the belief in the central role of abstraction that the characters manifest. Reed, on the other hand, talks about the conventional distinction between subjective and objective which characterizes the dualist system of beliefs. Reed writes: "In other words, the time structure and the progress of the individuals reveal a growth of the subjective and internal, and whole and the groupings reveal a structure of the objective and the distant" (p. 143). Reed's terminology only confuses the reader when he applies it to the text. What is yielded by a comparison between the Hines' "subjective" disclosures in Hightower's study and the scene in which Grimm "objectively" kills Joe? What is the difference between Hines' "subjective" rantings about God, Satan, the black curse, and the abomination of Women and Grimm's "objective" castration and murder of Joe, saying, "Now you'll leave white women alone, even in Hell" (p. 407). My distinction grants the subjective and the objective the common domain they do in fact inhabit in the world abstractly conceived and differentiates that from all the elements of particularity which none of the characters subjectively or objectively perceives.

[4]William Faulkner, Light in August (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 3. All subsequent citations from this edition will be accompanied by parenthetical page reference.

[5]Walter Brylowski, too, has pointed out that Hightower's feeling of rebirth is a false one, though he does not discuss the implications this delusion has for the whole of the novel (Faulkner's Olympian Laugh: Myth in the Novels [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968], p. 115).

[6]Slatoff has also noted oddities in Stevens' explanation but, because he is using conventional dualistic ideas with which to examine the novel, it never occurs to him that it is Stevens and not Faulkner who is unreliable. He does not note the clearly intentional disjunction between what the novel presents as Stevens' words and what it presents of the scene to which they are supposed to refer. Slatoff points out that what the reader knows of Joe's development does not attribute such a central role to black and white blood as Stevens does (pp. 180-81), but Slatoff does not seem able to account for this discrepancy as an intentional effort to discredit Stevens.

[7]Vickery believes in the success of Hightower's final illumination. Howe implicitly expresses a belief that Chapter 20 is meant to be triumphant as he criticizes Faulkner for having delusions similar to Hightower's (pp. 208-9). Slatoff, however, has noted the explicitly portrayed retreat of Hightower into what Slatoff refers to as madness (p. 193). Adams has noted that the allusions to a nobly detached Buddha, which might indicate successful enlightenment, accompany only Hightower's first appearances in the novel and are destroyed by this last monologue. Chapter 20, he says, "Hardly seems an appropriate representation of the Buddhist pari-Nirvana. . . . On the contrary, it is a vision of war and violent action . . . ." (p. 91). Between Adams and Slatoff, I think, it has been shown both that Hightower was defeated in his last appearance and that Faulkner knew it. My explication, I believe, adds illumination of the relevance to the total novel of Hightower's failure and the way in which transitions between the fragments of Hightower's thoughts in Chapter 20 serve to communicate his decline.

[8]The critics tend to see Joe Christmas as a "figure" whose life embodies an allegorical message. The inconsistencies in the details that surround Joe's life strain all their attempts to justify their chosen "figure." Waggoner, interpreting Joe as a Christ figure, justifies the character's violence and cruelty, telling the reader that it would have been too easy to make Joe a natural object of pity. "We are asked to feel not that Christmas is really good or nice but that he epitomizes the human situation" (p. 103). This does not solve the problem of the creation of a Christ figure that epitomizes the evils of the human condition whereas conventionally Christ redeems that condition.

Brylowski also interprets Joe as a Christ figure and calls the Christ archetype the central myth in the novel. At the same time, Brylowski reads an Oedipal archetype into Joe's character and at no point explains why the two are joined. His explanation of the inconsistencies in the mythic substructure of Light in August relates only to Joe's

deviation from the conventional stereotpye of Christ. This Brylowski attributes to poetic license (pp. 106, 110, 115). Brylowski's use of the archetypes solves some of the problems in the novel; it appears that his criticism uses the argument of poetic license to avoid facing the problems the archetypes present.

Vickery approaches Joe somewhat in the same way that Waggoner does. Like him, she visualizes Joe as a victim. Where Waggoner emphasizes Christianity, however, Vickery emphasizes the way Joe's black and white blood makes him a scapegoat (pp. 72-74). Like Waggoner, she avoids the details that suggest Oedipal archetypes. They both also fail to take into consideration that all that there is of God in this novel stands against everything embodied by the supposed Christ figure. They also fail to point to any transcendent sanction in this novel by which Joe Christmas can be an embodiment of any sort of divinity.

The significant deviations which Waggoner, Brylowski, and Vickery overlook are too glaring for Slatoff. But these destroy the novel for him. He is left with the puzzle of Christmas' coldness and viciousness in counterpoint with what he counts as "dozens" of details that he says force the reader to associate Joe with Jesus (pp. 178-79).

My reading of Light in August juxtaposes the spirit of Christ to the broken symbols that obscure Him, thus making sense of the discontinuity of detail. In addition, my reading takes note of the fact that Grimm's expletive, "Jesus Christ!" appears not in reference to a character, but to Hightower's act. Finally, my explanation makes the discontinuous shards of Oedipal references yield a Blakean vision of the god mistakenly worshipped as the supreme authority. The transcendental "father" god is the oppressor of the son of man. The Blakean vision of the human spirit as a rebel against the false god makes the mythic archetypes of Jesus and Oedipus complementary.

[9]Slatoff has pointed out that Faulkner's description of Grimm poses critical problems for him. Slatoff remarks that Grimm's merciless attack on Joe is characterized as the onslaught of a juggernaut, but also as if it is being conducted by a angel or a priest. Slatoff wonders why Christian terms are applicable to the vigilante assassin, and presents this as further evidence of the hopeless ambiguity of Faulkner's work (p. 188). My interpretation of the novel accounts for this juxtaposition through the Blakean framework of a falsely venerated god. Thus Grimm would be both an angel and a priest of that false god as he worships abstraction and murders the human spirit. In this Blakean interpretation, the abstract forms of angel and priest would supplant the living force of love.

[10]Vickery interprets the account of Joe's murder and castration as his final triumph that breaks the social cate-

gories. "Having made him a 'Negro' in order to crucify him, society, by its own passion for affirming the reality of its myths in actual living experience, in the end explodes both those myths and the categories out of which they were evolved. It is no longer the Negro murderer or even Joe Christmas, but simply 'the man' who rises 'soaring into their memories forever and ever'" (p. 74). This optimistic interpretation of Joe's death fails to take at least two very important details into account. First of all, the memory of Joe's death, created on the spot, almost before it exists as the present, is specifically "serene" and unthreatening. There is surely something disturbing about a scene of murder and castration remembered in lovely quietude for which Vickery's interpretation does not account. Perceiving this scene as a triumph also conflicts with the succeeding chapters, in which the categories defeat both Hightower and Byron. In the last chapter, Joe's death is diminished to a casual reference to the lynching of some "nigger," hardly evidence of Joe's triumph.

[11]This is not the received interpretation of Lena and her place in Light in August. Most critics place her as the novel's center of all the positive aspects of life. The most unquestioning encomiums of Lena are Waggoner's, Adams', and Kazin's. Waggoner sees her as a syncretistic blend of pagan and Christian virtues, though he does not deal with the possible implications in such syncretism for the novel as a whole. "Lena is not only a nature goddess but a witness to the efficacy of the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and love" (p. 108). For Adams, Lena is the embodiment of the flow of life he sees thwarted in Light in August by rigid abstraction. Adams calls her, "pure motion, tranquilly natural . . . never stopped or frustrated" (p. 86). Alfred Kazin identifies Lena as the still and natural ideal that Joe seeks all his life ("The Stillness of 'Light in August'" Partisan Review, 24 [Fall, 1957], 520).

Howe, on the other hand, identifies Lena as a positive figure whose existence does pose problems for cultivated readers, who assume that "suffering finds a justification in the growth of the human consciousness" (p. 201). He finds little of either in Lena's charmed existence.

Vickery, who also finds Lena a troubling figure, is able to resolve her problems with her conclusion that it is not Lena's faults that count, but her ability to inspire Byron to important action. "Certainly the real Lena, more than slightly stupid and more than slightly selfish, and the real Confederate Hightower . . . are both unworthy of the dreams they inspire. The responsibility, however, lies not with them but with the Byron Bunches and the Gail Hightowers who can be moved to save or deny Joe Christmas because of their dreams" (p. 83).

Brylowski identifies Lena as the archetypal earth mother, but notes her deviations and justifies them, as he justified Joe's, with poetic license (p. 110).

Slatoff, typically, fastens onto those defects which prevent him from consistent interpretation of Lena. Slatoff notes that despite the fact that she produces life and inspires Byron, the novel trivializes Lena with her "dont a body get around" summaries of experience. Slatoff points out that Lena does get flustered and frightened at times, as some critics have failed to note in their evocations of her as a tranquil earth mother. Slatoff remarks that, most important of all, Lena opts for the amoral and worthless Burch, while mistreating Byron, making it difficult to take her seriously as a positive figure (pp. 176-78).

Slatoff's questions about Lena adequately subvert critical interpretation of Lena as earth mother or embodiment of the Christian virtues; the actual text subverts her role in engendering any expansion of Byron or Hightower's sympathies for Joe. Byron is trying to exploit Joe, not to save him, and in context with Lena Hightower denies Joe; it is Joe's immediate presence that moves Hightower to fraternal action. Byron's best moments are the ones to which Lena is irrelevant. When he actually turns to her he has his worst moments. In the text, Lena's role is associated with malign developments. My interpretation of Lena as Female Will adequately answers Slatoff's objections and solves the problems of Lena's adverse effects on situations, especially on Byron in the last chapter.

CHAPTER V

ABSALOM, ABSALOM!

Conventionally described, the reader's first glimpse of the world of Absalom, Absalom! is of Rosa Coldfield telling Quentin Compson the story of Thomas Sutpen and his family. The exposition of this history is the ostensible purpose of the novel. Actual details of the Sutpen history, however, do not begin until the novel is a few pages old. What is more, as the novel proceeds, the Sutpen story is interrupted repeatedly by the seemingly irrelevant digressions of each particular narrator, and events are repeated and altered variously by the idiosyncrasies of the four narrators. Sutpen's life seems to become less rather than more available to the reader during the course of the book. Nevertheless, my explication contends that the broken continuity of the Sutpen story does not leave the reader with a hopelessly fragmented work to peruse.[1]

In the beginning, the reader's vision is engaged not by any particular character but by a myriad of details. They preoccupy the reader with a context characterized both by the detachment of reason from its objects of perception and by events which erupt from the whirlwind of the moment and appear to menace the characters' objective use of categories. The critical importance of context to Absalom, Absalom! cannot be overemphasized. The characters' solipsis-

tic isolation from each other and from direct apprehension of reality makes the central focus of the novel not the Sutphen story but the characters' lack of actual relation to their context. The reader's attention is directed to the characters' unfortunate interactions with their human and natural contexts by means of an intimacy built up between the reader and the novel's context. Lack of sensitivity to this crucial point is the reason why criticism of Absalom, Absalom! has gone so wide of its mark. (Particularly glaring instances of this problem are those explications which attempt to understand Quentin's ultimate nihilism in Absalom, Absalom! through his relationship to Caddy in The Sound and the Fury, despite the fact that there is not in Absalom, Absalom! the merest suggestion of her existence.)[2]

The careful reader of Absalom, Absalom! absorbs the fragments in the order in which they are presented and examines this novel as a unity with its own integrity. The context of the characters' aloof appraisals of immediate existence and their horror of all evidence of direct experience gradually become his main concern, as he reads what is actually on the pages before him. Focused thus on the characters' blindness to the significance of immediacy's power and on their ridiculously insistent detachment, the reader is rendered capable of a vision of how the prevalent conventions of human knowledge are barriers between humanity and the forces of life and creation. Finally, as we shall see, conventional ontology emerges not only as a barrier but

also as a hallucination of power and value which absurdly leaves humanity in a state of chaos.

The Cartesian division of reality into a non-material ego and a corporeal res from which it is separate and which it orders and controls is what this essay means by "conventional ontology." This division is widely recognized as the basis for objective, scientific study of natural and human occurrences and, I think, needs no further gloss here. On the other hand, the term "immediacy" has a wide range of possible connotations, and further contrast between immediacy and detachment in Absalom, Absalom! seems futile until the reader is acquainted with the precise sense in which "immediacy" is being used in this study.

"Immediacy" is a Blakean term. For Blake, the power and energy of creation are the center of immediacy. To Blake, the observer and observed that stand at the center of Cartesian theory are dualistic distortions, causes of the Fall, to be redeemed away by Jesus, who, to Blake, is the rebirth of direct experience. Blake's invocation to his muses at the beginning of Milton embodies his thoughts on the comparison between the two.

Daughters of Beulah! Muses who inspire the Poet's Song
Record the journey of the immortal Milton thro' your Realms
Of terror & mild moony lustre, in soft sexual delusions
Of varied beauty, to delight the wanderer and repose
His burning thirst & freezing hunger! Come into my hand
By your mild power; descending down the Nerves of my
right arm
From out the Portals of my Brain, where by your ministry
The Eternal Great Humanity Divine planted his paradise,

And in it caus'd the Spectres of the Dead to take sweet
forms
In likeness of himself. Tell also of the False Tongue
vegetated
Beneath your land of shadows of its sacrifices and
Its offerings even till Jesus, the image of the Invisible God
Became its prey; a curse, an offering, and an atonement
For Eternal Death . . .[3]

Here Blake is contrasting the immediate power of the muses as it surges through the poet's mind and body with the images which that power produces, the detached objects of perception. The images are the "spectres of the dead," and Blake, in cautioning the reader about the "false tongue," is warning against a tendency to exaggerate their importance over that of the living power that produces them. Blake's revelations work to give a voice to the life that has been silenced by the dead and deadly forms. This view, as I shall show, is also true of Absalom, Absalom!.

Beulah, the home of Blake's muses, is one of the four states of human existence; the other three are Eden, Generation, and Ulro. Eden is the original state of humanity's total harmony of energy and creation, in the center of which exist Jesus and the living God. Beulah is the necessary complement to Eden, the source of inspiration for man's energy and the repository of his former creations. The essential point about man's old creations is their temporary embodiment of human energy. Man's freedom to create continuously and the renewal of human existence depend on the temporary life of his former creations. Generation is the human state of natural energy, and is the state of procrea-

tive sexuality, also renewing to human existence. Ulro is the Blakean state of terror. It is the nightmare world of the Fall in which the temporary images of Beulah are perverted into permanence and threaten to halt the flow of immediacy and creativity which is essential to the continuity of human life. The emergence of Ulro as a fallen perversion of Beulah takes place at the beginning of The Four Zoas and is one of the major obstacles for mankind to overcome in its search for redemption. The present study will read the text of Absalom, Absalom! through this Blakean mythology.[4]

In Absalom, Absalom!, the most Blakean novel considered here, the reader is confronted with a structure whose metaphor is not, as it was in both The Sound and the Fury and Light in August, simply a Blakean inversion of a conventional Christian metaphor. The structure of the juxtapositions of Absalom, Absalom! makes the most sense when read directly through Blake's own mythology, as an analogy to Blake's fall of Beulah into Ulro. The procession of juxtapositions structures the action for the reader's comprehension of the characters' gradual subjugation by what Blake calls the "spectres of the dead." This is the process by which Blake imagines Beulah to be transformed from dream to nightmare.

Not only is the structure more Blakean; in Absalom, Absalom! language is used more radically than in the two previously discussed novels, in the explication of the

dilemmas of fallen existence. Language is, of course, one kind of mediation of direct experience and in Absalom, Absalom! it becomes an object of scrutiny. Here, language is not used primarily to create characteristic speech patterns or to evoke a setting, but to remind the reader of its dangerous tendency both to drift away from its referent and to create a general anonymity of human expression. For example, Irving Howe has noted that all the narrators in Absalom, Absalom! sound alike.[5] Excerpts from each of the four different narrations below show that there is substantial truth in this insight.

> I was a child who was to remember those three faces (and his, too) as seen for the first time in the carriage on that Sunday morning when the town finally realized that he had turned that road from Sutpen's Hundred in to the Church into a race track. I was three then, and doubtless I had seen it before; I must have. But I do not remember it.
>
> So he stopped again doubtless and looked from face to face again, doubtless memorizing the new faces, without any haste, with still the beard to hide what ever his mouth might have shown. But he seemes to have said nothing at the time.
>
> He didn't know why they moved, or didn't remember the reason if he ever knew it--whether it was optimism, hope in his father's breast or nostalgia, since he didn't know just where his father had come from. . . .
>
> When the moment came for him to admit he had been wrong she would have the same trouble she had had with her father, he would be dead too since she doubtless foresaw the scythe if for no other reason than that it would be the final outrage and affront like the hammer and nails in her father's business.[6]

The Sound and the Fury and Light in August both stand as strong testimony that Faulkner was brilliantly capable of

character differentiation and make it more than likely that the homogenization of styles is intentional. Indeed, it seems to work with the juxtaposition of scenes in the novel, which, as I shall show below, warns against abstraction from immediacy.

In addition, all of the narrators indulge in long stretches of discourse so rife with pronouns and abstractions that their speech is almost indecipherable. Given the control of language in Faulkner's other works, this again seems a deliberate satire on the meaninglessness of detached words. For example, Compson, describing the insoluble clash between Henry and Bon says:

> She was just the blank shape, the empty vessel in which each of them strove to preserve, not the illusion of himself nor the illusion of the other but what each conceived the other to believe him to be--the man and the youth, seducer and seduced, victimized in turn each by the other, conquerer vanquished by his own strength, vanquished conquering by his own weakness, before Judith came into their joint lives by so much as a girl name and who knows? there was the War now; who knows but what the fatality and fatality's victims did not both think, hope, that the War would settle the matter, leave free one of the two irreconcilables, since it would not be the first time that youth has taken catastrophe as a direct act of providence for the sole purpose of solving a personal problem which youth itself could not solve (pp. 121-22).

Similarly, the characters use metaphor and simile to obscure rather than to illuminate, as when Shreve calls the scythe that killed Sutpen a "symbolic laurel of Caesar's triumph" (p. 177). This inscrutable reference is just one of dozens of instances of a character's opaque use of language.

As a final signal that the language in this novel is

meant to imitate for the reader the dangerous abstracting tendency in words, on several occasions the anonymous narrator discourses as if fighting against language's metamorphosis into an enemy of direct expression. Early in the novel the narrator says: "It (the talking, the telling) seemed (to him, to Quentin) to partake of that logic- and reason flouting quality of a dream which the sleeper knows must have occurred, stillborn and complete in a second . . ." (p. 22). Why does the narrative voice work backwards to specificity in both instances of parenthetical addition? This is not characteristic of the narration of any other Faulkner novel. Yet this mannerism occurs here and in many other places, almost every time the narrator's voice interjects (pp. 48, 49, 174, 181, 207, 210, 295, 305, 376, 377). This mannerism seems to dramatize the difficulty with which the disintegration of language is overcome; even the narrator cannot automatically make these verbal symbols yield maximum contact with their referents.

So that this study will not become interminable, this is as much as I will discuss of the special use of language in Absalom, Absalom!; further consideration at another time might yield important results. In the first section of this chapter I will discuss in great detail how the structure of the novel enables the reader to see both the cyclic process through which mediation supersedes the living power of immediacy for the characters, and the consequences of that cycle. In the second section I will explore the mytho-

logical texture of the novel, which reveals a nightmarish evolution of abstraction into the conventional Judeo-Christian Jehovah. This is analogous to the Blakean satire of what he saw as the dead convention of that deity. I shall explore how the novel reveals the God of that usurping image to be a god of death that is analogous to the Covering Cherub, a deity of the Blakean Ulro.

There is present in Absalom, Absalom! as there was in the novels previously considered, a relationship between laughter and redemption. Whereas in the other novels it had been somewhat peripheral, here that association is central; it is the key to the reader's liberation from the characters' prisons of abstract classification.

Structure

Absalom, Absalom! is composed of two major clusters of chapters: I-V, set in the South, and VI-IX, set in the North. The clusters present a world everywhere struggling for order. From start to finish, however, the characters' urgent attempts at clarity through abstract theories are made foolish to the reader, although the characters' comic approaches to the moment are qualified by the disastrous results of their efforts. When, in the last cluster, abstraction completely envelops the characters, the reader's sense of the comic aspects of their situations is tempered by his understanding of the ludicrous as an integral part of human tragedy.[7]

The reader's first awareness in Chapter I is of the characters' frustrated attempts at objective control and understanding of their circumstances. The reader's first knowledge of this fictional world comes from the omniscient voice, which places him in a "dim hot airless room with the blinds all closed and fastened for forty-three summers because when she [Miss Coldfield] was a girl someone had believed that light and moving air carried heat and that the dark is always cooler . . ." (p. 7). The reader, barely aware of the chatacters' identity, is dramatically aware of an absurd context created by the characters' theoretical aloofness from the unmediated moment. Rosa's abstract expectation that closing the windows will make the room cooler absurdly resists its failure despite the discomfort that she and her guest must endure because of it.

The reader next glimpses the awarenesses of the characters before him. Quentin Compson and Rosa Coldfield are absorbed with Rosa's memory of Thomas Sutpen. As these two characters are occupied with the dead images of the past, however, the reader is told more about their concerns for image than about the image itself; this makes the characters' detachment and, not the Sutpen story, the central point for the reader's consideration. The reader watches Quentin confront Sutpen as Miss Rosa has presented him, and the reader's perception of Sutpen is hazy, while perception of Quentin's frustrated and confused detachment are sharply focused as the reader hears Quentin ruminate.

> It seems that this demon--his name was Sutpen--(Colonel Sutpen)--Colonel Sutpen. Who came out of nowhere and without warning--upon the land with a band of strange niggers and built a plantation--(Tore violently a plantation, Miss Rosa Coldfield says)--tore violently. And married her sister Ellen and begot a son and a daughter which--(without gentleness begot, Miss Rosa Coldfield says)--without gentleness. Which should have been the jewels of his pride and the shield and comfort of his old age, only--(Only they destroyed him or something or he destroyed them or something. And died)--And died (p. 9).

The immediately contiguous juxtapositions do not further illuminate the Sutpen story, but instead imitate the frustration of ratiocinative human understanding of the objects of its perception. In the juxtaposed fragments the reader's attention is focused on Quentin's attempts to understand why Miss Rosa wants to speak to him, whom it is made explicit to the reader she barely knows, and why she wants to tell him the story of Thomas Sutpen, which it is also made clear to the reader, is well known by everyone in the town. In juxtaposition to Quentin's evoked frustrations, the reader is directly presented with Miss Rosa's words, which again refer the reader to balked cognition rather than to the story itself. Rosa does give a few details about Sutpen's arrival in town and about his elevation to a position as the town's most prominent citizen, but, more than anything, Rosa speaks of her impeded desire to understand why her history has been shaped by one absurd decision after another: her highly moral father's approval of her sister Ellen's marriage to the clearly amoral Sutpen, and the town's acceptance of Sutpen among them despite his unac-

ceptable demeanor and activities. Finally, Rosa is tormented by her own ridiculous decision to marry him.

> But I had all my life to watch him. . . . I saw what happened to Ellen, my sister. I saw her almost a recluse, watching those two doomed children growing up. . . . I saw the notes of hand on pride and contentment and peace. . . . I saw Judith's marriage forbidden without rhyme or reason. . . . I saw Ellen die with only me, a child, to turn to and ask to protect her remaining child; I saw Henry repudiate his home and birthright and then return and practically fling the bloody corpse of his sister's sweetheart at the hem of her wedding gown; I saw that man return . . . who had created two children not only to destroy each other and his own line, but my line as well, yet I agreed to marry him (p. 18).

Rosa continues, again without illuminating the Sutpen story, but instead further expostulating on the mockery of objective assessment that has filled her life.

If the problems of reason in detachment are emphasized to the reader, so is the presence of a fearful immediate energy. Without having a clear idea of what the Sutpen story is all about, the reader is given a strong sense of demonic energy, frightening to Miss Rosa in her enclave, which is cut off from the energy of "light and moving air" (p. 7). Miss Rosa is repeatedly described as the rigid inhabitant of a tomblike enclosure: "There in the gloom of the shuttered hallway whose air was even hotter than outside, as if there were prisoned in it like a tomb all the suspiration of the slow heat-laden time which had recurred during the forty-five years, the small figure in black which did not even rustle . . ." (pp. 10-11). But if the reader does not know much about what Sutpen did, or

thought and felt, or even about his appearance, Sutpen's presence represents ferocious immediate force. Quentin's confusion has already revealed that much in his thoughts about Rosa's statement to him that Sutpen "tore violently a plantation" (p. 9). Rosa has already conveyed the violent means by which she believes her family was destroyed by Sutpen, and she repeatedly conveys the image of a "demon" to Quentin. It is this force that appears as the mockery of all attempts at theoretical organization.

Next comes Quentin's reaction to what Rosa is saying to him. It makes the reader continue to focus on the aberration of perception rather than on the object perceived, and emphasizes the distortion of the moment fostered by the detached image.

> It should have been late; yet the yellow slashes of mote-palpitant sunlight were latticed no higher up the impalpable wall of gloom which separated them; the sun seemed hardly to have moved. It (the talking, the telling) seemed (to him, to Quentin) to partake of the logic- and reason-flouting quality of a dream which the sleeper knows must have occurred, stillborn and complete, in a second, yet the very quality upon which it must depend to move the dreamer (verisimilitude) to credulity--horror or pleasure or amazement depends as completely upon a formal recognition of an acceptance of elapsed and yet elapsing time as music or a printed tale (p. 22).

The reader is asked to pay attention to Quentin's unscrutinized awareness that Rosa's passionate narration of the dead past involves him in frozen moments that distort the flow of immediacy.

Miss Rosa closes the first chapter with two anec-

dotes that are filled with more of her outrage at the derision she has experienced at the hand of life, at the same time that she justifies Quentin's perception that her approach to the moment distorts it. Her narration is placed so as to encourage the reader to scrutinize her offended anger rather than to accept its justice. The first anecdote concerns an event Rosa says she witnessed and remembers witnessing at the age of three; the second relates an event Rosa says she was not there to see. In both cases, Rosa's descriptions are equally vivid with detail. Their equal vivacity seems ridiculous since she herself has told us that she was present at one scene, absent from the other. Since both happened a long time before, her intense outburst appears foolishly inappropriate in reference to moments that were immediate to her so long ago.

The first account reveals how Miss Rosa, at age three, watched Sutpen arrive at church in a cloud of dust, careening carriage driven by savage driver and drawn by savage horses, "a sight of them which I shall carry to my grave" (p. 23). The memory of this scene stimulates Rosa to a frenzy and her recall of the subsequent discovery that this shocking behavior was instigated by Sutpen's six-year-old daughter, Judith, that a girl was responsible, outrages Rosa as much as the spectacle of the racing carriage itself. In the second account, Miss Rosa tells how she was <u>not</u> present to witness Sutpen in bestial combat with his slaves, bloody and sweating entertainment for the male population of

the vicinity. "He showed Ellen, that is: not me. I was not there" (p. 27). Miss Rosa goes on to describe vividly how Ellen found Judith at one of these matches and concludes, "But I was not there to see . . ." (p. 30).

Quentin's silence in this chapter leaves unchallenged Rosa's outlandish confusion between vicarious and immediate life. Miss Rosa's highly charged moral indignation places emphasis on the solidity of objects of perception. But the juxtapositions, placing a distance between these characters and the reader, have made significant for the reader not these judgments, but the oft-repeated information about Miss Rosa's relationship to the occurrence of these events that makes her involvement in them through vivid abstract images a mocking imitation of life that Rosa foolishly confuses with her spontaneous existence in the present, flowing moment.[8]

Chapter II begins in apparent discontinuity from Chapter I. Without transition, the reader is on the lawn of Quentin's home, but an immediate continuity is established between the two chapters. The reader is again focused on the characters' confusion between the immediacy of perception and the abstraction of detachment. Chapter II begins with Quentin and his father in their immediate setting. The narration talks of their immediate scene, emphasizing for the reader that this immediacy will, when time has passed, leave its residue, appearance, the hallucination that lures human perception from what is immanent in the moment. "It

was a summer of wisteria. The twilight was full of it and of the smell of his father's cigar as they sat on the front gallery after supper until it would be time for Quentin to start, while in the deep shaggy lawn below the veranda the fireflies blew and drifted in soft random--the odor, the scent, which five months later Mr. Compson's letter would carry up from Mississippi and over the long New England snow and into Quentin's sitting-room at Harvard" (p. 31).

The images' independence of the objects' immediate presence echoes the independence of the images of Rosa's anecdotes from her present reality. As the juxtapositons continue, it is clearly the images and not the immediate presence that the reader sees holding the characters' attention. In juxtaposition to these opening references to Quentin and his father, the omniscient voice begins to tell of Sutpen's arrival and early years in Jefferson. As the reader listens, he is shown Sutpen's early years in town as a presence which, to the outrage and frustration of the other characters, evades them. The reader can see that their bafflement is a result of the absurd stock they take in images. Part way through the discussion of this era in Sutpen's life, Mr. Compson takes over the narration and the reader is made to focus on how, laughing at the foolish confusions of long-ago events, he blindly continues himself to confuse detached images with the moment. Inadvertently, Compson makes as much of a fool of himself in the reader's eyes as the characters in his story make of themselves in his.

The omniscient voice's first description of Sutpen emphasizes the town's objective contemplation of his intentions and where he comes from. "He was already halfway across the Square when they saw him, on a big hard-ridden horse, man and beast looking as if they had been created out of thin air and set down in the bright summer sunshine in the middle of a tired foxtrot--face and horse that none of them had seen before, name that none of them had ever heard, and origin and purpose which some of them were never to learn" (p. 32).

The reader's view of the town's ordinary desire to learn what Sutpen is doing and where he comes from is the focus of the next series of juxtaposed fragments. As this desire is constantly thwarted, the reader sees that it is the town's objectivity that defeats its knowledge of Sutpen. Sutpen gives a show of threatening expertise with a pistol and intimidates the people in the town almost as soon as he arrives, forcing them to keep their distance from him; and indeed their separation from him results in their inability to apprehend Sutpen correctly. For example, although Sutpen uses a public agent to complete the transaction, it is not until Sutpen has temporarily left the area that the town discovers that he has bought land in their territory (p. 34). The most dramatic instance of the relation between the town's detachment and Sutpen's immediacy is the town's comic inability to fathom Sutpen's sudden and energetic involvement with Goodhue Coldfield, one of their number.

Sutpen's relationship with Coldfield began, the reader is told, after the completion of his mansion. The town, abstractly expecting that Sutpen is now ready for a wife, is absurdly unable to interpret the immediacy of Sutpen's actions in that direction. The reader is told that, when the townspeople saw Sutpen attending church, they were expecting to see him approach a prospective father-in-law, "so that when he entered the Methodist church that Sunday . . . there were men as well as women who believed that they had only to look around the congregation in order to anticipate the direction his feet would take . . . until they became aware that he had apparently marked down Miss Coldfield's father. . . . They watched in shocked amazement while he laid deliberate siege to the one man in the town with whom he could have had nothing in common . . . a Methodist steward. . . . In their surprise they forgot that Mr. Coldfield had a marriageable daughter" (pp. 42-43).

As Mr. Compson takes over the narration, the reader is again less aware of the story than of the town's remarkable removal from experience. At the same time, his own narration is evidence of his confusion. Mr. Compson's opening words discuss some trouble between Sutpen and the town over four huge wagons full of furnishings for his home. The town believes that Sutpen is in some sort of irregular collusion with Coldfield, as the wagons are Coldfield's, the contents destined for Sutpen's mansion, and neither is understood by the town to have the financial means to have

filled those wagons. The town is outraged by the presence of these articles for which it cannot theoretically account.

As Compson goes on to describe a vigilante attempt to arrest Sutpen, several aspects of this description impress themselves on the reader. First, although the ostensible context of this arrest is the law, nothing at all is mentioned about any specific violation of any specific law. Compson says that the town imagined Sutpen with a mask over his face, robbing a riverboat. This a priori apparition seems a foolish basis for legal action. At the same time the reader is impressed with Compson's similar ascription of reality to his detailed images of events he has not witnessed.

Compson tells Quentin what his father had communicated to him of Sutpen's arrest but, despite the fact that what Compson says has come down to him second-hand, he speaks as though he had vivid first-hand impressions. Thus he travesties immediate witness. Compson speaks of how a group of vigilantes proceeded toward Sutpen's Hundred, only to find Sutpen on the road, heading toward the town.

> He was riding the roan horse, in the frock coat and the beaver hat which they knew and with his legs wrapped in a piece of tarpaulin; he had a portmanteau on his pommel and he was carrying a small woven basket on his arm . . . your grandfather said that his eyes looked like pieces of a broken plate and that his bears was strong as a curry comb. . . . All I ever heard is how the town, the men on the gallery of the Holston House saw Sutpen and the committee ride onto the square together, Sutpen a little in front and the others bunched behind him--

> Sutpen with his legs and feet wrapped neatly in his tarpaulin and his shoulders squared inside the worn broadcloth coat . . . (p. 45).

Compson's details emphasize how the witnesses to Sutpen's arrest were made fools of in their detachment. To this end, Compson describes in minute detail everything the town saw of Sutpen's actions that day, and how they arrested him, not knowing that they had just seen him engage himself to Ellen Coldfield. The arrest, the reader learns, was frustrated by Mr. Coldfield and by Compson's father, who both signed a bond for their friend, humiliating the town's detachment.

In juxtaposition to this scene, Compson speaks of the wedding between Sutpen and Ellen Coldfield. Again the manner of the exposition emphasizes for the reader not the details of the story, but the mocking relationship between immediacy and detachment. Compson ludicrously begins his narration of the wedding by talking about divorce. Just as Compson's own detachment has been and continues to be made foolish to the reader, so his detached consideration of the Sutpen-Coldfield nuptuals satirizes it as what the reader can now recognize as a comedy of detachment. Compson begins by talking about how most divorces are instigated by women who have not had a full-dress wedding. "So is it too much to believe that these women come to long for divorce from a sense not of incompleteness but of actual frustration and betrayal? that regardless of the breathing evidence of children and all else, they still have in their minds the image

of themselves walking to music and turning heads, in all the symbolical trappings and circumstances of ceremonial surrender of that which they no longer possess? (p. 49). Compson's description of how women refuse to accept the deflation of the detached image by immediacy's reality is the description of an absurd state of affairs. This absurdity is the motif of the Sutpen-Coldfield wedding.

The travesty that the wedding became is narrated to the reader by Compson through details that make the reader aware that the wedding from start to finish was really a dispute about what abstract form it ought to take, the men taking into account Sutpen's recent difficulties with the vigilantes, the women refusing to consider that. The characters' images of what they want the wedding to be all amusingly distort the immediacy of union that a wedding implies. Similarly, the actual situation in the town makes all these expectations even more laughable. Compson speaks of how Coldfield intended to "use the church into which he had invested a certain amount of sacrifice and doubtless self-denial and certainly actual labor and money for the sake of what might be called a demand balance of spiritual solvency, exactly as he would have used a cotton gin in which he considered himself to have incurred interest or responsibility . . ." (p. 50). Sutpen "wanted not the anonymous wife and the anonymous children, but the two names on the license, the patent. Yes, patent with a gold seal and red ribbons too if that had been practicable" (p. 51). Ellen and her

aunt wanted a big wedding, "it may have been for the sake of that big house and the position. . . . Or maybe women are even less complex than that and to them any wedding is better than no wedding and a big wedding with a villain preferable to a small one with a saint" (p. 52). All of these wishes are balked by the immediate situation. Both Ellen's and her aunt's insistence of pursuing the detached image of the formal wedding and Mrs. Coldfield's and Sutpen's solicitous submission to their desires when plunged into the moment of the wedding are laughable. Thus the immediate moment becomes available to the reader once more as the crucible of the image.

The reader learns how Ellen's aunt sent out one hundred invitations, which were responded to not by the invitees but instead by a parody wedding party of one hundred of the county riff-raff, who pelted Sutpen with garbage. Compson thinks this an amusing story. At the same time, however, the reader is watching the comedic aspects of Compson's patronizing narration, as he quietly chuckles over a scene he believes himself to know in intimate detail, although he, like Rosa, was clearly not there to see it.

Chapter III opens with Compson speaking again with his son Quentin. Nevertheless, it begins in apparent discontinuity from Chapter II. Without transition from the wedding scene, Quentin is suddenly speaking about Miss Rosa's engagement to Sutpen. Nevertheless, a continuity concerning detachment and immediacy is maintained. Chapter

III opens with an amusing non sequitur by which Compson again emphasizes for the reader his aloofness from the moment. Quentin's remark, "If he threw Miss Rosa over, I wouldn't think she would want to tell anybody about it . . ." (p. 59), is followed by what should be Compson's response but is actually Compson's monologue, which never once refers back to Quentin's remark. Compson's self-involved evasion of Quentin's statement is a comic distortion of the moment he shares with his son that renders his unmediated rapport with the son inconsequential beside his abstract structuring of life, a negligence that remains unchallenged by Quentin. Compson's opening words about Rosa's past, on the other hand, emphasize a world in which the reader again sees the way immediacy turns mediating abstractions upside-down, making them ridiculous and negligible. "After Mr. Coldfield died in '64, Miss Rosa moved out to Sutpen's Hundred to live with Judith. She was twenty then, four years younger than her niece whom, in obedience to her sister's dying request, she set out to save from the family's doom which Sutpen seemed bent on accomplishing, apparently by the process of marrying him" (p. 59). Compson thus begins sardonically viewing Rosa's farcical contradiction of her intentions, not seeing that his own insistence on his ideas despite the nature of Quentin's comment, is at least as silly.

Miss Rosa's self-satire is continuously present, as the reader learns, from the very moment of her birth. Comp-

son reconstructs how Rosa's decision to marry Sutpen renders ridiculous her aunt's image of Rosa's birth as "a breathing indictment, ubiquitous and even transferable, of the entire male principle" (pp. 60-61) because of the death of Rosa's mother in childbirth. Rosa's acquiescence to Sutpen mocks the way in which Rosa, her aunt's pupil, "waited for the infancy and childhood with which nature had confounded and betrayed her to overtake the disapprobation regarding any and everything which could penetrate the walls of that house through the agency of any man . . ." (p. 60).

Compson is not aware that his own self-satire also remains evident as he digresses from his narration about Rosa, a digression from plot action that is continuous with the novel's central focus on the relationship between theoretical order and the moment. As Compson speaks of the post-war condition of the Sutpen estate where Rosa, agreeing to marry Sutpen, made mock of her abstract expectations for her life, he is brought to consider Clytie, who was living at Sutpen's Hundred when Sutpen returned from the war. Clytie, Sutpen's black, illegitimate daughter, reminds Compson that two of the Blacks Sutpen imported as slaves were women. Compson applauds Sutpen for his wisdom in providing temporary female companionship for himself until such time as he could get a social foothold in the county and a suitable woman. Compson's admiration for Sutpen is made ludicrous by the next words he speaks, but he absurdly does not notice and continues, savoring his own detachment. As Comp-

son continues to speak of Clytie, the child of Sutpen's foresight, he speaks of her as the omen of Sutpen's tragedy, which makes a farce of Sutpen's theoretical ordering of his life. Compson's inability to notice how badly Sutpen's plans worked out makes his judgment comic in the reader's eyes. "He named Clytie as he named them all. . . . Only I have always liked to believe that he intended to name Clytie Cassandra, prompted by some pure dramatic economy not only to beget but to designate the presiding augur of his own disaster . . ." (p. 62).

Compson's indiscriminate preference for form over substance is juxtaposed to the two stories that he narrates of Ellen Coldfield Sutpen and of her father, Goodhue Coldfield. These centrally concern Ellen's fanciful ideas about her position as the town's first lady, and Coldfield's moral conflict with the flow of life. Embedded in both these stories is Miss Rosa's enforced buffoonery as sister of the one and daughter of the other, because of her human involvement with each. This legacy, made visible to the reader, is unseen by Compson, who does not understand that he is essentially like Ellen and Coldfield except that he, even more absurdly than they, makes his ridiculous detachment prevail.

Compson describes how Ellen "had succeeded at last in evacuating not only puritan heritage but reality itself; had immolated outrageous husband and incomprehensible children into shades; escaped at last into a world of pure illusion in which safe from any harm, she moved, lived, from

attitude to attitude against her background of chatelaine to the largest, wife to the wealthiest, mother of the most fortunate . . . speaking her bright set meaningless phrases out of the part which she had written for herself . . ." (p. 69).

Central to Ellen's ridiculous detached order is Charles Bon, here introduced as a classmate of Henry's who Ellen decides is the destined mate for her daughter Judith. The reader learns that Bon's entire existence is, for Ellen, eviscerated of immediate energy. He is nothing but the figment of her fantasy. "Ellen did not once mention love between Judith and Bon. . . . She spoke of Bon as if he were three inanimate objects in one, or perhaps one inanimate object for which she and her family would find three concordant uses. . . . She postulated the elapsed years during which no honeymoon nor any change had taken place, out of which the (now) five faces looked with a sort of perennial bloom like painted portraits hung in a vacuum . . ." (p. 75). This travesty of immediate life, the reader learns, turns Rosa into a partisan of the absurd, as she spends her entire time making a trousseau for Judith. When immediate life mocks this absurd fantasy, Ellen, unmoored from immediacy, is unable to survive her disorientation from her abstract expectations: "And then something happened. Nobody knew what. . . . But anyway, when Christmas day came, Henry and Bon were gone. And Ellen was not visible . . . and so the tale came through the negroes: of how on the night before Christmas there had been a quarrel between the

son and the father and that Henry had formally abjured his father and renounced his birthright . . . and that he and Bon had ridden away in the night and that the mother was prostrate . . ." (p. 79). Rosa, in more absurd detachment, continues to work on the trousseau despite what has occurred.

The story of Goodhue Coldfield locates him as another character locked in conflict with immediacy. What is more, Rosa, through her connection with her father, is caught up in another dream world that is removed from the moment, almost as if the reader were watching the spread of an ontological epidemic. Compson speaks of Coldfield's refusal to support the Southern cause during the civil war, but not because of Coldfield's dispute with any issue. Rather Coldfield acts as if the war were a violation of abstract categories: "He had never been an irascible man and before war was actually declared and Mississippi seceded his acts and speeches of protest had been not only calm but logical and quite sensible. But after the die was cast he seemed to change overnight, just as his daughter Ellen changed her nature a few years before" (p. 81). The invasion of his moral structures by raw experience finds Coldfield fighting for his standards, by increasingly intense attempts to withdraw from the existence of the violence that they do not sanction. First he barricades himself inside his store, and then he hides in his own attic. Rosa, feeding him at night to avoid detection of his whereabouts in fear of retribution for his defection from the Southern

cause, during her free time writes odes in praise of the soldiers. Rosa's ludicrous, self-contradictory position ends when her father finally refuses to live, in rage against life's invasion of his principles. Compson describes how Coldfield was found one day "with three days' uneaten food beside his pallet bed as if he had spent three days in a mental balancing of his terrestrial accounts, found the result and proved it and then turned upon his contemporary scene of folly and outrage . . . the dead and consistent impassivity of a cold and inflexible disapproval" (pp. 83-84). Coldfield's suicide becomes for the reader at least as great a folly as the war. Its comic aspects are modified by the fact that this folly, like Ellen's, results in human death.

Likewise Compson's comic immersion in the issue of why Rosa after the death of her father did not go to the Sutpen ruin to live is tempered by the reader's recognition of Compson's cold insensitivity to the more important issues of Ellen's and Coldfield's deaths. Only laughing at their foolish demises, Compson gives serious and misguided thought to an issue on which the reader does not need his help. The reader has been shown by Compson himself how Rosa has been made the clown of her sister's and father's absurd, detached scenarios and could not be expected to do other than remain as isolated from life as she has always been.

Compson, the reader's source of this information, does not, however, use his own knowledge when he is explain-

ing Miss Rosa's actions. Instead he resorts to a theory about Southern upperclass women that makes it seem impossible to him that Rosa should not have gone immediately to the Hundred. Ludicrously, his knowledge that she did not go does not alter his attitude toward his useless theory. Even more absurd than either Ellen or Coldfield, who both died unable to bear the precedence of life over their abstractions, Compson does not even notice the mockery of his theory.[9]

This chapter culminates in a demonstration that, like Rosa, Compson is in a more deteriorated relationship to direct experience than the characters he is speaking about, but that is not the chapter's end. It ends with Compson's return to the narration, in which Rosa's isolation is invaded by a poor white named Wash Jones, suddenly emerging in front of her house, shouting her name. Jones is portrayed as a threat to Rosa's hermetic existence. The juxtapositions have thus brought the reader through the revelation about Compson and Rosa to consideration of the effect of the moment of immediacy on Rosa, in her doubly removed fantasies.

Chapter IV begins in another apparent discontinuity. The reader is addressed now by the omniscient voice, speaking of Quentin's further obligation to Miss Rosa without transition from Compson's narration of Wash Jones' appearance before her house. The reader is therefore lured away with double force from considering plot continuity to the central continuity of the novel. Not only does the reader

fail to learn what Jones said to Rosa, but he is also not permitted to learn what Quentin's obligation is, only that Quentin and Miss Rosa will do something later. Rather he is asked again to look at the tragi-comic removal of humanity from the moment.

In juxtaposition, Compson appears beside Quentin with a letter for him to read, which is not identified for the reader and is not given to Quentin, but instead remains in Compson's hand. Holding the paper intended for Quentin's perusal, Compson vaguely identifies it as a remnant of the past, in comparison with which he then ridicules the immediate present.

> Yes, for them: of that day and time, of a dead time; 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 living once or dying once instead of being diffused and scattered creatures drawn blindly limb from limb from a grab bag and assembled, author and victim too of a thousand homicides and a thousand copulations and divorcements (p. 89).

Compson's burlesque of immediate life is augmented as he then, instead of giving Quentin immediate contact with the letter, holds it in his hand and speaks of the relationship between Sutpen's two children, Henry and Judith, and Charles Bon, a college friend of Henry's. He continues to wave the letter as he speaks, making points about what he is saying, using the letter as proof and yet still withholding it from Quentin.

Still more ludicrous is the vision of Compson's story that the reader is led to see. Narrating a story he himself describes as incomprehensibly ridiculous, Compson possesses the knowledge that his story is completely without immediate foundation; yet he continues to regard it as reality.

The reader does not know as Compson begins that his story is without foundation in events, or that Compson knows this. Compson's narrative begins with his amazed juxtaposition of the erratic and arbitrary behavior of the Sutpens and the detached object of their perception, Charles Bon. Giving the auditor to understand that Bon's dead body was found later with the picture of an unknown woman and child on it, Compson speaks of how Henry left his home in the first flush of friendship for Bon after a quarrel about Bon with his father concerning Sutpen's charge that Bon was already married, a factor which must alter Bon's relationship with Judith. Compson characterizes this departure as a travesty of itself, because, according to Compson, Henry must have known that his father was telling the truth. "He must have said to himself . . . I will believe; I will, I will. Even if it is so, even if what my father told me is true and which, in spite of myself, I cannot keep from knowing is true, I will still believe" (p. 90).

The next series of juxtaposition describes in the same way the connections that bind Henry, Bon, and Judith. Compson's explanation of the reason why Henry was so inter-

ested in the marriage of Bon and Judith supposes a ludicrous travesty of immediacy. Compson describes how Henry, either aware or unaware, had established Judith's virginity as the central significance in his life, and understood in some way that it could be only as precious as he wished it to be, given an "inability to endure . . . and so he must depend on its loss, absence, to have existed at all." Compson describes as the perfect incest Henry's choice of Bon as the one who would establish virginity's value by destroying it, "taking that virginity in the person of the brother-in-law, the man whom he would be if he could become, metamorphose into, the lover, the husband; by whom he would be despoiled, choose for despoiler, if he could become metamorphose into the sister . . ." (p. 96). Every aspect of Compson's supposition of Henry's structuring of this relationship is a satire on immediacy. Compson sees Henry making precious what does not exist and counting as the essential act the one he has not committed but from which he is detached in vicarious participation.

Similarly, Compson describes the bond between Judith and Bon as another absurd ridicule of immediacy. He is brought unwillingly to say that, since Judith had barely seen Bon, and since Bon seems not to have expended any effort to woo her, her willingness to marry him must have been a result of a long-distance seduction with Henry as intermediary. "So it must have been Henry who seduced Judith, not Bon: seduced her along with himself from that distance

between Oxford and Sutpen's Hundred, between herself and that man whom she had not even seen yet, as though by means of that telepathy . . ." (p. 99).

After this catalogue of absurdities in his story, Compson reveals his relationship to his groundless story as the greatest possible travesty on immediacy of being. Compson returns briefly to mention the Christmas quarrel, at the end of which Henry and Bon disappeared from Sutpen's Hundred, and reveals that in fact no one knows what the quarrel was about. Everything he has just said is a detached image with no grounding in immediacy past or present: "the explosion, and none to ever know just why or just what happened between Henry and his father and only the cabin-to-cabin whispering of negroes to spread the news that Henry and Bon had ridden away in the dark and that Henry has formally abjured his birthright" (p. 106).[10]

The rest of the juxtapositions lead the reader to clarify the deterioration of relationship to immediacy that has taken place between Compson's time and the long-ago time of the Sutpens. Compson continues his ridiculous mockery of immediacy by completing this story as if he were talking about reality, and showing more and more mockeries of immediacy in the actions of the characters. When the letter Compson has withheld is finally revealed, the reader can see that the people of the past were indeed involved in mockeries, but that there was still a moment every so often when immediacy would, through the power of mockery, become avail-

able to perception. In contrast Compson and his son are sealed off even from that moment.

Compson continues to fabricate as he speaks of how Henry insisted on going to New Orleans, "The only place, the very place, where he could not help but prove conclusively the very statement which, coming from his father, he had called a lie" (p. 107). Compson's depiction of Henry's time in New Orleans emphasizes the travesty of direct experience that his conflict with Bon represents. Bon's "wife" in that city is an octoroon, a person who has no legal existence. By the terms of her existence in that culture, there can be no conflict between her alliance with Bon and a marriage to Judith. This situation, created by the abstract classifications of the color-caste system, abounds with absurdities, not the least of which is that it is later theorized by Shreve and Quentin that Bon has black blood in him. Nevertheless, although the woman's existence is to Henry no more than the peripheral image that abstraction dooms her to be, the ceremony between her and Bon remains an essential reality to him. Although Compson sees nothing inordinately abstract about the racist structure of that society, he is clearly aware that in his view of the story Henry is wildly fanatical about the priority of abstraction in worrying about an octoroon wedding. Compson fabricates Bon's attempt to give Henry some perspective on how situations alter cases: "Ah. That ceremony. I see. That's it then. A formula, a shibboleth meaningless as a child's game performed by some-

one created by the situation whose need it answered: a crone mumbling in a dungeon . . . you call that a marriage, when the night of a honeymoon and the casual business with a hired prostitute consists of the same suzerainty over a (temporarily) private room, the same order of removing the same clothes, the same conjunction in a single bed? Why not call that a marriage too?" (pp. 117-18).

Compson again points out the ridiculous nature of fanatic preoccupation with abstraction that characterizes his version of the Sutpen story as he describes Henry and Bon, side by side during the war, waiting absurdly for the resolution of this detached tussle: ". . . it was not Judith who was the object of Bon's love or of Henry's solicitude. She was just the blank shape, the empty vessel in which each of them strove to preserve, not the illusion of himself nor his illusion of the other but what each conceived the other to believe him to be . . ." (pp. 119-20).

Finally Compson arrives at the letter, through which he does have contact with what at least once was immediate reality. We now know that Bon wrote the letter to Judith and that she presented it to Compson's mother after Bon's death. Both Compson's narration of Judith's presentation of the paper to his mother and the reader's view of the contents of the letter itself illustrate how the people of that time were indeed buffoons in their detachment from immediacy, as Compson is and as were the images in his story. However, in the letter, the most direct contact with that time avail-

able, the reader sees an instant when the characters found it possible to seize the moment. In contrast, what one sees of Quentin and his father indicates a troubling inability to find such a moment.

Compson's description of Judith's words to his mother evidence a despair that is really a mockery of immediacy.

> You get born and you try this and you dont know why only you keep on trying it and you are born with a lot of other people . . . all trying and they dont know why either except that the strings are all in one another's way like five or six people all trying to make a rug on the same loom only each one wants to weave his own pattern into the rug; and it cant matter you know that, or the Ones that set up the loom would have arranged things a little better, and yet it must matter. . . . And so maybe if you could go to someone, the stranger the better, and give them something--a scrap of paper--something not to mean anything in itself and them not even to read or keep it . . . at least it would be something . . ." (p. 127).

Judith in all the mocked despair of her detachment from immediacy has found a moment of direct experience. She has the possibility of desperate, impersonal, but unmediated contact with Quentin's grandmother.

In contrast, Compson, commenting on what he had just reported her as saying, gives evidence of being completely detached from what he obviously knows she said. He calls the piece of paper before him special proof of love between Judith and Bon and speaks of Judity "considering this one worthy to give to a stranger . . ." (p. 129) when he has just told Quentin that Judith presented it to his mother as

a paper that meant nothing in itself but was part of a moment of immediate events.

The contents of the letter are then revealed: the letter too gives evidence of the presence of the immediate moment, lost as it is in the mockery of detachment. It begins by describing an incident of the war. The writer and his starving troops, we learn, attacked a Northern supply convoy. Famished and ragged, they had no doubt that they would find in the boxes on the wagons food and clothing which they so desperately needed. They found, absurdly, in the middle of the war, "stove polish. Gallons and gallons and gallons of the best . . . not a box of it a year old yet and doubtless still trying to overtake General Sherman with some belated amended field order requiring him to polish the stove before firing the house" (p. 130). The moment of this discovery is one of liberation from the absurdity of all abstractions. "And so the conclusion and augury which I draw, even though no philosopher is this. We have waited long enough. You will notice how I do not insult you either by saying I have waited long enough. And therefore, since I do not insult you by saying that only I have waited, I do not add, expect me. Because I cannot say when to expect me. Because what WAS is one thing, and it is not because it is dead, it died in 1861, and therefore what IS--" (p. 131).

Clearly, as the rest of the letter shows, this is but a temporary moment of disengagement from what is, overall, a comedy of rational errors.

> There they have started firing again . . . sometimes I think it has never stopped. It hasn't stopped of course; I dont mean that. I mean, there has never been any more of it, that there was that one fusillade four years ago which sounded once and then was arrested, mesmerized raised muzzle by raised muzzle, in the frozen attitude of its own aghast amazement . . . and now only the loud aghast echo jarred by the dropped musket . . . or by the fall of the spent body itself. . . . So that means that I must stop thinking, remembering . . . to become once more for a period without boundaries . . . irrational companion and inmate of a body which, even after four years . . . is still immersed and obliviously bemused in recollections of old peace and contentment the very names of whose scents and sounds I do not know that I remember, which ignores even the presence and threat of a torn arm or leg as though through some secretly incurred and infallible promise and conviction of immortality . . . (p. 131).

The writer's detachment remains a satire on his immediate existence, but the moment of immediacy has had some effect on his perceptions of reality. The letter ends: "Because what IS is something else again. . . . And since because within this sheet of paper you now hold the best of the old South which is dead, and the words you read were written upon it with the best . . . of the new North which has conquered and which therefore . . . will have to survive, I now believe that you and I are strangely doomed to live" (pp. 131-32).

On the cther hand, Quentin and Compson are unable to grasp any part of the immediate moment. Compson misquotes aloud from the letter that is sitting right in front of him; Compson, a buffoon of his own detachment, does so without understanding that what he is saying does not represent what is in the letter. The most glaring example of Compson's

disorientation is his ridiculous repetition of the writer's conclusion from his experience with the stove polish convoy that he and the recipient of the letter have waited sufficiently. Compson misquotes the expression as "I have waited long enough" (p. 132). As can be seen above, the writer of the letter has in fact made a great deal of his expression that "We have waited long enough."[11]

In juxtaposition, the reader sees Quentin concentrating on his own detached image of the triadic relationship among Bon, Judith, and Henry. Quentin's detached image is of a scene which postulates Judith absurdly sitting in the Sutpen ruin making her bridal gown for a wedding which has never been mentioned. He also pictures Bon and Henry approaching the Sutpen ruin as Henry and Bon clash farcically over the limit to how far Bon may be permitted to go: "They faced one another on the two gaunt horses . . . the two faces calm, the voices not even raised: Dont you pass the shadow of this post, this branch, Charles; and I am going to pass it, Henry" (p. 133). Quentin, like Compson, is shut off from the moment.

This is not the end of the chapter. It ends abruptly, returning the reader to the moment outside Rosa's house where Wash Jones, a mocking apparition, invades her detachment. Here the reader learns that Jones told Rosa of Bon's death at Henry's hands. The delayed presentation of this plot information functions as a catapult in Chapter V, in which the reader is focused on how Rosa's disengagement from

life has progressed steadily as the years have gone by. Although the events of Chapter V begin with Miss Rosa in the present, taking the plot narrative right from where it is left off at the end of Chapter IV with Wash Jones' announcement, it is the focus on immediacy which has been and remains central to continuity in this novel, as the reader watches Rosa's life as a process of alienation from life and attachment to preconception.

Rosa begins Chapter V, telling what happened after Jones told her of Bon's death. Although her trip to the Sutpen estate is ostensibly what is being conveyed to the reader, in fact the details of her journey and arrival are means by which the reader is made to focus on Rosa's comic preference for her ideas about Bon's death to the occurrence itself. The reader is further made to see how Rosa's continual discovery of the difference between what she thinks and what she experiences does not alter her burlesque demand that life conform to her rational expectations of it. Her first words reveal her steadfast reverence for detachment:

> So they will have told you doubtless already how I told that Jones to take that mule which was not his around to the barn and harness it to our buggy while I put on my hat and shawl and locked the house. That was all I needed to do since they will have told you doubtless that I would have no need for either trunk or bag since what clothing I possessed, now that the garments which I had been fortunate enough to inherit from my aunt's kindness or haste or oversight were long since worn out, consisted of the ones which Ellen had remembered from time to time to give me and now Ellen these two years dead; that I had only to lock the house and take my place in the buggy and traverse those twelve miles . . . (p. 134).

Rosa's reverence for the abstraction of ownership and her mechanical recording of the haphazard course of objects in immediate life humorously contradict each other.

In juxtaposition, Rosa speaks of her fury at Wash Jones at the site of Bon's tragic death. Despite Rosa's rage the scene emerges for the reader as one of comic frustration of Rosa's detached images and expectations. She is propelled by a detached image of mourning that she obsessively believes is the sole reality of the situation, the pale corpse and bereft lover, and Jones is involved in the immediacy of the moment, driving slowly, unwilling to accommodate her urgent haste because the mule and he, he says, have no part in this event, and in addition the mule has not been properly fed for a long time. Rosa lashes out at Wash calling him a fool and beating the animal. But, once at the house, Rosa's absurdity is revealed even to her. It becomes clear that her fury is foolishly misdirected against life itself and that her reverence is for a hollow detachment, a travesty on her existence.

The scene that Rosa passionately believes she is destined to witness, "That bedroom long-closed and musty, that sheetless bed (that nuptual couch of love and grief) with the pale and bloody corpse in its patched and weathered grey crimsoning the bare mattress, the bowed and unwived widow kneeling beside it . . ." (p. 138) is accessible in immediacy only through Clytie, whom Rosa has emphatically told the reader she hates and fears. Rosa sees the scene

she came "destined" to witness only as she and Clytie look at each other and the scene materializes as a mutual hallucination between them. Rosa never actually sees Bon's corpse or a bereaved Judith.

Rosa speaks of how Clytie physically restrained her from going up the stairs and seeing the dead Bon and Judith. She tells her auditor that Judith finally appeared, unbereaved, casually holding against her side the picture of herself that she had given to Bon.[12] This is life's jest at the expense of Rosa's total faith in the reality of her image. Again, the reader sees that Rosa is not liberated by the satire but instead rails against the moment that has revealed the absurdity of <u>a priori</u> belief. She speaks of immediacy as

> this factual scheme from which the prisoner soul, miasmal-distillant, wroils ever upward sunward, tugs its tenuous prisoner arteries and veins prisoning in its turn that spark, that dream which, as the globy and complete instant of its freedom mirrors and repeats (repeats? creates, reduces to a fragile evanescent irridescent sphere) all of space and time and massy earth . . . but is that true wisdom which can comprehend that there is a might-have-been which is more true than truth, from which the dreamer, waking, says, not "Did I but dream?" but rather says, indicts high heaven's very self with: "Why did I wake since waking I shall never sleep again?" (p. 143).

In juxtaposition, Rosa speaks of her teen-age love for Charles Bon. It emerges as the original, ridiculous distortion which Rosa knows is in despite of both love and life and in the name of which she is unable to live. This fragment emerges as the beginning of Rosa's attacks against

the revelations of immediacy. Rosa speaks of how she loved Bon without seeing him, without knowing him, without experiencing his immediate presence at all, only because he was a part of her image of Judith's supposed romance with him. Rosa speaks of how, one afternoon, she stole into Judith's empty bedroom and found a picture of Bon on Judith's dressing table, believing that "even before I saw the photograph I could have recognized, nay, described, the very face" (p. 147). This haphazard encounter is experienced by Rosa, as she tells it, as an image of destiny. Further, she says that, if she were God, images would be reality. The reader, unlike Rosa, understands that she has already accomplished this for herself: "And I know this: if I were God I would invent out of this seething turmoil we call progress something (a machine perhaps) which would adorn the barren mirror altars of every plain girl who breathes with such as this--which is so little since we want so little--this pictured face. It would not even need a skull behind it; almost anonymous, it would only need some vague inference of some walking flesh and blood desired by someone else even if only in some shadow-realm of make believe" (p. 147).

In juxtaposition to this detached image of Bon's face, Rosa's life, we are again reminded, disappoints her. Rosa speaks of how, because she found Judith unbereaved and never saw Bon's corpse, she had no contact with him alive or dead. Because of her detachment from Bon's immediate existence, Rosa speaks of a deteriorating connection with the

immediate world. She speaks of how she was one of his pall-bearers, but could not even feel the weight of his body in the coffin. She speaks of herself as a helpless victim in her disorientation, but the reader has seen her choose her own detachment.

In her narrative, Miss Rosa now reaches her move to Sutpen's Hundred, where she and Judith and Clytie waited for Sutpen's return from the war. She reiterates what we already know, that she does not understand why she stayed there. She rejects the popular rumor that it was because she was waiting for Sutpen to come home so that she could marry him. Indeed, as she describes her waiting time to the reader, it appears that in her impaired relation to direct experience she is waiting for the renewal of a priori systems of order. As Rosa describes her wartime habitation, it is clear that the main focus being presented to the reader is the impaired relationship of the three women to their immediacy: "So we waited for him . . . and amicably, not as two white women and a negress, not as three negroes or three white, not even as three women, but merely as three creatures who still possessed the need to eat but took no pleasure in it, the need to sleep but from no joy in weariness or regeneration, and in whom sex was some forgotten atrophy like the rudimentary gills we call the tonsils or the still-opposable thumbs . . ." (p. 155).

When Sutpen returns, however, the reader does not see the return of direct experience, but merely the return

of the illusion of structure to a humanity whose permanent condition is the inability to experience the unmediated moment. Farcically, the women accept this fantasy of form in lieu of reality. Sutpen brings with him from the war a monomaniacal concern for the restoration of his lands to their former glory. The women recognize that this is madness, things being what they are, but this fact does not prevent them from cherishing it. Rosa describes them with respect to Sutpen's return as "that triumverate mother-woman which we three, Judith, Clytie and I made, which fed and clothed and warmed the static shell and so gave vent and scope to the fierce vain illusion and so said, 'At last my life is worth something, even though it only shields and guards the antic fury of an insane child'" (p. 152).

In juxtaposition, the reader sees both Rosa's engagement to Sutpen and its rupture. Rosa reaches a crescendo of amazement at this point in her narrative. In contrast, the reader, enabled by the context of the juxtapositions, sees the irony of the sense of helplessness that Rosa manifests. It is her own faith that is confounding her. She is the victim of her own civil war between the moment and theory.

Sutpen's engagement to Rosa is described by her in terms that make it clearly visible to the reader as the triumph of detachment over immediacy. Rosa tells the reader how one day Sutpen was at the house when he should have been out in the fields and suddenly looked at her, as if seeing

her for the first time, "standing there in the path looking at me . . . it was not love; I do not say that, not gentleness or pity, just a sudden overburst of illumination . . ." (p. 163). Rosa speaks of how helpless she felt. Rosa documents her statement as she discusses how Sutpen unilaterally engaged them to each other that night. Announcing that he will be her husband, he orated on the restoration of the Hundred, "as though in the restoration of that ring to a living finger he had turned all time back twenty years and stopped it, froze it" (p. 165).

Rosa then speaks of the day the engagement was broken. She relates how Sutpen suddenly appeared at the house once more and said something to her which appalled her beyond endurance. The reader is not told what Sutpen said. What the reader is told, however, shows him that what dismayed Rosa was the way the words forced her renewed awareness of how foolish her dreams were in context with Sutpen's reality: ". . . it was the very day on which he knew definitely and at last how much of his hundred square miles he would be able to save and keep and call his own . . . he stood with the reins over his arm . . . and spoke the bald outrageous words exactly as if he were consulting with Jones or with some other man about a bitch dog or a cow or mare" (p. 168). The immediate becomes available to Rosa, but she misinterprets its contradiction of her fantasies and, instead of understanding that she has misplaced her faith in

her abstractions, she believes that she herself and not her misconceptions have been humiliated.

The consequences of Rosa's blindness to the centrality of spontaneous existence is dire; she returns to her solitary house, cut off from everyone, hating her father for bringing her into the world, and confusing the immediate presence with the dead object. Her disorientation is shown in the last sentence of her narration as she describes her reaction to the information, rendered by someone whose identity we never learn, that Sutpen is dead. "'Dead,' I cried. 'Dead? You? You lie; you're not dead; heaven cannot, and hell dare not, have you!'" (p. 172). She confuses the living source of these words with the dead and departed object of her rage.

In sudden discontinuous juxtaposition, the reader is made to understand that Quentin's focus is not on Miss Rosa but on a detached image. He, as a young man, is as absurdly sealed off as she, an old woman, has become: "But Quentin was not listening, because there was also something which he too could not pass--that door . . . the two of them, brother and sister . . . speaking to one another in short brief staccato sentences like slaps, as if they stood breast to breast striking one another in turn neither making any attempt to guard against the blows.

Now you cant marry him.

Why cant I marry him?

Because he's dead.

Dead?

Yes. I killed him" (p. 172.

Quentin's obsession with this detached embodiment signals a deterioration of his immediate relationship to life. Like Miss Rosa hearing of Sutpen's death, he travesties life by being in direct communication with the words of this apparition while he cannot hear Miss Rosa, sitting in front of him. What is more ridiculous, when Miss Rosa finally impinges on Quentin's consciousness, it is to tell him of life as detachment. Trying to tell Quentin that there is a person whom nobody knows about hidden in the Sutpen ruin, she tells him that there is "something" living and hidden with Clytie at the old Sutpen Hundred (p. 172). The first cluster closes with these words, having brought the reader to understand them as a milestone marking the absurdities of the deterioration of human capacity for direct experience.

The second cluster, Chapters VI-IX, charts the descent of the human world depicted in the novel into the endless night of its illusory farce. No more does the moment of immediacy have the power even to illuminate how ludicrous is the belief that the figments of detachment are real. Instead detachment burlesques immediacy by supplanting it in the characters' perceptions with a grotesque caricature of existence. The reader sees the human present embodied in the generation of Shreve and Quentin, and each chapter charts their position in relationship to moments in the past when immediacy was still a viable force. Chapter VI opens

the second cluster with another plot discontinuity. Suddenly the reader is confronted with a person named Shreve, never seen or heard of before, who is with Quentin in the cold of a Massachusetts winter. But, as the chapter unfolds, the reader is witness to a thematic continuity with the first cluster. Here he is focused on the gradation of human perception of the non-verbal satire with which the moment laughs at inappropriate insistence on abstraction. Shreve and Quentin, the newest generation, in their opaque detachment from this wordless humor, are even more grotesque than the older characters and the characters reconstructed from the past.

The chapter begins with a quotation from Compson's letter to Quentin informing him of Miss Rosa's death. A half year has clearly passed since the end of the first cluster. "Miss Rosa Coldfield was buried yesterday. She remained in the coma for almost two weeks and two days ago she died . . . without pain they say whatever they mean by that since it has always seemed to me that the only painless death must be that which takes the intelligence by surprise . . . since if death be anything at all beyond a brief and peculiar emotional state of the bereaved it must be a brief and likewise peculiar state of the subject as well. And if aught can be more painful to any intelligence . . ." (p. 173). The reader is reminded once more of Compson's perverse inversion of priorities. The detached intelligence is

the center of living reality in the above; death is the brief spontaneous moment.

The inverted perception of immediacy is also to be found in the juxtaposed fragment, narrated by the omniscient voice, of Quentin's trip with Rosa to the Sutpen ruin in the preceding September. Quentin is shown cognizant of the satire the immediate moment makes of the centrality of detachment, but he misinterprets it. The narrative voice describes the cloud of dust in the road that enveloped the buggy in which Quentin and Miss Rosa were riding that night and Quentin's immediate perception of a voice from this whirlwind mocking the importance their search gave to the detached object. The omniscient voice tells the reader that the dust seems to say, "Come on if you like. But I will get there first; accumulating ahead of you I will arrive first, lifting, sloping gently upward under hooves and wheels so that you will find no destination but will merely abrupt gently onto a plateau of harmless and inscrutable night . . ." (p. 175). The narrator implies Quentin's imperfect sense of this warning that the dust gives to "turn around and let what is, be . . ." (p. 176). Quentin does not think of his perception as a warning to give centrality to the immediate moment. Instead he sees it as an injunction against action and for detachment. "Good Lord yes, let's dont find him or it, try to find him or it, risk disturbing him or it . . ." (p. 176).

In juxtaposition to this Shreve and Quentin are pre-

sented in a totally blind farce which tautologizes their own present existence. The reader watches Shreve narrate anew the lives of Rosa and Sutpen. Shreve emphasizes the way in which they are ridiculous parodies of themselves, but what the reader sees is that they are continually in the presence of the immediate moment, badly as they misinterpret it, while Shreve and Quentin, in discussing them, are absurdly sealed off from it. Everything Shreve says about Rosa and Sutpen is in the form of a question to Quentin, to verify what Shreve is saying to him. Quentin does verify it. But this is a form of self-burlesque. As Quentin has given Shreve all the information Shreve possesses about these people on the basis of scarcely any immediate connection with their lives, Shreve's statements and Quentin's verifications are in tautological relationship to one another.

Thus the reader watches Shreve mock Rosa as, ". . . this old dame that grew up in a household like an overpopulated mausoleum, with no call on her time but the hating of her father and aunt and her sister's husband in peace and comfort and waiting for the day when they would prove not only to themselves but to everybody else that she had been right" (p. 176). Shreve extends this tirade with a series of satirical remarks on Rosa's ridiculous, solipsistic fantasy.

Similarly, Shreve emphasizes the ridiculous in Sutpen's life, speaking of Sutpen as,

> this Faustus, this demon, this Beelzebub fled hiding from some momentary flashy glare of his Creditor's outraged face . . . skulldugged a hundred miles of land out of a poor ignorant Indian . . . chose a wife who not only would consolidate the hiding but could and would breed him two children to fend and shield both in themselves and in their progeny the brittle bones and tired flesh of an old man against the day when the creditor would run him to earth for the last time . . . and so sure enough the daughter fell in love, the son the agent for the providing of that living bulwark between him (the demon) and the creditor's bailiff hand . . . (p. 179).

But Shreve's ridicule is satirized for the reader as Shreve and Quentin tautologically assert and verify their statements. While Shreve reveals some expository information to the reader with his narration, the reader's central focus is not on these "facts." Basic to the reader's concern is an awareness that, no matter how badly mismanaged, the immediate moment was at least available to Rosa and Sutpen as it is not to Shreve and Quentin. The reader learns that the outrageous words Sutpen spoke to Rosa that broke their engagement were a proposal that they have a baby first; if it were a boy then they would marry. Sutpen in proposing a trial birth and Rosa in rejecting it, on behalf of their individual detachments, are burlesque perceptions of the creation of immediate life, but at least the moment confronts them.

As the chapter continues, the reader is focused on Quentin's perception of Shreve and his own father as detached from him and of his inability to focus on his own immediate place between them. This is juxtaposed with an

account of the Sutpens' existence in the reconstructed South, following Sutpen's death. Quentin's thoughts of Shreve and his father reveal to the reader an invisible psychological loss of the wholeness of the self's relation to immediacy that is placed side by side with the social loss of the wholeness of humanity implicit in the color bar in the reconstructed South. The juxtapositions again illuminate the deterioration that has taken place between then and the immediate presence of Quentin's youth. Bad as things were, they have grown worse still.

Quentin is shown making a judgment on Shreve while the reader is shown through the juxtaposed fragments that this judgment is interchangeably relevant both to Quentin and to Shreve. The implication is that Quentin is blind to his own immediacy. Quentin is shown thinking,

> He sounds just like father . . . glancing (his face quiet, reposed, curiously almost sullen) for a moment at Shreve leaning forward into the lamp, his naked torso pink-gleaming and baby-smooth, cherubic, almost hairless, the twin moons of his spectacles glinting against his moonlike rubicund face, smelling (Quentin) the cigar and the wistaria, seeing the fireflies blowing and winding in the September dusk. Just exactly like father if father had known as much about it the night before I went out there as he did the day after I came back . . . (p. 181).

This is what Quentin thinks, but the next section implies that Shreve and Quentin have identical cognitive aberrations. There follows upon Quentin's thoughts about Shreve and his father an italicized section about Sutpen's last days on earth in which Quentin presents to himself for

tautological verification some details in exactly the same form that Shreve has been shown using in presenting material to him. Quentin is shown to the reader finishing his thought "Just exactly like father if father had known as much about it the night before I went out there as he did the day after I came back thinking Mad impotent old man who must have realized at last that there must be some limit even to the capabilities of a demon for doing harm . . ." (p. 181). Quentin goes on to think about Sutpen's dreams of restoring his once magnificent domains while reduced to running a ramshackle country store on the wreck of his estate. Quentin thinks of Sutpen's impregnation of Wash Jones' granddaughter Milly in a last attempt to get himself a son who will inherit his worldly goods, and of Sutpen's unaccountable rejection of the baby and his death at the hands of Wash Jones. Quentin punctuates all this, saying "yes" (p. 185) just as he had for Shreve, in self-satire of his perception of Shreve and his father. He is interchangeable with Shreve, but no one except the reader can see this.

There exists no other critical commentary like mine on the significance of Quentin's italicized dialogue with himself, but my perception of it dovetails with a prevalent critical perception that the narrator-characters sound alike. Irving Howe expresses this perception and comments: "It does not very much matter, since Faulkner is trying not to identify the narrators as individuals but to arrange them as parts in a chorus."[13] Nonetheless, the narrators are

very definitely known individuals, not like the anonymous salesman at the end of Light in August, and he has a very individualized speech pattern. That they do in fact sound alike and, as in the dialogue between Quentin and himself, are interchangeably detached from immediate existence, matters very much. The interchangeable speech patterns communicate a reduced state of human reality which is divorced from the flow of life's creative power, in which uniqueness is being transformed into a blur. All are wandering symbolically in the same linguistic fog.

A narration follows, about a day when Compson and Quentin, hunting with a black servant named Luster, took shelter from the rain under the trees in the Sutpen family cemetery. A discussion between Quentin and his father focuses on the ludicrous self-satires fostered by the social abstraction of racial discrimination. The self-mockery is enacted by Bon's son, brought for no known reason to Mississippi by Clytie after Bon's death. As grotesque as the boy's behavior is, however, it is at least visible as such and in its inescapable presence, maintains the possibility of liberating the human condition from absurdity.

The narration of the events in the life of Bon's son comes through Compson. Compson's details are not intended by him to reveal the absurdity of the color bar, but the context of the juxtapositions makes them work in that way for the reader. Bon's son, coming from the sheltered world of the octoroon in New Orleans "where pigmentation had no

more moral value than the silk walls . . . where the very abstractions which he might have observed--monogamy and fidelity and decorum and gentleness and affection--were as purely rooted in the flesh's offices as the digestive processes" (p. 199), suddenly emerges into an absurd context which satirizes itself because of its abstractions that supersede immediacy. Compson speaks of the little boy of both negro and white racial background, who would sleep at an intermediate level between Judith, the white woman who slept on the formal bed, and Clytie the black who slept on the floor, hearing the unspoken words that this visible behavior made into self-satire. "You are not up here in this bed with me, where through no fault nor willing of your own you should be, and you are not down here on this pallet floor with me, where through no fault nor willing of your own you must and will be, nor through any fault or willing of our own who would not what we cannot" (p. 198).

Bon's son responds in kind to this absurdity. For no reason at all he attacks black people as well as white people. On the first occasion of this behavior the reader sees the judge of the court to which he has been hauled, who does not know the race of this light-skinned youth, make visible the inapplicability of the color bar to immediate situations as he berates Bon's son:

> . . . the justice (Jim Hamblett it was) was already making his speech of indictment . . . his eyes already glazed with that cessation of vision of people who like to hear themselves talk in public: "At

> this time, while our country is struggline to rise from beneath the iron heel of a tyrant oppressor . . . when the very tools which we have to use . . . are the pride and integrity and forbearance of black men and the pride and integrity and forbearance of white; that you, I say, a white man, a white--" and your grandfather trying to reach him, to stop him . . . and it already too late, as if Hamblett's own voice had waked him . . . saying "white" again even while his voice died away . . . and every face in the room turned toward the prisoner as Hamblett cried, "What are you? Who and where did you come from?" (p. 203).

The high visibility of the comedic aspects in stereotypical thinking is again contrasted to the almost invisible grotesqueness of Quentin's detachment and of Quentin's and Shreve's tautological vision of reality. Quentin thinks of how hearing his father talk is like a parody of communication. "But you were not listening, because you knew it already, had learned, absorbed it already without the medium of speech somehow from having been born and living beside it . . . so that what your father was saying did not tell you anything so much as it struck, word by word, the resonant strings of remembering" (pp. 212-13). But if Quentin once had some vision of the absurdity of his detachment, it is now absurdly darkened in his communication with Shreve.

A conversation between Shreve and Quentin, which is a parody of immediacy in its self-defining detachment from reality closes the chapter. Shreve asks Quentin about Jim Bond, Charles Bon's grandson, who is living with Clytie at the Sutpen ruin. As Shreve continues to speak of and describe Clytie and Jim Bond, he brings in the journey Quentin and Rosa made out to the ruin to find the other inhabitant

whose existence Rosa suspected. "'And yet this old gal, this aunt Rosa, told you that someone was hiding out there and you said it was Clytie or Jim Bond and she said No and you said it would have to be because the demon was dead and Judith was dead and Bon was dead and Henry gone so far he hadn't even left a grave: and she said No and so you went out there . . . and there was?'

'Yes.'

'Wait then,' Shreve said. 'For God's sake wait'" (p. 216). Shreve and Quentin are absurdly detaching themselves from immediacy to make it stop and start at their behest; and there is no context but the context of the juxtapositions to make this visibly absurd (and then only to the reader).

Chapter VII again confronts the reader with Shreve and Quentin as grotesques of a human detachment from immediacy arrived at in evolution from a time when the moment, immediacy, was a vivid part of the human context. The chapter begins with Shreve making a ridiculous statement which neither Quentin nor any other immediacy correxts. "'So he just wanted a grandson,' Shreve said. 'That was all he was after. Jesus, the South is fine, isn't it. It's better than the theatre, isn't it. It's better than Ben Hur, isn't it'" (p. 217). Shreve is mocking the south, but it is he who is absurd. Shreve is of course extrapolating freely on the knowledge that it was a <u>son</u> that Sutpen wanted; this is very clear to the reader, but about this discrepancy Quentin is absurdly silent.[14]

Two detached buffoons, they are juxtaposed with what the reader learns about human perception in Quentin's narration of Sutpen's story of his own youth, transmitted to Quentin through his grandfather. It is a story that was told to Quentin's grandfather during a pause in Sutpen's pursuit of his architect, who had run away before the construction of Sutpen's house was completed.[15] It is a story which the reader can recognize, because the juxtapositions have focused him on immediacy and detachment, as a long-ago moment of full human immediacy meeting for the first time with the force of human detachment.

Sutpen, the reader is told,

> was born where what few other people he knew lived in log cabins boiling with children like the one he was born in--men and grown boys who hunted and lay before the fire on the floor while the women and older girls stepped back and forth across them to reach the fire to cool . . . where he lived the land belonged to anybody and everybody and so the man who would go to the trouble and work to fence off a piece of it and say "This is mine" was crazy; and as for objects, nobody had any more of them than you did because everybody had just what he was strong enough or energetic enough to take and keep, and only that crazy man would go to the trouble to take or even want more than he could eat or swap for powder and whiskey (p. 221).

This is contrasted to the Tidewater area to which Sutpen's family haphazardly traveled. The new location was a place "all divided and fixed and neat with a people on it all divided and fixed and neat because of what color their skins happened to be and what they happened to own . . ." (p. 221).

As the narrative continues, it becomes clearer and clearer to the reader, because of the context of the juxta-

positions, that the neatness is a travesty on immediacy and that the black man's status in this society is a constant self-parodying ridicule of the precedence of stereotypical thinking over human immediacy. In the place of Sutpen's childhood, any sign of such precedence, ownership, or self-assertion of superiority would have provoked hilarity. The comedy has been inverted.

Sutpen's submission to the absurd mockery of detachment occurs during his attempt to deliver a message to the house of the plantation owner on whose estate his father works. Sutpen is told by the black house slave that he must go around to the back door and never come to the front door again, a travesty on the integrity of his errand which changes the course of his life. It is impressed on the reader that Sutpen approached the house fully conscious of the immediate communication of a message, expecting to see for the first time the interior of the big house. It is also emphasized how unconscious Sutpen was of his appearance, especially of his skin. The aftermath of what the black man told Sutpen is described in terms of a sudden vision of the black man as a hollow mockery of his own life, which gives the detached image of priority over the immediate humanity.

> . . . he told grandfather, how before the monkey nigger who came to the door had finished saying what he said, Sutpen himself seemed to kind of dissolve and a part of him turn and rush back through the two years they had lived there . . . and seeing a dozen things that had happened and he hadn't even seen them before: the certain flat level silent way his older sisters and other white women of their

> kind had of looking at niggers. . . . You knew that you could hit them . . . and they would not hit back. . . . But you did not want to, because they (the niggers) were not it, not what you wanted to hit; that you knew when you hit them you would just be hitting a child's toy balloon with a painted face on it, a face slick and smooth and distended and about to burst into laughing, and so you did not dare strike it because it would merely burst and you would rather let it walk right on out of your sight than to have stood there in the loud laughing (pp. 229-30).

Evidence of theoretical order taking precedence over the moment is no longer an effective ridicule of the preference of the detached images as it was in the place of Sutpen's birth. The reverse in fact is true. Absurdly, it is immediacy that stands mocked in Sutpen's eyes. He separates himself forever from his family to live inside the confines of the categories that define the white planter's existence.[16]

Sutpen's evolution is given in terms that clearly evidence his growing separation from immediacy, regardless of the increasing force of the satire that greets his evolution. The reader's knowledge of Sutpen's success in marrying the daughter of a sugar planter in the West Indies is only further knowledge of the assinine cliche into which Sutpen is transforming his life; trapped inside the main house with the planter and his daughter and a few faithful servants, surrounded by countless blacks outside,

> he just put the musket down and had someone unbar the door and then bar it behind him, and walked out into the darkness and subdued them, maybe by yelling louder, maybe by standing, bearing more than they believed any bones and flesh could or should . . . maybe at last they themselves turning in horror and fleeing from the white arms and legs shaped

> like theirs and from which blood could be made to spurt and flow as it could from theirs and containing an indomitable spirit which should have come from the same primary fire which theirs came from but which could not possibly have (p. 254).

Sutpen's detached postulation of a superbody is grotesquely triumphant even in the crucible of the moment, at least temporarily.

The reader also learns that the woman with whom Sutpen was rewarded for taking the planter's part in the West Indies had to be discarded, that ultimately she was unfit for his plan of destiny, his design. "I found that she was not and could never be, through no fault of her own, adjunctive or incremental to the design which I had in mind so I provided for her and put her aside" (p. 240). The reader does not learn what is wrong here. Even at the end of the novel, the reader knows only of Quentin's and Shreve's theory that Sutpen's first wife had black blood. Her unsuitability now and later is a joke life has played on Sutpen's juggernautish commitment to his design. Instead of concluding that a scheme which requires such an absurd attitude toward life is inappropriate to spontaneous existence, however, Sutpen unhesitatingly, ludicrously proceeds, giving priority to his design.

The remainder of the chapter correspondingly shows the reader how Sutpen's misinterpretation of the satire immediacy inflicts on his detached design succeeds in creating a descending cycle in which his detachment fosters acts of a more and more grotesque nature.

The remaining narrative about Sutpen in Chapter VII concerns mainly the discovery that Charles Bon was the son of Sutpen and the cast-off first wife from the West Indies, and that this cast-off immediacy came back to ridicule Sutpen's detached design. The reader then learns how Sutpen in even more extreme mockery of immediacy, tried to resurrect the detached design and was ridiculed even more savagely by immediacy.

That his cast-off son, immediate creation of his first, written-off marriage, would destroy his carefully-wrought abstract configuration of life by threatening to marry the daughter of his second marriage is mockery enough of Sutpen's detachment. Sutpen, attempting to write all that trouble off and complete his design in spite of his initial discouragements, is even more grotesque. He courts, and is given permission by Wash Jones to impregnate, Jones' fifteen-year-old granddaughter, Milly. The reasons why Jones permits this are rooted in his ridiculous preference of detached image to immediacy.

> . . . it would seem to him [Wash Jones] that this world where niggers, that the Bible said had been created and cursed by God to be brute and vassal to all men of white skin, were better found and housed and clothed than he and his granddaughter--that this world where he walked always in the mocking and jeering echoes of nigger laughter, was just a dream and an illusion and that the actual world was the one where his lonely apotheosis . . . galloped on the black thoroughbred, thinking maybe, Father said, how the Book said that all men were created in the image of God . . . and so he would look at Sutpen and think A fine proud man. If God Himself was to come down and ride the natural earth, that's what he would aim to look like (p. 282).

Jones and Sutpen's ridiculous confusions of fantasy and reality are finally travestied for the nonsense they are by the moment of the baby's birth. The reader is shown how Sutpen visited a newborn colt in the same stable in which his own baby was born and casually rejected Milly and his child, saying, "Well, Milly; too bad you're not a mare too. Then I could give you a decent stall in the stable" (p. 286). The puncturing of Jones' detachment is not lost on Jones at all as he suddenly becomes aware of it. "I kaint have heard what I know I heard. . . . That was what got him up. It was that colt. It aint me or mine either. It wasn't even his own" (p. 288). Jones is not illuminated, however. The reader watches him ludicrously travesty his own immediacy as he kills Sutpen, his granddaughter, the baby, and in the end virtually commits suicide by throwing himself at a pack of quasi-vigilantes, thereby getting himself murdered.[17]

Most grotesque of all, however, are Shreve and Quentin, who, the reader sees, are already as ludicrously detached from immediacy as Sutpen was in the final states of his descent. Shreve, in his agitation over Sutpen's seemingly capricious destruction of his world just as he was about to attain his goal, tries three times to impress his amazement on Quentin, as he persists in asking him why Sutpen said what he did to Milly. The reader watches Quentin obliviously continue his narration. Finally, as the chapter is ending, Shreve makes an impression on Quentin.

Quentin informs him absentmindedly that the baby was a girl, not the son Sutpen wanted. Shreve is pacified, as is Quentin. In grotesque denial of the sanctity of life, Sutpen, in his final stages of degeneration, refused his child for not fitting into his design. The implication is that Shreve and Quentin, as they too accept Sutpen's choice without comment, are already at the same point, seduced by a dead man's fancy.

As Chapter VIII opens, the two young men are still talking about Sutpen, but in apparent discontinuity from the end of the previous chapter. They are now plunging again into the night of the Christmas quarrel. With the help of the omniscient voice, the juxtapositions emphasize for the reader, that, although it is immediacy that makes all their narration possible, like Sutpen, Shreve and Quentin deny their powers and exalt their creation over their creative force.

The chapter begins with Quentin and Shreve fabricating the scene (about which there is no real information) of Henry confronting his father in the library on the fateful Christmas eve. "'So the old man sent the nigger for Henry,' Shreve said. 'And Henry came in and the old man said 'They cannot marry because he is your brother' and Henry said 'You lie' like that, that quick: no space, no interval, no nothing between like when you press the button and get light in the room. And the old man just sat there, didn't even move and strike him and so Henry didn't say 'you lie' again

because he knew now that it was so; he just said 'It's not true'" (p. 293). In the way they have constructed this scene, Quentin and Shreve portray Henry's immediate reactions as irrelevant and Sutpen's detached authority as the center of the truth. The remainder of the narrative of this chapter impresses on the reader that this devaluation of spontaneity is simply Quentin's and Shreve's blindness to the essence of being, and that in their distraction from what is truly important they make themselves completely ridiculous.

After permitting Quentin and Shreve to construct the father-son encounter, the narrator emphasizes the centrality of the immediate relationship between Quentin and Shreve and renders superfluous the image of the Sutpen story made possible by their spontaneous relationship. The omniscient voice speaks of Shreve and Quentin visualizing Henry in his father's study shocked by what Sutpen has just said and seeing through the window his sister and Bon, walking through the garden, "pacing slowly, the sister's head bent with listening, the lover's head leaned above it while they paced slowly on in that rhythm . . . to disappear slowly beyond some bush or shrub starred with white bloom--jasmine, spirea, honeysuckle, perhaps myriad scentless unpickable Cherokee roses . . ." (pp. 294-95). This vision is quickly followed by an omniscient deflation of the importance of these particular images and an augmentation of the significance of the immediacy that makes them possible:

> It would not matter here in Cambridge that the time had been winter in that garden too, and hence no bloom nor leaf even if there had been someone to walk there and be seen there since, judged by subsequent events, it had been night in the garden also. But that did not matter because it had been so long ago. It did not matter to them (Quentin and Shreve) anyway, who could without moving . . . and with no tedious transition from hearth and garden to saddle, who could be already clattering over the frozen ruts of that December night not two of them there and then either but four of them riding two horses through the iron darkness, and that not mattering either: what faces and what names they called themselves so long as the blood coursed--the blood, the immortal brief recent intransient blood . . . (p. 295).

The narrator's identification of the power of immediacy with the pulsation of the blood is impressively Blakean. Blake often uses the living blood as a figure of the fount of unmediated life. One of the most forceful statements of this type is: "For even in this Period the Poets work is Done: and all the Great / Events of Time start forth & are concievd in such a Period / Within a Moment: a Pulsation of the Artery" (Milton, p. 126).

In juxtaposition, the reader watches Shreve prove to his satisfaction that Bon did not know at first that he and Henry were brothers. The mental gyrations through which Shreve puts himself bring him to a clearly ridiculous conclusion, but to his perception the detached images are primary and the conclusion is absolute and authoritative.

> But Bon didn't know. Listen, dont you remember how your father said it, that no one time did he--the old guy, the demon--even seem to wonder how the other wife managed to find him track him down, had never once seemed to wonder what she might have been doing all that time, the thirty years since

> that day when he paid his bill with her and got it receipted, so he thought, and saw with his own eyes that it was so (so he thought) destroyed . . . never once wondered about this but only that she had done it, could have and would have wanted to track him down? So it wasn't her that told Bon (p. 296).

This spontaneous jumble of words is almost arbitrary, distinguished as meaningful only by its absolute faith in itself as detached truth.

All the images of Bon's life that they fabricate, which spring from their desire to make romantic stereotypes prevail, burlesque their attempts. Quentin and Shreve are not, however, redeemed by the revelations from within themselves. On the contrary, at the end of the chapter they mock their immediacy with a supreme travesty.

The subsequent fragments that deal with Bon's childhood are a series of warning bells to the reader, and potentially to Shreve and Quentin as well, of how ludicrous humanity is in placing detachment ahead of immediacy. As Shreve fabricates Bon's mother, she is functionally insane as she travesties Bon's immediate existence by replacing it with images of his role in the revenge she will effect on Sutpen for putting her aside. Nevertheless, Shreve absurdly proceeds to read into history as an actual reality a character that he has just thought up: Bon's mother's lawyer, who is masterminding her revenge.

The lawyer himself appears as a mockery of direct experience. His campaign for revenge is based on a grotesquely abstract caricature of Sutpen's life.

> Today Sutpen finished robbing a drunken Indian of a hundred miles of virgin land, val. $25,000. At 2:31 today came up out of the swamp with the final plank for house. val. in conj. with land 40,000. 7:52 p.m. today married. Bigamy threat bal. minus nil. unless quick buyer. Not probable. Doubtless conjoined with wife same day . . . Son. Intrinsic val. possible though not probable forced sale of house & land plus val. crop minus child's one quarter. Emotional val. plus 100% times nil. plus val. crop . . . and maybe here with the date too: Daughter and you could maybe even have seen the question mark after it and the other words even: daughter? daughter? daughter? (p. 301).

This parody of the utilitarian descendants of Newton is in the spirit of Blake's belief that the calculations of materialism are but one more abstract reduction of life.

In juxtaposition, the omniscient voice deflates Shreve's absurd insistence on the image as reality, since its truth lies only in its source, the generating power of immediate imagination. "It was Shreve speaking, though save for the slight difference which the intervening degrees of latitude had inculcated in them . . . it might have been either of them and was in a sense both: both thinking as one, the voice which happened to be speaking the thought only the thinking become audible, vocal; the two of them creating between then, out of the rag-tag bob-ends of old tales and talking, people who perhaps had never existed at all anywhere . . ." (p. 303). As in Blake, this vision emphasizes that truth and value lie in the power to create, not in the creation.

What follows is continued by the characters' evasion of the importance of immediacy. The reader sees that Shreve

believes in the reality of the images he is creating, despite the way that the lawyer he has spontaneously brought onto the scene suggests fantasy rather than life. Like the larger-than-life villain of a melodrama, the lawyer stage-manages Bon's life so as to get him packed off to the University of Mississippi, and manipulates Bon's encounter with Henry Sutpen. The lawyer's strategy depends on his sending, without Bon's knowledge, a letter of introduction for Bon, which has also never before been discussed as part of the Sutpen context, to Henry, "scion of the principal family of that county as it is your fortunate lot to be" (p. 34). The obvious distortions of life involved in the ex nihilo appearances of these two cliches, the lawyer and the letter, do not make either Quentin or Shreve laugh off their fantasy. Rather, the reader learns, this ad hoc fabrication is fuel for their fire. It is the means to their desired end, the exploration of love.

As the voice tells the reader of the boys' priority, the reader is given to understand that they are exploring love as abstraction. The narrative voice again deflates and mocks the holiness with which Quentin and Shreve invest it.

> "And now," Shreve said, "we're going to talk about love." But he didn't need to say that either any more than he had needed to specify which he meant by he, since neither of them had been thinking about anything else; all that had gone before just so much that had to be overpassed . . . as someone always has to rake the leaves up before you can have the bonfire. That was why it did not matter to either of them which one did the talking, since it was not the talking alone which did it, per-

> formed and accomplished the overpassing, but some happy marriage of speaking and hearing wherein each before the demand, the requirement, forgave, condoned and forgot the faulting of the other--faultings both in the creating of this shade whom they discussed (rather, existed in) and in the hearing and sifting and discarding the false and conserving what seemed to be true, or fit the preconceived--in order to overpass to love, where there might be paradox and inconsistency but nothing fault nor false (p. 316).

In the context of the juxtapositions, the abstraction they revere is clearly shown to be a travesty. Quentin and Shreve juxtapose the two kinds of love between which Bon must choose, Judith's love and his father's. But both of them are presented in the boys' vision as empty concepts. The reader is impressed with Henry's desire that Bon and Judith marry as "that fairy balloon-vacuum in which the three of them existed, lived, moved even maybe, in attitudes without flesh . . ." (p. 319). But the love which would concern Bon and his father is no different. The fabrication of Bon's confrontation of Sutpen brings him "face to face with the man who might be his father, and nothing happened--no shock, no hot communicated flesh that speech would have been too slow to impede--nothing" (p. 320).

What is more, as Quentin and Shreve speak between themselves of love, they emerge with an idea of love that is a silly mockery of real desire. Love is an image of Judith as a lemon sherbet which, in comparison to the whiskey and champagne that are the images of women who provoke real longing, no one really wants. "It would be no question of choosing, having to choose between the champagne or the

whiskey and the sherbet, but all of a sudden . . . you find that you dont want anything but that sherbet and that you haven't been wanting anything else but that . . . besides knowing that the sherbet is there for you to take. Not just for anybody to take but for you to take, knowing just from looking at that cup that it would be like a flower that, if any other hand reached for it, it would have thorns on it, but not for your hand . . ." (p. 323).

Again the voice encourages the reader to evaluate these images as neither necessarily real or important in themselves. They are creations of human spontaneity. In speaking of Bon's visit to New Orleans with Henry, the voice holds all the differing images in suspension--their differences not a matter of truth, but only a matter of possible embodiment:

> the two of them (four of them) held in that probation . . . by Henry . . . who was going deliberately to look upon and prove that which, so Shreve and Quentin believed, would be like death for him to learn. So it was four of them still who got off the boat in New Orleans . . . Henry who knew yet did not believe, and Bon whom Mr. Compson had called a fatalist, but who, according to Shreve and Quentin, did not resist Henry's dictum and design . . . four of them who sat in that drawingroom . . . while the Haiti-born daughter of the French sugar planter . . . whom Shreve and Quentin had likewise invented and which was likewise probably true enough . . . told them nothing . . . (p. 335).

The characters continue to make themselves ridiculous, emphasizing the centrality of their detachment without being liberated by the patent farce it involves. As Shreve reaches the point in the narration of Bon's and Henry's war

experiences during which Bon is said to have been wounded, he abruptly says, "Because your old man was wrong here too! He said it was Bon who was wounded, but it wasn't. Because who told him? Who told Sutpen or your grandfather either . . . Sutpen didn't know because he wasn't there, and your grandfather wasn't there either. . . . Not Henry, because his father never saw Henry but that one time and maybe they never had time to talk about wounds . . . and not Bon, because Sutpen never saw him at all because he was dead--it was not Bon, it was Henry [who was wounded]" (p. 344). Shreve's farcical, tautological proof of who it was who got wounded is echoed by the characters in his story in the next lines as Shreve and Quentin envision Bon and Henry at their wits' end in their detached consideration of what to do next about the issue of Bon's marriage to Judith. They reach the reductio absurdum as Bon says to Henry, "Say you do want me to go back to her. Maybe then I wont do it" (p. 345). But the reductio does not alert anyone but the attentive reader to the absurd.

The chapter reaches its end as Shreve and Quentin jointly fabricate a scene in which Sutpen informs Henry during the war that Bon is in fact part-Negro and thus cannot marry Judith. Henry is without doubt as to what he must do now, and sets off to prevent the miscegenation. This effort turns out to necessitate Bon's murder. This new information appears as part of a farcical burlesque of the triumph of detachment over immediacy. The interview between Sutpen and

Henry is impressed on the reader as a darkly comic mistaken-identity scene. Henry, who has been told that the colonel wants to see him enters the colonel's tent and recognizes not his own father, but only the symbols of the uniform that Sutpen wears. "He (Henry) comes to a salute facing a gray sleeve with a colonel's braid on it, the bearded cheek, a jutting nose, a shaggy drop of iron riddle hair--a face which Henry does not recognize, not because he has not seen it in four years . . . but rather because he is not looking at it. He just salutes the braided cuff . . ." (pp. 352-53). The reader also sees that Henry's attention is not even taken by his father's voice familiarly speaking his given name. Henry's reaction springs from an immediate response in himself to which he pays no conscious attention: "Even now Henry does not start. . . . It is the older man who moves first, though they meet in the center of the tent, where they embrace and kiss even before Henry is aware that he has moved, was going to move, moved by what of close blood which in the instant abrogates and reconciles . . ." (p. 353).

Whether or not what Quentin and Shreve suppose here is true is unknown to the reader, but that this is farcical is unmistakable. Henry's recognition of the suit, but not his father, recalls the old comic folk tale about the man who, when refused entry to a party because of inappropriate dress, returned in his best suit and proceeded to give all the food to his garment. The folk hero is, of course, con-

scious that he is burlesquing a depleted reverence for humanity. Quentin and Shreve, in creating this image of Henry, are not aware of the farce involved; neither, of course, is their fictional hero.

Farce is also the major element of Henry's sudden clarity about the issue of marriage between Judith and Bon. The stereotypical significance of skin color has little immediate bearing on the wedded bond in comparison with the immediate barrier to marriage of sibling kinship, knowledge of which left Henry not knowing what to do. Equally absurd, whether or not it is true, is Shreve and Quentin's supposition of Bon's certainty that he will marry Judith because Sutpen has failed to recognize him as his son, and his challenge to Henry to stop him. This challenge is a terrible mockery, as Henry reminds Bon, saying "You are my brother" (p. 357). Bon absurdly cannot find the wedge in this acknowledgment to liberate himself from the rational distortions that are usurping his vision, and he redoubles his mockery of immediacy as he replies, "No, Im not. I'm the nigger that's going to sleep with your sister. Unless you stop me Henry" (p. 358).[18] The murder follows in Shreve's and Quentin's fabrication, an absurd result of an absurd preeminence given to detachment.

Quentin and Shreve, with the images of their own spontaneous creativity flashing warnings at them, then go on to use their fabrication to turn the entire Sutpen history into an Orwellian nightmare come to life. Shreve adds up

everything he and Quentin have said and suddenly turns on Quentin.

> And your old man wouldn't know about that too: why the black son a of bitch [sic] should have taken her picture out and put the octoroon's picture in, so he invented a reason for it. But I know. And you know too. Dont you? Dont you, huh? . . . It was because he said to himself, "If Henry dont mean what he said, it will be all right; I can take it out and destroy it. But if he does mean what he said, it will be the only way I will have to say to her I was no good . . ." aint that right? aint it? By God, aint it? (p. 359).

This is a major distortion which no critic has discussed. Although Shreve speaks as though it is common knowledge that Bon substituted the octoroon's picture for Judith's, nowhere in the novel has any other character mentioned such an occurrence. The reader knows that in Chapter IV Compson mentioned a picture of the octoroon that was found on Bon's corpse (p. 90); Rosa in Chapter V mentioned a picture that Judith gave to Bon (p. 142). The reader has neither seen nor heard anything to indicate that one picture was substituted for the other, nothing to rule out the possibility that there were two pictures. Shreve's exultant proclamation marks him as nothing more than a travesty of a detective, as he triumphantly unriddles a non-existent puzzle. Even more absurdly, neither he nor Quentin is aware of this tautological burlesque that has resulted from placing priority on the abstracted image. That no critic has seen this mad "solution" for the red herring that it is is but one more instance of ontological humor and constitutes by

itself a strong defense of the use of Blakean concepts in dealing with this novel.

Chapter IX opens with the boys in their beds, the Sutpen narration over. But the dangers of "objective" thinking have not yet been fully explicated for the reader. He has seen Quentin's more immediate connection with the Sutpen story give way before Shreve's detachment like butter before a hot knife. The reader must now watch Quentin's immediate connections with his own existence for the same.

The last chapter begins with mockery: Shreve's language actually degenerating into babble and Quentin so absurdly detached from immediacy that, while his body is wracked with muscular spasms from the cold, he experiences his physical condition as satisfactory. "'University of Mississippi,' Shreve's voice said in the darkness. . . . 'Bayard attenuated forty miles . . . out of the wilderness proud honor semesterial regurgitant'" (p. 360). In juxtaposition Quentin begins to shiver from the cold without any ability to experience his discomfort. "And now . . . he began to jerk all over, violently and uncontrollably . . . until even Shreve felt it and turned . . . though Quentin himself felt perfectly all right" (p. 360).

In juxtaposition, Shreve, rattling on about how he wants to understand the peculiarities of the South, demonstrates that he shares in the aberrations he attributes to Quentin's people: "I just want to understand it if I can and I dont know how to say it better. . . . What is it?

something you live and breathe like air: a kind of vacuum filled with wrathlike and indomitable anger and pride and glory at the in happenings that occurred and ceased fifty years ago? . . . So that forevermore you wont be anything but a descendant of a long line of colonels killed in Pickett's charge as Manassas?" (p. 361). Speaking of the absurdity of the South in its detachment from immediacy through his reference to its arrested consciousness of past history, Shreve unintentionally ridicules himself. His talk of a filled vacuum is nonsense. Similarly, his reference to Pickett at Manassas is a figment of his own detached mind. (Pickett's charge took place at Gettysburg.) Quentin vocally corrects Shreve, but continues to be submissive to Shreve's unilateral declaration of himself as the arbiter of what is real.

In juxtaposition, the reader sees a series of memories and retellings of the night when Quentin went out to the Sutpen ruin with Miss Rosa. The scene of Rosa and Quentin's journey is rendered by the narrative voice in terms of what Quentin can remember. Quentin in that journey finds himself wondering why all the people involved are acting as they do. The reader is continually impressed with Quentin's perception of Rosa's actual unwillingness to make this trip and her inability to rid herself of the detached compulsion to do it. Quentin knows that he does not want to be there and feels some arbitrary detached compulsion to obey Miss Rosa. When they arrive, he is conscious that Clytie, who

did not want them to be there either, "merely came with a bunch of enormous old fashioned keys, as if she had known all the time that this hour must come and that it could not be resisted, and opened the door and stepped back a little as Miss Coldfield entered" (p. 369).

Quentin, however, is unable to interpret the significance of what he sees. The reader, because of the context of the juxtapositions, is aware that on the night of his trip to the Sutpen ruin, Quentin comes closer than anyone in the novel to perceiving the madness of stereotypical thinking. But the reader also sees that Quentin's progress that night is halted when he, under the same compulsion as Miss Rosa, experiences a "necessity" which the reader understands is as tautological as Rosa's or Clytie's fatalism. Quentin believes himself compelled to look upon Henry Sutpen, who is hidden upstairs. There, alive, Henry is absurdly playing the role of a corpse, the role now the reality for him, so that both death and life are confused by this pose.

The reader is told how Quentin saw ". . . the bed, the yellow sheets and pillow, the wasted yellow face with closed almost transparent eyelids on the pillow, the wasted hands crossed on the breast as if he were already a corpse; waking or sleeping it was the same and would be forever as long as he [Quentin] lived:

<u>And you are</u>--?

<u>Henry Sutpen</u>.

<u>And you have been here</u>--?

Four years.

And you came home--?

To die. Yes.

To die?

Yes. To die.

And you have been here--?

Four years.

And you are--?

Henry Sutpen" (p. 373).

Henry Sutpen is ridiculous in the attitude he has struck, and the conversation between Quentin and Henry is absurdly tautological. But even more absurdly, Quentin responds by taking him seriously, putting priority on Henry's detachment instead of seeing it for the parody such a pretense ought to appear by virtue of the fact that Quentin knows that Henry is alive.[19]

In juxtaposition, Shreve, in Cambridge, speculates about Rosa's "hatred" for Sutpen as the reason why it took her three months to return with an ambulance for Henry, at which time Clytie burned the house down to keep Rosa and the doctors from him. Quite clearly, hatred has nothing to do with Rosa's delay. Her hesitation is all part of the dynamic of the absurd priority of images over life, a priority which yields the final grotesque gesture of suicide and the sanction of suicide.

The final paragraphs of the chapter locate hatred and death as the ultimate realities of the characters' illu-

sory world, which centrally values detachment. Only now is the reader allowed to see the final portion of Compson's letter to Quentin, the first part of which was disclosed in Chapter VI. The conclusion of the letter is an absurd contradiction, of which the writer is not aware, of the first part which expressed the anxiety of the detached intellect before death. On the contrary, the last part of the letter is an actual expression of a hope that death will afford the perfection of abstraction that life has not granted. With regard to Rosa's death, Compson writes, "Surely it can harm no one to believe that perhaps she has escaped not at all the privilege of being outraged and amazed and of not forgiving but on the contrary has herself gained that place or bourne where the objects of outrage and of the commiseration also are no longer ghosts but are actual people to be actual recipients of the hatred and the pity. It will do no harm to hope--" (p. 377). Compson's mockery of life in his hope for Rosa's death as a more perfect reality is followed by Shreve's final attack on the moment.

Abruptly, Shreve turns on Quentin, asking him, "Now I want you to tell me one thing more. Why do you hate the South?" (p. 378). This non sequitur, like Shreve's solution of the "mystery," asserts Quentin's hatred as a reality ex nihilo. But in this case Shreve is attacking the immanence not of some distant occurrences, but of the life of the person to whom he is speaking. Quentin's helplessness here is thus both more farcical and more tragic than his silence

before Shreve's theory about the great picture substitution. Quentin finds himself able only to protest, but not to affirm his life and love: "'I dont hate it,' Quentin said quickly, at once, immediately; 'I dont hate it,' he said. I dont hate it he thought panting in the cold air, the iron New England dark; I dont. I dont! I dont hate it! I dont hate it!" (p. 378). The novel thus ends with Quentin comically immobilized by Shreve's tautology.[20]

The dynamics of this use of humor are complex. The novel, although it has evoked the situation as absurd, ends with detachment as the only reality for the characters, with hatred and death affirmed over life and love; this is the condition of Blake's Ulro, the home of the misguidedly final perception of detached images. But, though this is the situation for the characters, the juxtapositions have enabled the reader to perceive the immediacy that makes detachment laughable as a priority. Though the reader is witness to a world devoid of laughter, a world that is a helpless buffoon, he is brought to a point at which death and hatred are revealed to be dualistic illusions. Thus Absalom, Absalom! ends with a cosmic laugh at the ridiculous location of detachment as the center of reality. The reader's position at the novel's terminus is analogous to Los' at the end of Jerusalem, when he realizes man's power to conquer death: "Fear not my Sons this Waking Death. . . . Will you suffer this Satan this Body of Doubt that Seems but Is Not / to occupy the very threshold of Eternal Life . . ." (p. 251).

Mythology: The Great Hermaphrodite

The juxtapositions in Absalom, Absalom! exhibit to the reader a debilitating evolution of human perception which I have read, through Blake, as the tragi-comic confusion of images with immediated reality. The mythology of Absalom, Absalom! enriches the reader's understanding of this descent, for what happens to Quentin in this movel has not only cognitive but also cosmic ramifications. I will use Blake's Beulah once more as a lens for reading the cosmic aspects of Absalom, Absalom!. Beulah is not only the home of the necessary, and necessarily temporary, image, but it is also the realm of sexual division. The division between male and female is necessary to the primary cosmic human reality, but in Blake, it is crucial that the moonlit sexuality of Beulah defer to the primacy of Christ in Eden, or, as Blake would rephrase it, to the fraternity of all humanity.

In Blake, just as Beulah's image is perverted by insistence on its finality, so Beulah's sexual organization is perverted when it is given the role of mankind's central organization. In that role, sexuality becomes abstract. Instead of living as the immediate energies of the female and the male, it is perverted into what D. H. Lawrence called sex-in-the-head, and what Blake portrayed as sexual stereotypes. Both writers were referring to the removal of sexuality from direct experience. Blake perceived such a sublimation as a transformation of sexuality into deified

images that could only pervert unmediated experience with the ideas of an abstract "maleness," a will to conquest, and an abstract femininity, a sacred holiness. In Blake, these fixed forms are quite sinister, operating as a "sexism" that is not merely an interference with civil rights but a cosmic center for the perverse distortion that makes abstraction seem more real to humanity than direct experience. In Blake these sexual categories together actually form a false hermaphroditic deity that he calls the Covering Cherub, an Anti-Christ in its usurpation of the heart of human existence, which should be reserved for direct apprehension.[21] All exaggerations of the importance of mediation are the progeny of this abstract parody of sexuality, and the Satan-Jehovah mythology is merely another of the deity's meaningless illusions.

I shall demonstrate how Absalom, Absalom! makes the reader look anew at the concept of divinity, deflating the strength of the traditional images of Satan and Jehovah and urging upon the reader an understanding of the massive evil power of sexual abstractions from the mind of man. From the very beginning, Absalom, Absalom! empties the traditional images of cosmic power for the reader. Rosa opens the novel by imputing a Satanic nature to Sutpen and turning to God for recourse, but her first image of Sutpen empties these distinctions. Sutpen is a fusion of Satan and Jehovah:

> Out of quiet . . [sic] thunderclap he would abrupt (man-horse-demon) upon a scene peaceful and deco-

> rous as a schoolprize water color, faint sulphur-reek still in hair and clothes and beard, with grouped behind him his band of wild niggers like beasts half tamed to walk upright like men, in attitudes wild and reposed, and manacled among them the French architect with his air grim, haggard, and tatter-ran. Immobile, bearded and hand palm-lifted the horseman sat; behind him the wild blacks and the captive architect huddled quietly, carrying in bloodless paradox the shovels and picks and axes of peaceful conquest. Then in the long unamaze Quentin seemed to watch them overrun suddenly the hundred square miles of tranquil and astonished earth and drag house and formal gardens violently out of the soundless Nothing and clap them down like cards upon a table beneath the up-palm immobile and pontific, creating the Sutpen's Hundred, the Be Sutpen's Hundred like the oldentime Be Light (p. 9).

Here, not only are Satan and Jehovah one entity, but, in addition, their power is mocked as a house of cards, a derivation of Nothing. This is a Blakean image of the traditional Jehovah.[22]

This blended image is supported by other evidence of the meaninglessness of Judeo-Christian mythology. Rosa's amazed recapitulation of Sutpen's effect on her life shows his means to Satanic conquest to be the minions of virtue. Her father, a pillar of Methodism in Jefferson, gave Sutpen his start, and Sutpen discovered in church the woman who would, as a virtuous bride, "make his position impregnable" (p. 15). Compson, too, is forced in his chapters of narration to merge in amazement the conventional idea of evil with the conventional idea of good: "Have you noticed how so often when we try to reconstruct the causes which lead up to the actions of men and women, how with a sort of astonishment we find ourselves now and then reduced to the belief,

the only possible belief that they stemmed from some of the old virtues: the thief who steals not for greed but for love, the murderer who kills not out of lust but pity?" (p. 121).

Although toward the end of the book Quentin and Shreve are referring to Rosa as a righteous virgin, a traditional Christian symbol of goodness, and to Sutpen as a demon, a traditional Christian symbol of evil, the omniscient voice equates the demon and the virgin and likens them both to Shreve and Quentin's ratiocination, "which was after all a good deal like Sutpen's morality and Miss Coldfield's demonizing" (p. 280). Finally, as Quentin and Shreve are visualizing Henry's attempt to justify incest, the omniscient voice speaks of "how people before and since have tried to evoke God or devil to justify them in what their glands insisted upon . . ." (p. 346). The Satan-Jehovah concept is not only blended there, but also reduced to an involuntary physical reaction.

But if the conventions of Satan and Jehovah are, in the novel's point of view, only nominally deities by virtue of the characters' vocabulary, the characters' inclination to mediated experience, about which they never speak directly, shapes their destiny. This predilection, which we have explored, has not thus far revealed a prevailing mythos. Characters' cognitive aberrations which have been discussed have no pattern in common except insofar as they all refer the characters' perception away from the moment of reality.

What has not yet been explored, however, is the way in which the characters consistently refer to male-female stereotypes, using categories which are applied in the novel in juxtaposition to living male and female human beings. As we shall see, as the characters invoke these categories to give form to existence, the categories create an order detached from direct experience, and, rather than giving order to life, they, like Blake's Covering Cherub, usurp the power of creation, transforming it ironically into the omnipresence of destruction. The conjunction of the consistently pervasive stereotypes of "male" power and "female" value emerges as a parody of the sexual conjunction of the male and female. The union of the abstractions of power and value is dogma but since, when we examine the text we shall see that these abstractions are the characters' major experience of masculinity and femininity, dogma, in the context of this novel, is hermaphrodite. And since dogma is the essential cosmic reality to the characters in the novel, the hermaphrodite is their deity. As the novel unfolds, it becomes more and more clear to the reader that the function of the hermaphrodite deity is to fabricate an order that devalues human life and that it increasingly encroaches upon unmediated human sexuality until, like Blake's Covering Cherub, it rules a dominion of death.

The characters' belief in the femininity of value and the masculinity of power appears immediately in Rosa's opening narrative. The first chapter is permeated by sexual

characterizations of holiness as female, power as male. For example, as Rosa speaks of Ellen's marriage, she evokes Woman as a sacred aegis: "Then he needed respectability, the shield of a virtuous woman" (p. 15). When the minister castigates Sutpen, he speaks in the "name of the women of the county" (p. 24). The secret wrestling matches, shows of brute power, that Sutpen began for men only are intended to be hidden from the women. It is nevertheless ironically made very clear that when one gets away from Woman and Man to this or that man or woman the categories do not hold. The carriage racing for which the minister chastised Sutpen was instigated by Judith (p. 25), and, while Judith and Clytie came to see the wrestling matches secretly of their own desire, brother Henry had to be forced to watch and was nauseated by the spectacle (pp. 29-30).

The independence of immediate humanity from the sexual abstractions is again obvious in Chapter II when Compson tells us how the mob pelted Sutpen on his wedding night. The mob gathering on that night is furious at attempts that have been made to force the town to attend this ceremony. The reader knows that Ellen was responsible for the wedding in the first place, and the town knows that Ellen's aunt is responsible for the inordinate coercion of the town. Nevertheless, as the mob responds, they act as though, power, and thus the ability to realize this wedding, were not only male, but the man in the situation, and as though value is not only female, but the woman present. So as the garbage

is thrown at Sutpen, a voice shouts, "Look out! Dont hit her now!" (p. 56). Sutpen and Ellen are less present to this mob than are Power and Value.

As the novel continues, the categories, remaining clear, not only devalue the actual presence of men and women, but also make immediate sexual identity more confusing. People begin to appear androgynous. In Chapter III, Compson speaks of how Rosa's aunt is more man than woman, Rosa's father more woman than man, because the aunt is a forceful person and Coldfield is taken up so completely with morality: "that strong vindictive woman who seems to have been twice the man that Mr. Coldfield was and who in very truth was not only Miss Rosa's mother but her father too" (p. 63).

When Compson speaks about Judith's energy, he must again see her as an androgynous aberration. In Chapter IV, as Compson makes up his story about the Christmas quarrel, he speaks of how Judith waited at Henry's behest for further knowledge about the problems which had mysteriously driven Henry and Bon from her home, commenting how she would wait "only up to that mutually recognized though unstated . . . point and both doubtless aware that when that point was reached she would, and with the same calm, the same refusal to accept or give because of any traditional weakness of sex, recall the armistice and face him as a foe . . . fighting the matter out with Henry like a man first, before consenting to revert to the woman, the loved, the bride" (p. 92).

A sinister limitation to perceiving sexual distinction only in abstract terms makes itself more manifest as Compson imagines Henry's reasons for bringing Judith, himself, and Bon into relationship. In Compson's Chapter IV narration, to Henry sex seems no more than a fantasy of Power and Value.

> Henry was the provincial, the clown almost, given to instinctive and violent action rather than to thinking 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. In fact, perhaps this is the pure and perfect incest: the brother realizing that the sister's virginity must be destroyed in order to have existed, taking that virginity in the person of the brother-in-law, the man whom he would be if he could become . . . the husband; by whom he would be despoiled . . . if he could become the bride (p. 96).

Henry's limitation of sexuality to abstractions of Power and Value results in disaster for living men and women, Judith's barren life, Bon's death, and the hideous inversion of Henry's friendship with Bon.

The parody of the creative power of sexuality with abstract sexual distinction continues as Compson speaks of his own values. Evoking the civil war as the historical background for Henry's agony, Compson discloses that for him the two most powerful sights in society are the sacrifice of female virgins and the sending of men into battle: "probably the most moving mass-sight of all human mass-experience, far more so than the spectacle of so many virgins going to be sacrificed to some heathen Principle, some Priapus--the

sight of young men, the light quick bones, the bright gallant deluded blood and flesh dressed in a martial glitter of brass and plumes, marching away to battle" (p. 122). Compson's most powerful responses are reserved for images of the feminine and masculine. Although he is not aware of their significance, both images mythologize the male and female as abstractions of power and value, and in both cases involve the death of real men and women.

Rosa's engagement to Sutpen brings the reader into contact with an explicit sublimation of copulation such that marriage and sexuality are removed from direct human experience into a realm of dogma in which the Male and Female exist as the total Value and Power of the universe, as a hermaphrodite deity to which the lives of men and women are irrelevant. Rosa speaks of the suddenness of Sutpen's desire to marry her after a moment's glance at her which is clearly evoked as an abstract form of copulation. Rosa talks of how one day Sutpen looked at her "as if the barnlot path at the instant when he came in sight of me had been a swamp out of which he had emerged without having been forewarned that he was about to enter light, and then went on . . . there is a metabolism of the spirit as well as of the entrails, in which the stored accumulations of long time burn, generate, create and break some maidenhead of the ravening meat; ay in a second's time. . . . This was my instant . . ." (p. 163). This sublimation of sexuality has nothing to do with either the man or the woman involved. In

spite of the unique individuality of both Rosa and Sutpen, this fusion of male and female is a matter purely of the reestablishment of order in Sutpen's domains. Rosa tells us that when Sutpen said that he would marry her he spoke not about either of them but only about his impossible dream of rebuilding his estate and did not acknowledge Rosa's presence for the next two months (p. 165). This marriage is nothing but the fusion of Power and Value for abstract order at the expense of direct experience. It is a displacement of sexuality into transcendent dogma, a superhuman oneness of the abstract Male and Female, a Hermaphroditic deity of illusory form. Caught in this web of stereotypes, Rosa and Sutpen do not live happily ever after. They are instead bereft of involvement with each other and with life in general as Rosa becomes a recluse and shortly afterward Sutpen dies. The second cluster follows through on the mythology of the parodic decreation of humanity by abstract sexuality, this transcendent fusion of the categories of Power and Value that is analogous to Blake's great Hermaphrodite.[23] It opens with Shreve attacking Quentin about his inability to mediate his experience with verbal explanation. Shreve's subjection of Quentin to an imperative that he verbalize his life and the history of his people is meant to yield an absolutely true and authoritative explanation of the events described, a dogma. Shreve often reminds the reader of this goal as he keeps proclaiming that he is not only right, but the only one who is right (pp. 176, 220, 344, 359). The

narrations of the Sutpen history simultaneously continue to evoke absolute Power and Value as sublimations of masculinity and femininity which not only limit the characters' perceptions of men and women but which also destroy dignity and life.

Shreve responds to the news of Rosa's death by baiting Quentin. "'You mean she was no kin to you, no kin to you at all, that there was actually one Bayard or Guinevere who was not kin to you? then what did she die for' and that not Shreve's first time, nobody's first time in Cambridge since September: Tell about the South. What's it like there. What do they do there. Why do they live there. Why do they live at all . . ." (p. 174). Shreve is, as the reader can see, nagging Quentin to fix his knowledge and experience of life into a "definite" formulation. It is just this rigid, stereotyped order of the living experience that the reader has seen presented as the dogma of sexual abstractions. In Quentin's attempts to satisfy Shreve's demand, his further discussion of the world the Sutpens inhabited confirms that the imposition of the dogma, rather than giving shape to life, decreates it. In this connection, Shreve's attitude toward Quentin, his unflagging insistence that Quentin transform all his knowledge into authoritative, accurate, verbal abstraction is made to appear to the reader as a sadistic decreation of Quentin's reality. For example, Quentin's recollections of his father's communication to him about Bon's son parallels Shreve's

demand that Quentin abstract experience so that it may be sufficiently formalized.

As we see in the story Compson has told Quentin about Bon's son, the little boy's subjection to the hermaphrodite of Power and Value replaces the warm atmosphere of his early childhood. The transposition from New Orleans to Jefferson decreates him from a human being into a "nigger." This process parallels Shreve's dehumanization of Quentin's heritage into "objective" history. Bon's son is shown in transition from the New Orleans enclave, in which he was loved and cherished as the creation of his parents, to the world of the Sutpens, in which he exists as a dehumanized subject of an abstract order which is sanctioned by abstractions of Power and Value. The transition is portrayed to the reader explicitly in terms of a sublimation of the sexual. Compson tells Quentin that Bon's son had come from a world where "the very abstractions which he might have observed--monogamy and fidelity and decorum and gentleness and affection--were as purely rooted in the flesh's offices as the digestive processes" (p. 199). But in the culture of the Sutpens the situation is inverted and the human is abstracted into the stereotype. Compson verbalizes the boy's plight as he encapsulates Judith and Clytie's unspoken attitude toward him: "<u>You are not up here in this bed with me [Judith], where through no fault nor willing of your own you should be, and you are not down here on this pallet floor with me [Clytie], where through no fault nor</u>

willing of your own you must and will be, not through any fault or willing of our own who would not what we cannot" (p. 199). From being the sexual creation of a mother and father, the boy is decreated into a "nigger" overseen by two virgin guardians of the categories that are sanctioned by ideas of Value and Power.

In just the same way, Shreve's rephrasing of what Quentin has already told him throughout Chapter VI decreates Quentin's living heritage into a dehumanized object of study, as Shreve emerges in Chapter VII with what has been the source of Quentin's life his own theatrical spectacle. "Jesus the South is fine, isn't it. It's better than the theatre isn't it. It's better than Ben Hur, isn't it" (p. 217).

The mythology of decreation grows clearer as the second cluster proceeds. Sutpen's experience at the door of the plantation when the house slave told him to go around to the back door is rendered in terms of the decreation of humanity by the sublimations of categorical Power and categorical Value. The house slave's words to Sutpen at the plantation house door change both Sutpen and the black man from two people standing near a door into three objects in a scale of abstract Value sanctified by abstract Power. This metamorphosis is conveyed through Sutpen's location in a purely human realm before the incident and in a totally abstract hierarchy of objects after it. Before his attempt to deliver his message,

> he no more envied the man [the planter] than he would have envied a mountain man who happened to own a fine rifle . . . because he could not have conceived of the owner taking such crass advantage of the luck which gave the rifle to him rather than to another as to say to other men: Because I own this rifle, my arms and legs and blood and bones are superior to yours except as the victorious outcome of a fight with rifles: and how in the world could a man fight with another man with dressed-up niggers and the fact that he could lie in a hammock all afternoon with his shoes off? (pp. 228-29).

At the moment of Sutpen's encounter with the absolute Value and Power that the slave's words represent, the slave for the first time is decreated from a human being into a "nigger" and Sutpen leaves the social world of men and women created by the immediate family of male and female. Sutpen suddenly sees the slave as a hollow balloon, as he now realizes the grown-ups do, and he sees himself and his family "as the owner, the rich man (not the nigger) must have been seeing them all the time--as cattle . . ." (p. 235).[24] He leaves not only his family, but all participation in the family of man, for the sublimated parody of the family, the order and ranking of Value and Power which Sutpen calls his "design," for which the human creations of sexual energy are counters. "I had a design. To accomplish it I should require money, a house, a plantation, slaves, a family, incidentally of course a wife" (p. 263). Family, slaves, and incidental wife are all part of the same list of objects as the house and land holdings.

Sutpen's involvement with Wash Jones' family is another illumination of the decreation mythology. Jones'

compliance with Sutpen's use of his granddaughter as breeding stock is presented to the reader in terms of a pattern--the sacrifice of the sexual to the hermaphrodite of Power and Value. Jones sees Sutpen as the locus of holy omnipotence and is portrayed thinking "If God Himself was to come down and ride the natural earth, that's what He would aim to look like" (p. 282). Sutpen, of course, values the baby only as an appropriate counter for his design and rejects her on behalf of the abstract hierarchy. Ironically, the death of the rejected baby girl and her mother as well as Sutpen at Jones' hands shows that, in the context of the hermaphrodite abstraction of sexuality into categories, the immediate female is valueless and the immediate male powerless.

Quentin's and Shreve's reaction to this dehumanized slaughter of innocents should also be read through the mythology of decreation. Shreve's anxiety about why Sutpen provoked Jones is completely dispelled once he learns that the child was not appropriate to the design, and Quentin makes no remonstrance. The reader sees the decreation of Shreve and Quentin's humanity by the abstract hierarchy of Power and Value.

In Chapter VIII, as Shreve and Quentin imagine the mechanics of the destiny of Bon's death as Compson did in Chapter IV, men and women are nothing but fantasies of Power and Value. The fabrication of this story begins with a purely abstract relationship between family members, as the omniscient voice speaks of Shreve and Quentin narrating, "as

free now of the flesh as the father who decreed and forbade, the son who denied and repudiated, the lover who acquiesced, the beloved who was not bereaved" (p. 295). In the boys' fantasy all the characters are stereotypes.

Bon's relationship to his mother and father is not to a particular man and woman but to the maternal, affronted Value, and to the paternal, affronting Power: "hence no man had a father . . . but all mother faces which ever bred swooping down at those almost calculable moments out of some obscure ancient general affronting and outraging which the actual living meat had not even suffered but merely inherited; all boy flesh that walked and breathed stemming from that one ambiguous eluded dark father head . . ." (p. 299). In conjunction, these abstractions decreate human value in parody of sexual creation. Quentin and Shreve imagine how Bon lacks immediate value not only for his absent father but also for his mother, his existence for her only an abstract instrument of revenge on Sutpen: "that boy when he did arrive like the dynamite which destroys the house and the family and maybe even the whole community . . . created between this woman and a hired lawyer . . ." (p. 306).

This hermaphrodite abstraction is shown decreating all the characters in Shreve's and Quentin's story, but the most important decreations concern the climactic clash between Bon and Henry. First the reader sees Judith and Henry transformed from warmly regarded human beings into counters in Bon's decision to take revenge against Sutpen by marrying

Judith. Then he sees Bon's transformation of his own concept of himself into the dehumanized "nigger" (pp. 357-58). These transformations show not only Bon's sublimation of sexuality into a counter in the hierarchy of Power and Value, but also Henry's similar sublimation. In protesting Bon's decision, Henry, inappropriately, seems possessed by a kind of sexual frenzy. "Henry looks at the pistol; now he is not only panting, he is trembling; when he speaks now his voice is not even the exhalation it is the suffused and suffocating inbreath itself" (p. 357). Once more the sublimation of sexuality signals the well-being of the hermaphrodite hierarchy and the decreation of humanity.

Again, Shreve's and Quentin's relationship parallels the transformations in the Sutpen story. In the process of imagining their fantasy, Shreve continually uses this story, which is itself an abstract sexual fantasy, to establish dogmatic truth, and to establish himself in the hierarchy of Value and Power. Shreve's capricious decision that no one but he knows that it was Henry who was injured during the war and not Bon is one instance of the decreation of reality and humanity for the hierarchy. At the end of the chapter, when Shreve claims to have solved the great Sutpen mystery, he blurts out, "Aint that right? Aint it? By, God, aint it" (p. 359). Shreve's "eureka" explicitly proclaims itself dogma, and it is at the same time a process of decreation of the Sutpen reality.

In this mythology of decreation, that which is no

longer visible, human immediacy, is the precious casualty of the establishment of the hermaphrodite hierarchy. The mythology of this negative space is similar to the mythology of The Sound and the Fury and Light in August. In all these novels, with the increasing aggrandizements of the rational, Jesus becomes less accessible. In The Sound and the Fury Caddy and Miss Quentin, the Christ figures, disappear. In Light in August, Christ, as an apocalyptic liberation of human brotherhood, is hidden from the characters. In Absalom, Absalom! Christ is associated with what is missing, just as the hermaphrodite abstraction is associated with the characters' hallucinations of extant order in their world.

Early in Absalom, Absalom! the letter Compson shows to Quentin mentions the power of Christ as having been replaced by the abstract order of the Union government, represented by its initials. The letter speaks of the boxes on the convoy, "stenciled each with that U. and that S. which for four years now has been to us the symbol of the spoils which belong to the vanquished, of the loaves and the fishes as was once the incandescent Brow, the shining nimbus of the Thorny Crown . . ." (p. 130).

When Shreve speaks of love he makes Jesus a factotum of a detached God. "Jesus, some day you are bound to fall in love. They just wouldn't beat you that way. It would be like if God had got Jesus born and saw that he had the carpenter tools and then never gave him anything to build with them" (p. 324). This is also an evocation of the absence of

Christ, although in fact it is only in Shreve's narration that the name of Christ begins to appear at all. As in the above simile, every time Shreve uses the name he implies the emptying of Jesus' power, because for Sherve "Christ" is always a throwaway or an expression of derision. In Chapter VII, Shreve says "Jesus, the South is fine, isn't it" (p. 217). In Chapter VIII Shreve uses the name often to punctuage his story. "Jesus, you can almost see him" (p. 317). "Jesus, who to know what she saw . . ." (p. 322). "Jesus, he must have known it would be" (p. 322). The irrelevance of this presence is glaring in a Christian context, as the society of this novel certainly purports itself to be. At the end of the novel, this negative space is dramatically emphasized when, in terror after having seen Henry Sutpen, Quentin calls in vain "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus" (p. 372). There is no more to Christ here than there was in Shreve's off-hand use of the name. Quentin, left with nothing but Henry's abstract denial of life, is in despair, and this is a Blakean dramatization of his nihilism. He is shown bereft of the divine vision Blake would call Christ and a victim of the abstract hallucination Blake would call the Covering Cherub, the Anti-Christ.[25]

Quentin's inability to perceive the power of Christ in any meaningful way corresponds to his isolation at the end of the novel in a void unable to affirm life and love. Quentin's intimidation by the decreating hermaphrodite dogma is evident as Quentin and Shreve discuss Clytie's arson,

which left Jim Bond as the fugitive remnant of the Sutpens. Shreve concocts an equation to express the termination of the family line which is another transformation of sexuality into abstraction, and a very dramatic perversion of the sexual idea into human death. "So it took Charles Bon and his mother to get rid of old Tom, and Charles Bon and the octoroon to get rid of Judith, and Charles Bon and Clytie to get rid of Henry; and Charles Bon's mother and Charles Bon's grandmother got rid of Charles Bon. So it takes two niggers to get rid of one Sutpen, dont it?" (p. 378). Decreation of life by a couple is a parodic inversion of sexual creation.[26]

All that is left after this decreation process is Jim Bond, an idiot, Shreve's idea of the future of human civilization: "I think that in time the Jim Bonds are going to conquer the western hemisphere. Of course it wont quite be in our time and of course as they spread toward the poles they will bleach out again like the rabbits. . . . But it will still be Jim Bond; and so in a few thousand years, I who regard you will also have sprung from the loins of African kings" (p. 378). Here, Shreve is predicting the victory of the Anti-Christ hermaphrodite abstraction because in the context of this novel, the "nigger" is the decreated human being.

Context is essential to the reader's understanding of Shreve's prediction. Elsewhere, Faulkner has spoken with completely different implications about the ultimate con-

quest of western civilization by the black man. The Bear is one notable example. The context of Ike's statement in The Bear, however, is so strikingly different that it is worthwhile to quote it here as an example of the major premise of this study--that only distortion can come of looking at all of Faulkner's work as parts of a single category. Ike, in The Bear, expresses the belief that the black man is indeed superior to the white man and that eventually, as a part of eternal justice, the best will prevail: "Because they will endure. They are better than we are, stronger than we are. Their vices are vices aped from white men or that white men taught them: improvidence and intemperance and evasion--not laziness: evasion of what white men had set them to."[27] Clearly this has nothing to do with the vision of the dehumanized "nigger" that Shreve is discussing; it is more a part of the romantic lionizing of the "noble savage." It also implies a traditional notion of the divine destiny of the prevalence of the best, which again has nothing to do with Shreve's prognostication. The difference between these two visions of futurity supports the distinction I have made in this study between Blakean and conventional novels and is in turn supported by the inconsistency of the non-fictional statements Faulkner made, commenting on racial issues in society, at times defending, at times attacking the belief in racial stereotypes.[28]

A final example both of the hermaphrodite abstraction's transformation of life and the importance of context

is the last interchange in the book between Quentin and Shreve. Shreve's baffling non sequitur is in fact part of the pattern established in the novel for the triumph of dehumanization and death. "Now I want you to tell me one thing more. Why do you hate the South?" (p. 378). With a statement that he gives the force of an absolute truth that it does not in any way possess, Shreve is decreating Quentin's immediate life. Quentin rejects this, but in vain, just as he called upon Jesus. He can no longer significantly recognize anything but the hallucination that Shreve calls truth, and cannot affirm, therefore, the reality of human life that does exist and that makes Shreve's deity a joke. Shreve holds out to Quentin, in the last analysis, not the immediate bonds of friendship but the primacy of detached abstraction, the parody of sexuality in its fusion of male power and female value, from which man cannot be born, by which man dies.

Nevertheless, the novel qualifies this nightmare for the reader. The reader knows that the great Hermaphrodite is a mediator that barely permits glimpses of direct experience. Its signs and signals codify a nightmare landscape which does not really exist and from which the person who can see it for what it really is remains free. Clearly the immediate moment and, by implication, Christ, exist, although Quentin's vision of them is dimmed. The reader's redeemed perceptions are therefore free to wake up to immediacy and to the living deity that is at its center.

Notes to Chapter V

[1]The variety of critical responses to the unity of Absalom, Absalom! includes some that start with generalizations which approximately coincide with mine and differ with respect to particulars. These will be explored in the footnotes that follow. Joseph Reed likens Absalom, Absalom! to Melville's The Confidence Man, saying that it undercuts the fictions it presents and uses the conventions of literature to frustrate stock responses in order to arrive at a humanization of literature (Faulkner's Narrative [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973], pp. 147-49). Hyatt H. Waggoner also believes that the constant revision of the narrative holds within it a coherence: "The motive for the retellings, the re-interpretations, each of which adds new facts as well as a new perspective and makes necessary a re-interpretation of the facts already known, is consistent, and it supplies the organizing principle of the novel" (William Faulkner: From Jefferson to the World [Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1959], p. 155). On the other hand, James Guetti says that nothing is ever resolved in Absalom, Absalom!, and doubts that the work can even be considered a novel (The Limits of Metaphor: A Study of Melville, Conrad, and Faulkner [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967], pp. 107-8). Likewise, Walter Slatoff dismisses Absalom, Absalom! as a psychological oxymoron, throwing up his hands at the impossibility of cataloguing all the ambiguities in the novel (The Quest for Failure [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960], p. 201). Somewhere in the middle, Olga Vickery sees the novel as an unresolved suspension, whole in its inclusiveness of all the versions at once (The Novels of William Faulkner [Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959], pp. 84-85).

[2]Vickery speaks of how Quentin is "unable to maintain aesthetic distance or to distinguish the symbolic from the literal. For he, like Henry Sutpen, is obsessed with the idea of incest and with his responsibility for his own sister" (p. 92). This is completely untenable--even if one concedes the validity of interpreting Absalom, Absalom! on the basis of The Sound and the Fury, and I do not. Since in the earlier novel Quentin has both an idiot brother and a mother only slightly acquainted with reality, we cannot assume that it is the idea of incest between Judith and Bon and not the presence of Jim Bond or Ellen Sutpen that has so incapacitated Quentin. Reed also makes use of Caddy to interpret Quentin's catatonic non-reactions (p. 168).

[3]William Blake, The Prose and Poetry of . . ., ed.

David V. Erdman, commentary Harold Bloom (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1965), p. 95. All further references to Blake's works will be taken from this text and will be indicated parenthetically in the body of the essay.

[4]Harold Bloom glosses Blake's Beulah as I have described it above. "Beulah is a passive state. . . . It is a dreamworld, in that its Innocence is too disorganized to withstand the generative pressures of Experience. The function of the daughters of Beulah is to create spaces that keep the mind's sleep [participation in innocence] from becoming death. . . . Time and space enter into Beulah as a relieving world of temporal appearance, a rest from the strenuous makings and unmakings of imaginative passion. The spaces of Beulah are momentary indulgences that even the most vigorous of artists must grant himself. . . . But these forms do not insist upon themselves as realities. . . . The health of the creative life, for Blake, lies in the willingness of these forms and extra-artistic beliefs to sacrifice themselves so as to revive the mind's power to visualize fresh appearances (Blake's Apocalypse [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970], p. 199). The fall of Beulah into Ulro, the nightmare world in which the forms claim permanent validity for themselves, appears at the beginning of The Four Zoas. "The Daughters of Beulah follow sleepers in all their Dreams / Creating Spaces lest they fall into Eternal Death / The Circle of Destiny complete they gave to it a Space / And named the space Ulro . . ." (p. 299). The aberrant insistence of the new images on their truth terrifies the Daughters of Beulah as they see that this new development is the Eternal Death from which they are supposed to protect the creative life. In panic they isolate the threatening images and flee. "They said the Spectre is in every man insane & most / Deformed . . . / We meet it with our songs and loving blandishments & give / To it a form of Vegetation But this Spectre of Tharmas / Is Eternal Death What shall we do O God pity & help / So spoke they & closed the Gate of the Tongue in trembling fear" (p. 299).

[5]Irving Howe, William Faulkner: A Critical Study (New York: Random House, 1951, p. 225. He believes, however, that the uniformity of narrative style is unimportant.

[6]William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! (New York: The Modern Library, 1936). The curious reader may be interested to know that the speakers are, in the order in which they are quoted, Rosa (pp. 22-23), Mr. Compson (p. 47), Quentin (p. 223), and Shreve (p. 177). All further citations from the novel come from this edition; page references will be noted parenthetically in the body of the essay.

[7]Some critics believe that there is a progressive

development between the points of view of the various narrators toward more realism. Waggoner, for example, asserts that there is no voice that is authoritative about the Sutpens, but that the reader works his way toward Shreve and Quentin's more plausible version as the novel proceeds (pp. 148-49). Reed also believes that the progression is toward Shreve's and Quentin's greater verisimilitude, but specifically that it is poetic, that their metaphor is a humanized "tool of understanding" (p. 152). Vickery and Brylowski, on the other hand, tend to stereotype the different points of view rather than suggesting movement of perception in a purposeful direction. Vickery characterizes the reader's advance from Gothic thriller in Miss Rosa's story, to classical drama verging on satire in Mr. Compson's point of view, and ending with Quentin's and Shreve's chivalric romance (p. 87). She does not give any reason for the order of these points of view, though she does make it clear that she believes that they are all meant to be equally valid. Similarly, Walter Brylowski attempts to categorize the points of view without stipulating the necessity of the order in which they are presented. He speaks of the reader's journey from Rosa's vision of the hero of the romantic mode to Compson's low-mimetic hero to Shreve's ironic mode. Quentin, he says, remains to the center of Frye's spectrum, though he does not explain what the center is (Faulkner's Olympian Laugh: Myth in the Novels [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968], pp. 23-25).

[8]My explication of this first chapter alone demonstrates the futility of characterizing Rosa or the book as Gothic. If there is Gothic horror in Rosa's attitude toward Sutpen, the entire chapter is structured to focus the reader beyond what Rosa sees. Thus Vickery's description of Rosa's narrative as a Gothic thriller (p. 87) is a generalized evasion of the specifics in Rosa's story, a case of seeing with Rosa's eyes instead of through her as the reader is clearly intended to do. Irving Howe comments that Faulkner uses the Gothic novel conventions in Absalom, Absalom! because he is overwhelmed by his perceptions of history: ". . . the devices of the Gothic help to formalize, to 'freeze' his material and therefore blunt the edge of feeling" (p. 73). When one really examines the text, one sees that this is Rosa's device, not Faulkner's. Peter Swiggart is closer when he characterizes Rosa as cut off from life by emotional abstractions (The Art of Faulkner's Novels [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962], p. 153).

[9]An examination of the text makes it similarly futile to look at Mr. Compson as a classical point of view as Vickery does (p. 87), or to speak of Compson's vision of the low mimetic hero as Brylowski does (pp. 23-25). Compson's point of view is being undercut in the text, and it is

the reason for that deflation that is the reader's focus; Compson's beliefs do not structure reality for the reader.

[10]No critic has pointed out how clear it is that Compson has made the story up, that he knows this, and that he still sees it as reality. However, it is textual details like this that explain Howe's perception that the language in the text "sometimes breaks down into an excess of abstraction as in sentences which cannot be read but which must be deciphered . . ." (p. 230). Howe gives as an example: "It was probably just peaceful despair and relief at the final and complete abnegation now that Judith was about to immolate the frustration's vicarious recompense into the living fairy tale" (pp. 230-31). He might have chosen from an enormous selection of similar expressions, such as Compson's description of "Henry still in the fierce repercussive flush of vindicated loyalty . . ." (p. 197). I believe that the textual emphasis on Compson's active participation in his own detachment from reality makes these abstract excesses part of the rhetoric of his creation, not excesses of the author's. Specifics like this also speak to Vickery's sense of Compson's abstraction, though she can only approach it tentatively, calling Compson's vision of the fight between Bon and Henry a "Battle of ideas . . . not a conflict of people" (p. 89). She is unable to take her insight any further in interpreting Compson's role in the novel.

[11]Compson's blatant misquotation of the letter he has just given to Quentin has not been discussed by any critic. It is as much a signal to the reader of Compson's self-satire as the disclosure that he had entirely concocted his version of Bon's and Henry's conflict.

[12]Rosa says that she saw Judith holding the picture of herself which she had given to Bon, and does not mention the picture of the octoroon that Compson says was found on Bon's corpse. This is evidence for Vickery's perception that the text does not cancel out the previous images with the ones that follow them, but holds them all in suspension (pp. 84-85). Nothing in either story prevents the possibility of two pictures, although Compson and Rosa each focus on only one. My Blakean reading of Absalom, Absalom! shows, however, that the reason for this suspension is that all the images are equally unimportant, reality being a function of direct experience only. Vickery, as indicated above, thinks all the images are equally true.

[13]Howe, p. 225.

[14]I have not found any other critical examination of Shreve's error, which could not be an author's lapse. Since the chapter Shreve's mistake begins is concerned mainly with

Sutpen's desire for a son, it seems unthinkable that Faulkner would not notice that Shreve says "grandson."

[15]There is some critical dispute about whether Quentin got any information directly from his grandfather or whether all his knowledge came through his father. Many critics have assumed without question that the latter is the case. For example, Reed (p. 164) and Waggoner (p. 159) both discuss what Quentin learned from his father as a donee, not as an issue. Gerald Langford, in his collation of the manuscript of Absalom, Absalom! with the published version, discusses the dispute between Cleanth Brooks and Ilse Dusoir Lind about whether Quentin was directly in contact with his grandfather or not (Faulkner's Revision of Absalom, Absalom! [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971], p. 5). Langford locates a passage in the published novel that seems to him to support Lind: "Grandfather didn't tell him [his father] all of it either, like Sutpen never told grandfather all of it," and comments that Quentin could not know this unless he had spoken directly with his grandfather (p. 6). He then locates another passage in Chapter IV that implies that Compson already knows the whole story. Langford cites a passage that he interprets as Compson's statement that Sutpen had already forbidden the marriage in his mind before arriving in New Orleans and seeing the octoroon (p. 10). Langford concludes that his collation shows that the dispute about Quentin's contact with his grandfather cannot be resolved by ascertaining who knew about Bon's Negro blood first, Quentin or his father. Since the manuscript shows an intention to have Compson know the whole story from the beginning, and the published version implies that he learned it from Quentin, the confusion, Langford says, is a result of Faulkner's incomplete revision of the final version (p. 9). My own reading of the novel leads me to believe that this whole discussion is a dead end. The language of both examples Langford picks does not conclusively show what anyone knew and does not prove any inconsistency in the novel. In both cases the language is so ambiguous as to leave communication incomplete. (I shall deal separately with Compson's statement in note 18.) Quentin's statement above about what his grandfather didn't tell his father leaves open several possibilities, not only the one that Langford seizes upon. Perhaps Quentin's words indicate, as Langford thinks, that Quentin spoke with his grandfather. They also may indicate that Quentin's father was aware that his father had not told him the whole story because Sutpen had not told the whole story to him. Further, Quentin may be indicating that Mr. Compson was aware that his father was holding back something he knew, just as Sutpen held back something, and that his father had found out the whole story from another source. What I conclude is that this ambiguity is part of the strategy the novel employs to convince the reader that

all the versions of the Sutpen saga are equally detached and should not be approached as a locus of truth, because mediation can never be.

[16]This scene has received a range of critical response. Swiggart and Vickery both focus on Sutpen's detachment as I do, differing from me in that they see it in isolation and not as part of the whole novel's approach to an interpretation of objectivity. Swiggart defines Sutpen's tragedy as the dehumanization of life in favor of abstraction (pp. 165-66). Vickery speaks of Sutpen's childhood home as a place of human values which alert Sutpen's instinct to what is wrong in the Tidewater system. Unfortunately, Vickery comments, Sutpen betrays his instinct (p. 94). Guetti, on the other hand, focuses on Sutpen's attempt to find meaning in a world which has none to offer. Guetti speaks of Sutpen's design as both "an attempt to dominate the arbitrariness that Sutpen perceives in the universe and an attempt to make real the artificial significance that this arbitrariness creates" (p. 88). Guetti thus sees Sutpen with two untenable options, chaos and arbitrary form. Elsewhere he calls this "an intense desire to perceive and the conviction that his perception must fail" (p. 100). Whereas Guetti sees this as the significant, nihilistic communication of the novel, I see the novel showing that the untenability of the culture it portrays is a function of its own priorities. The novel laughs at the culture's self-made prison of detachment, and points to the direct experience that is accessible to it. If the culture is nihilistic, the novel is not.

Most distant from my position is Robert Penn Warren, who interprets the incident as a realistic fact of social history. In Warren's own words, however, lie the limitations of his reading. Trying, with the help of historians and sociologists, to show that Sutpen's reaction to the house slave's words was an ordinary Southern response, Warren says of Sutpen, "Like Paul on the road to Damascus, he has been struck down by blinding revelation. His having been turned away from the front door by a black servant in livery proved to be traumatic. . . . Yet, if you can't beat them, you'd better join them" ("On Absalom, Absalom!," Mosaic 7 [Fall, 1973], 175). This pragmatic reading of the conversion of Saul is surely a novel description of the discovery of Christ. It is equally misapplied to Sutpen's transformation, and Warren himself impresses this on the reader as he continues to discuss how Sutpen did not really join or beat the planter at the game. Sutpen, in fact, as Warren himself knows, never got his experience to mesh with his ideal. Warren's knowledge of this does not make him question his common-sense idea about this scene, but his very discussion of the way Sutpen defies all common sense undercuts his argument.

[17]Sutpen's insult to Milly, interpreted as I have done it as Sutpen's most grotesque parody of immediacy, is part of a larger situation that is making his detachment a travesty on itself. No critical description of this scene exactly matches my own. My interpretation of Sutpen's ludicrous distance from unmediated experience does, however, dovetail with Howe's perception that Sutpen is uniquely without self-knowledge in the annals of literary tragedy. Such powerful and misguided characters as Lear and Oedipus have their moments of enlightenment, he reminds the reader, but not Sutpen (p. 223). Howe's traditional exploration of Sutpen as hero itself points to the inapplicability of traditional criticism in this case, and, though Howe surely does not intend it, lays a base for a criticism that looks for a unique rather than a conventional set of expectations. My interpretation of this scene also meshes with Vickery's perception that in Absalom, Absalom! "Each betrayal of humanity betrays its agent as well as its victim" (p. 95). Again, Vickery's correct insight, like Howe's, questions the validity of the overall approach to the novel. Whereas Vickery's statement is only appended to her vision of the entire novel as an inconclusive suspension, my interpretation gives her insight a place as a relevant aspect of a whole vision of dehumanizing detachment.

[18]Gerald Langford's work on the manuscript of Absalom, Absalom! has revealed that originally Faulkner had planned for Compson to tell Quentin early in the novel that he had heard from Quentin's grandfather of Bon's Negro blood (p. 3). In attempting to make use of this discovery to talk about the published version, Langford explores places in the published edition which he calls errors in thoroughly revising the text on Faulkner's part. Langford's specific examples of these errors are, however, evidence of his failure to accept the ambiguous, abstract disposition of Compson's language as a part of the rhetoric of characterization. They are also evidence that Langford does not understand the ramifications of the changes that he has discovered. One example of Langford's evidence is a quotation of Compson in the published version of Chapter IV. Langford believes that what Compson says indicated his knowledge of Bon's mixed heritage. "It was his [Bon's] only chance, though of course neither he nor Judith could have known this, since Sutpen (granted that the following Xmas, the moment when Sutpen was to absolutely forbid the marriage was in the cards) was but two weeks from home . . ." (p. 10). Langford comments that Compson could not possibly have meant the octoroon as the prohibition of the marriage that was already "in the cards" since Sutpen had not yet reached New Orleans to discover her when his intervention against the marriage was already a certainty. Langford's interpretation of Compson's words depends on his precise grasp of the time scheme relative to

Bon's meeting with Judith and Sutpen's arrival in New Orleans. But from the information in the quotation above, it is impossible to determine what Compson is saying about the time sequence. Sutpen was two weeks from home, but does that mean two weeks from coming home, or that it was two weeks since he had departed? It is impossible to tell; just as it is impossible to tell from the above whether Sutpen was, in Compson's mind, already aware of the octoroon.

Langford's greater failure is to distinguish the difference between the earlier, projected, conventional plot in the manuscript, in which Compson's discussion of Bon's Negro inheritance makes it an unquestioned fact that implies a straightforward, easily knowable reality, and the published version, in which this "fact" has no such clear provenance. In the published novel, it emerges from Shreve's and Quentin's story, which the narrative voice insists over and over may or may not be true. Langford's major contribution to scholarship is not the correction of simple errors in rewriting but the providing of evidence of the transformation of a relatively conventional novel into a complex investigation of the nature of reality.

[19]The significance of Quentin's confrontation of Henry Sutpen has been variously interpreted. Guetti believes that Quentin discovers nothingness when he finds Henry Sutpen (p. 96). Waggoner says that the reader does not know what Quentin learns from Henry, but that this meeting establishes the flesh and blood reality of the past for Quentin (pp. 162-63). Michael Millgate believes that the encounter communicates to Quentin knowledge of Bon's Negro blood that makes sense of Henry's murder of Bon (The Achievement of William Faulkner [London: Constable, 1966], p. 164). Close examination of the text makes Waggoner's theory untenable; Henry is a travesty on living flesh and blood. There is no textual basis for Millgate's belief that "fact" other than what is said and seen is communicated by Henry to Quentin. I am more in sympathy with Guetti's description of Quentin's encounter with nothingness than I am with any of the other interpretations, but Guetti believes that Quentin is a reliable witness and that Quentin's nihilism is the point of view of the novel as well. I have read Quentin's nihilistic awe brought on by Henry's condition as part of an address to the reader that shows it as a laughable limitation on his part.

[20]The relationship between Quentin and Shreve has been variously interpreted by the critics. Vickery, Reed, and Waggoner see it as a very positive friendship. Vickery sees both a warm union transcending regional considerations, and a superior understanding on Shreve's part that their story of Bon is only poetically true, which Shreve cannot, unfortunately, communicate to his friend (pp. 91-92). She

sees Shreve's last comment to Quentin as a light-hearted riposte (p. 100). Vickery, as the reader, may know that the story is only poetically true. Shreve and Quentin, as I have shown, both completely confuse illusion and reality, and therefore she and they are unable to see the confusion evidenced by Shreve's cry of "Eureka!" They have failed to note that, although Compson and Rosa mention different pictures, they at no point mention a picture switch or in any way indicate that there were not two pictures. Further, a careful reading of the text shows the many instances of Shreve's distortions to be attacks on Quentin's immediacy, and I think that it is also clear that the last comment is the worst.

Reed speaks of Quentin's and Shreve's narration as more meaningful than Sutpen's reality: "The abstractions of fiction that make it possible to combine the freshness of first experience with the maturity and finality of something understood" (p. 174). Shreve's pattern of ludicrously creating his own details for the Sutpen story makes it hard to justify the claim that anything is understood when Shreve clearly claims that his fiction is truth. Guetti, conscious that Quentin's and Shreve's narrative may or may not refer to real events, does not see the address to the reader that works against the possible nihilism of the boys' unreliability. While Guetti thinks that Quentin's and Shreve's story leaves the reader with a "gap between experience and meaning in this novel that must remain unbridgeable" (p. 81), and Slatoff has a similar reaction (p. 201), I have shown that the achievement of Absalom, Absalom! is the re-establishment of the visibility of unmediated experience by making mediation work against its own limits.

[21]Blake's Hermaphrodite is broken down in his epics into a female will to holiness and a male will to conquest. It is variously described as the sterile fusion of Satan, or the Spectre, and Rahab, or Vala. The revelation of the misguided worship of this deity appears at the end of Night the Eighth of The Four Zoas (pp. 363-71). Here the reader sees the Hermaphrodite, composed of Satan and Vala, in control of the temple. In Milton, Satan and Rahab become clear to Milton and Oothoon as the sterile hermaphroditic deity that is dangerous to humanity. "Altho' our Human Power can sustain the Severe Contentions / Of friendship, our sexual cannot but flies into the Ulro! / Hence arose all our terrors in Eternity & now Remembrance / Returns upon us!" (p. 142). In Jerusalem, at the end of Chapter Three, this Hermaphrodite, this time the Spectre and Vala, is revealed as the destructive, sexual, abstract deity of human tragedy. "Then the Spectre drew Vala into his bosom terrific / Glittering with stones & Gold . . . / Crimson with Wrath & Green with Jealousy . . . / Over the plow of Nations thundering in the hand of Albion's Spectre / A dark Hermaphrodite they stood

. . ." (p. 213). In each case, the visibility of the deity is a prelude to redemption. Similarly, despite the dire plight of the characters in this novel, the reader may be at the threshold of redemption as a result of the novel's clear view of this terrible deity.

[22]Among the many explicit references to the misguided worship of a Jehovah who is really also Satan, the discussion at the beginning of Chapter 2 of Jerusalem is the most complete (pp. 172-73).

[23]In Blake, the Hermaphrodite is the death principle, or principle of decreation. It is, in this, analogous to the deadly fusion of the male and female abstractions in Absalom, Absalom!. In The Four Zoas the Hermaphrodite is characterized as the death principle in the following way: "Seen in the aggregate a Vast Hermaphroditic form . . . / A male without a female counterpoint a howling fiend / Forlorn of Eden & repugnant to forms of life / Yet hiding the shadowy female Vala as in an arc & Curtains / Abhorrd accursed ever dying an Eternal Death" (p. 323). In Milton, the Spectre is spoken of as the negation that must be destroyed to reestablish the strivings of life (p. 141). In Jerusalem, the reader is told of Vala and the Spectre that as the Hermaphrodite "All the arts of Life they changed into the Arts of Death" (p. 214).

[24]Brylowski attempts to mythologize Sutpen's early home as Eden, identifying Sutpen outside the plantation house door as Adam in Paradise. He also speaks of a Biblical allusion to Sutpen's creation of his estate as a kind of Be Light, which would identify Sutpen's plantation as paradise (p. 10). These fragments of Judeo-Christian mythology are very much in conflict with each other as Brylowski reads them into Absalom, Absalom!. As they stand in his commentary, Sutpen's expulsion from Paradise transforms him into Jehovah, because he becomes the Creator in Genesis once he is alienated from his roots in the mountain culture, a clear deviation from the tradition of Judeo-Christian mythology for which Brylowsky does not account. Later on he speaks of the golden age destroyed by the Civil War (pp. 39-42). The ante-bellum South is not depicted as any kind of paradise in the novel. In any case, I do not see how the white planter's ante-bellum Tidewater and its mountainous antecedent in Sutpen's life can both be Paradise. The Blakean mythology of Beulah is much more consistently applicable to the text of Absalom, Absalom!.

[25]In Blake, one of the consequences of the dominion of the Hermaphrodite is the illusion that Christ is no longer. This is most clearly illustrated in The Four Zoas, at a point in the epic in which the Hermaphrodite temporarily

holds sway. There is a general despair at the appearance of Christ's dead body, His "destruction" a result of the Hermaphroditic efforts. As it turns out, Christ uses this very illusion to reveal His presence, as the body is resurrected (p. 365). Read through Blake's mythology of the illusion created by the Hermaphrodite, the peculiar vacuum where Christ ought to be in this novel can be understood.

[26]No other critic has commented on how Shreve's equation is a travesty on the immediate power of sexuality, an abstract parody of it. The equation shows the subtraction from humanity when the couples it mentions come together. This equation is more than just nasty humor when viewed through the lens of Beulah. I think that this consideration explains the presence of a callow, superficially unimportant sarcasm in the strategic terminus of the novel.

[27]William Faulkner, "The Bear," The Faulkner Reader (New York: The Modern Library, 1949), p. 326.

[28]Faulkner has an extremely mixed record in speaking about racial issues. Decades after writing The Sound and the Fury, he told an audience of students, as artist-in-residence at the University of Virginia, that Dilsey's ability to hold the Compsons together was evidence that the imperative for human survival will sometimes take the "neither channel of the black man" (William Faulkner in the University, ed. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph Blotner [Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1959], p. 5). Blotner's biography of Faulkner quotes him expounding publicly the racial stereotype of the Negro as childlike. We are told that Faulkner said that black people need to be taken care of, whereas white people do not (Faulkner: A Biography [New York: Random House, 1974], I, 738). Nevertheless, in a collection of his essays, we see Faulkner attacking the racial prejudice in the United States as "the artificial inequality of man" ("On Fear: Deep South in Labor: Mississippi," Essays, Speeches & Public Letters [New York: Random House, 1965], p. 96). In the same essay he comments on how the black man in the South, far from being childlike, with no chance at all for opportunity has accomplished so much for himself that Faulkner suspects that the white Southerner fears that with half-a-chance he would take over completely (p. 96). Elsewhere in the same essay, Faulkner demonstrates that all legal, moral, and spiritual authority is against racial prejudice (p. 100).

This probable inconsistency should warn against easy assertion of "what Faulkner believed." It is more evidence, I believe, for refusing to consider his art as a hydra-headed statement of a single point of view. Perhaps Faulkner was warning his audience of this when he told the students at the University of Virginia: "I think that the

writer is a perfect case of split personality. That he is one thing when he is a writer and he is something else when he is a denizen of this world" (Faulkner in the University, p. 268). If we look at this statement with all the complexity it implies, can we not also consider the differences between the writer's works of art--they may vary between each other, some closer to expressing the point of view of the artist, others closer to the voice of involvement in mundane affairs.

CONCLUSION

The Sound and the Fury, Light in August, and Absalom, Absalom! all assert the wholeness of direct experience and disclose the problems created by all forms of mediation. Christ appears in each as the unheeded human option for immersion both in the immediate moment and in human love and friendship. Increasingly, as the critic or reader moves from The Sound and the Fury toward Absalom, Absalom!, reason's usurpation of human experience of the moment creates more intensely disorienting illusory prisons which remove the characters from unitive experience. In all these novels, the reader sees that chaos and death result from rational reduction of man's participation in direct experience.

Five other novels by Faulkner, Sanctuary, As I Lay Dying, Pylon, The Wild Palms, and A Fable, also explore this Blakean defense of direct experience. In concluding this study, I would like to point to one or two problems in each that would yield to a Blakean reading. I would also like to indicate how each of these novels enlarges in its unique way on the visionary themes that we have considered in this study.

Sanctuary and As I Lay Dying have occasioned lively critical dispute. Although Sanctuary was once read as trash,[1] most critics now admire it as mythology and/or allegory. One of the most famous multi-level interpretations

of the novel is George Marion O'Donnell's discussion of it as an allegory of the corruption of the traditional South, represented by Temple Drake, by modern industrialism, represented by Popeye.[2] Rejecting out of hand the idea that Sanctuary is trash, I submit that Temple is rendered as corrupt before Popeye sees her. When Temple is first presented to the reader, she is evoked as a predator who places her allegiance with her best opportunity, with the college men at the Saturday night dances, and during the week with the town boys who own cars. She is described as we first see her "with her high soft chin, her eyes blankly right and left looking, cool, predatory and discreet."[3] What is more, when Temple is introduced into Popeye's world, she is ironically accused by an ex-prostitute of being a bad influence on the men in her life (pp. 66-72). Since this woman, Ruby LaMar, is one of the few characters in the novel exhibiting loyalty and commitment to life, her comments about Temple cannot be dismissed as comic "sour grapes." O'Donnell's allegorical interpretation of Popeye is similarly contradicted in the text, as the reader's ultimate discovery about Popeye is that he is a victim, and not a corrupter. At the end of the book, the reader learns of Popeye's brutal early life, including his emasculation as a baby when his grandmother burned down the house (pp. 368-69). Finally, it is Temple who is the dominant force as the novel ends with Temple in Europe, listening to a concert in a park, surrounded by the marble statues of queens of antiquity. The last

description of the park and the music implies that Temple is one of the assembly of these marble women, and that they are all not only dead queens, but queens of death (pp. 378-80).

A careful reading of Sanctuary will make sense of this scene as the culmination of the novel. The strategy of the novel, I believe, is to reveal to the reader that the society it depicts is ruled by a Queen of Death analogous to Blake's Female Will, that the society, her fiefdom, is an insult to unmediated experience, and that its misinterpreted icon is the sacred Virgin. I suggest that if the juxtaposition of scenes in Sanctuary is closely explicated, the reader will be able to see the way in which Faulkner (in a rather lurid fashion, true) inverts the Christian tradition of the Virgin into an outrage both to the individual and to society.

As I Lay Dying, Faulkner's well-known comic evocation of Addie Bundren's journey to the cemetery, also raises a number of still unsolved problems. First, we must investigate the structure of this novel, which, like The Sound and the Fury, presents isolated points of view in an order that seems capricious. It is questionable whether anything happens in this novel to warrant more than one point of view. If Addie Bundren is to go to her reward, why does one need a dozen points of view to get her there?

Vickery has claimed that the trip is a kind of rite de passage which leads Cash, Addie's oldest son, to achieve manhood;[4] Waggoner says that the novel is a metaphoric jour-

ney through life to death and back again.[5] Swiggart calls it a tour de force that explores the external and internal arenas of action;[6] Howe discusses it as an exploration of death as it shapes life.[7] None of these explains, however, why Darl, the second son, in a vicious deception his family perpetrates, is committed to a mental institution, why Addie's interior monologue appears only well after she is dead, what to make of Darl's narration of scenes he was clearly not present to witness, and the reason for the ambiguity of Addie's characterization both as coldly cruel and as a heroic combatant against a patently stultifying existence.

The confusion between death and life that is represented in this novel by Addie's appearance as a narrator after she is dead should be read in association with Darl's peculiar discussion in detail of events that he has never seen. These aberrations and others in the novel are presented to the reader as evidence, sometimes hilarious, of the chaos and confusion created by the dualist division of the world into subject and object. It is this that makes the perceptions of the characters appear so strange to the reader, and it is this that makes not only Addie but all of the characters ambiguous. We cannot like or dislike them, because the dualistic division precludes liking; it fosters an approach toward life that deals only in schemes of deciding where things belong in an abstract pattern.

The novel opens with Darl giving an extremely objec-

tive account of a world where people clearly are nothing but things in surrealistic relationship to each other. "JEWEL AND I COME UP FROM THE FIELD, FOLLOWING THE path in single file. Although I am fifteen feet ahead of him, anyone watching us from the cotton-house can see Jewel's frayed and broken straw hat a full head above my own."[8] All the characters then proceed to disclose varying degrees of petrifaction in their dualistic views of the world around them. Cash's first words in the novel are a funny extreme of this "objective" approach to life, as he has nothing to say for himself but to give an outline of the thirteen steps by which he made Addie's coffin (p. 397).

An exploration of the order of the monologues would reveal here the same complex understanding of the humor that the parodies in Absalom, Absalom! disclosed. This dualism is sinister and, when Darl's family commits him to a mental institution for being, as I think close reading would show, simply a dramatic example of their own detachment, a very trenchant point is made about the dangers to the family of man inherent in the Cartesian structuring of life. Similarly, Cash's last words about Darl reflect the kind of ontology by which man relates to man as a thing with a place on a shelf: he remarks that it is too bad about Darl but that "this world is not his world. This life his life" (p. 532).

Significantly, the one reference to Christ in this novel supports this Blakean outline of the meaning of As I

Lay Dying. When Darl, Cash, Anse (Addie's husband), and Tull (a neighbor) are trying to get Addie's coffin across a stream where the bridge has broken, a log unexpectedly leaps out of the water. We are told: "It surged out of the water and stood for an instant upright upon that surging and heaving desolation like Christ" (p. 445). The log's abrupt appearance is an occurrence that is not in any predetermined order. In the context of the dualist order of As I Lay Dying, this allusion to Christ suggests a Blakean portrayal of Christ as direct experience, understood only in a flash, then forgotten.

Neither Pylon, The Wild Palms, nor A Fable is considered by critics with much of the interest or respect that greets Sanctuary, As I Lay Dying, The Sound and the Fury, Light in August, or Absalom, Absalom!. I do not wish to make a case here for their standing as first-rate Faulkner, for I too have my doubts about their achievement. I think, however, that their aesthetic value is irrelevant to this discussion. My contention here is that they are written from a Blakean perspective that differentiates them from Faulkner's conventional novels.

Pylon, for example, which tells the story of a menage a trois, does not treat it from the point of view of conventional morality, but instead as a manifestation of human sensibility that is in permanent rebellion against society's repressive order. The rebel challenge is analogous to Orc's rebellion against Urizen in Blake. As in Blake,

this rebellion cannot be effective because, despite its apparent challenge to repression, it does not offer a truly different alternative. Like the society it fights against, the Orcian insurrection does not assert the participation in direct experience that Christ implies; it too is devoid of the loving union among men that Blake's Christ represents. In Blake, Orc eventually collaborates with Urizen's repressiveness. Although some critics have lionized Jack, Laverne, and Roger, the three rebels,[9] close scrutiny of Pylon will show that in many ways they support the repression which their deviant behavior challenges. The principal example of this inadvertent cooperation with society is the fate of the child of the menage, who does not know which of the men is his father. At the end of the novel, Roger having died in a plane crash, Laverne and Jack abandon the child with Roger's parents. Having taken the child to the older people without telling him their intentions, the couple leave while the boy is asleep, brutally relinquishing him to the very conventional social order from which they wish to be free.

This unfeeling treatment of the child is, I think, the common denominator of the society and the rebels. This interaction between Jack and Laverne and conventional society is an analogy to the relationship between Blake's Orc and Urizen. In Pylon, society, like Blake's Urizen, is presented as essentially abstract, impersonal and mechanical, particularly as it is represented by the airport and by the airplanes. The three rebels, like Blake's Orc, are charac-

terized as essentially instinctual and sexual, but also as impersonal and mechanical in their instincts, showing no tenderness and charity despite their eroticism. The interaction between Laverne, Jack, and Roger on the one hand and society on the other brings triumph neither to abstraction nor to materialism, but both instead combine to victimize humanity. The child is the principal victim. Roger's death is really another result of the interaction of the rebels and society, as Roger's plane crashes while he is stunt flying for the city-sponsored air show. The reporter, who is a liaison between the rebels and society, is the third important victim.

The reporter is delineated as a spectral (in the Blakean sense) presence who is drawn to vicarious participation in the lives of Laverne, Jack, and Roger. Almost as soon as he meets Laverne, he falls half in love with her and, barely acquainted with Roger, mourns the aviator's death as if he had lost a brother. Despite his vicarious attachment to the rebels, however, the reporter lives within the confines of the social fabric as an employee of the newspaper. A close reading of the novel will, I think, show the reporter, preoccupied with Laverne and her men, and caught nevertheless by the social system, as the shadowy humanity that is a victim of the kind of Orc Cycle that the counterpoint between society and the threesome represents. Both options are loveless and detach humanity from immediate experience; the Orc-Urizen Cycle, in Blake, involves two

ways of withdrawing from unitive experience and the wholeness of humanity; and a careful scrutiny of Pylon, would, I think, show the same mythology.

Like Pylon, The Wild Palms plays on the poverty of merely instinctual gratification in a context where abstraction has made incursions into the wholeness of direct experience. Again, Blake's mythology of Orc's rebellion would serve as a useful guide to interpreting this novel.

The main critical question about The Wild Palms concerns its unity. The juxtapositions between the story about Charlotte and Harry, the couple who escape from society into what would now be called a "hippie" existence, and the story about the convict and the pregnant woman, who are swept away from society by a flood, seems forced and fruitless to most critics.[10] I think that a close reading of the text would illuminate the spectre of society-as-prison that hangs over both these stories as an image of the Blakean "mind-forg'd manacles." The juxtaposition of the two stories makes the point that, in both instances in which the characters have left the repressive social order, whether willed like Charlotte and Harry's escape, or fortuitous like the convict's and the pregnant woman's, they have done so only physically. Clearly, although the convict adapts brilliantly to his wilderness environment after the surging waters have extricated him from society, his is a purely materialist relationship both to the woman he is protecting and the water from which he gets their sustenance. His mind is

always turning toward the order that the prison system represents. I think the same can be said for Charlotte and Harry. Joseph J. Moldenhauer makes a point of the omnipresence in the novel of Harry's "puritan preoccupation with fixed moral and social order";[11] Moldenhauer thinks that Harry chooses prison over life more intentionally than may appear to the superficial glance because of his "incapacity to enjoy the pagan freedom Charlotte offers him. . . . Harry Wilbourne follows a course of frenzied self-punishment which culminates in his blundering and compulsive murder of Charlotte."[12] Moldenhauer's characterization of the abortion performed by Harry (from which Charlotte dies) as murder, may be somewhat hyperbolic; but a close explication of the novel would perhaps show that both Charlotte's abortion and the convict's inability to take pride in or experience joy at the birth of the baby the flood brings him illuminate a mythology of the unredeemed sterility of a life structured by the counterpoint between a theoretically ordered society and the freedom of purely material sensuality.

Finally, I think that a close reading of A Fable would show that in this last Blakean novel Faulkner creates not only a Blakean vista for the reader, but also a character, the runner, who is a spokesman for the Blakean point of view. (My position is that in all of the other novels I have discussed at length or briefly the characters are presented ironically.) Indeed, A Fable is the only Blakean work by Faulkner in which a different situation obtains.

The novel is explicitly based on the mythology of the Crucifixion, but many of its elements, particularly those associated with the story about the three-legged racing horse which the runner is told, do not yield to interpretation on the basis of Christ's Passion. I believe that a Blakean reading would show that the main action, to which both the Passion and the fable about the horse contribute, is the English runner's discovery, in the thick of World War I, of a conscious understanding of how conventional society bars the individual from direct experience and from brotherhood among men. Unlike any other of Faulkner's characters in his Blakean novels, the runner sees the Great Hermaphrodite of female and male abstractions, here the "Motherland" and the "male" power to defend "Her." This is evident at the end of A Fable, when the runner appears at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and hurls his medals on the coffin in rejection both of the medals and of the glorification of war that the monument represents. As he does this, he shouts in derision the shallow slogans which make war holy to humanity despite its disastrous consequences to all men: "You too helped to carry the torch of a man into that twilight where he shall no more; these are his epitaphs: They shall not pass. My country right or wrong. Here is a spot which is forever England--"[13] The sacred war is, as I have said above, the incarnation of the Covering Cherub, another way in which Blake describes the fusion of the feminine abstraction of Value and the masculine abstractions of Power.

For his pains and insight, the runner is viciously attacked by the street mob. This is another Blakean touch, for it suggests the Blakean idea of the fallen man's response to redemption. The mob clearly hopes that the runner is dying as a result of its violence. But he does not die. In what I read as Faulkner's only Blakean crescendo of triumph for a character, the runner laughs and tells the crowd that he will never die (p. 381). My closely-worked interpretations of the three novels in this study all associate laughter with liberation from the dangerous extremes of mediation, chaos and death; here, the runner's assertion of life amidst his roaring laughter seems to proclaim the emergence of Faulkner's first and last Blakean hero.

Where does the apocalyptic liberation in A Fable leave the writer and his reading public? The relationship between Faulkner's visionary work and the reality of the world of being is full of ironies, worthy of those found in The Sound and the Fury, Light in August, and Absalom, Absalom!. First, A Fable, despite its enormous visionary achievement of a conscious hero, is not Faulkner's best work. It also failed to lead to a more profound visionary triumph for direct experience and brotherhood, since it was the last visionary writing that Faulkner ever did. With the breakthrough of the runner's awareness, Faulkner plowed in a field of eminently conscious characters; but not only were they created with artistry inferior to that which went into the creation of his ironically viewed characters, they were

also written to be interpreted within a conventionally dualistic framework. Temple Drake, as she appears in Requiem for a Nun, is a good example of this later mode of perception. Her entire existence in the novel is absorbed with her newborn awareness of her unconscious years, available to the reader in Sanctuary. There is nothing Blakean, however, about the way she rakes over the ashes of her youth. Hers is a purely dualistic mode of obsessive analysis of the past, through which her mind is quite clearly out of relationship to what is happening in the present moment. Nevertheless, the novel is written to encourage the reader to think that Temple has made progress toward the truth through her ratiocination. What is more, Nancy's Christian self-sacrifice, which Temple comes to respect and which the reader is intended to regard approvingly, stems without doubt from a dualistic and not a Blakean Christianity. Another irony is that most readers, deeply imbued with our cultural dualism, have plainly been discouraged or baffled, not illuminated, by the complexity of Faulkner's visions. What is worse, for decades dualist critical explications, like so many Covering Cherubs, have assaulted the Blakean novels with images that hide their unique existences. Despite everything, however, like the runner, the novels stand as their own witnesses to the indestructible passion of the human imagination, the silent roar of their laughter impervious to the confusion that surrounds them.

The discoveries I have made about these novels may

seem recondite and suspect to my reader. But perhaps this is always the case with a new perception of what is thought of as a familiar sight, and perhaps the reason why these novels have never before been illuminated in this way is not the obscurity of what I see in them. We live in a dualist society, and it has been no easy task on my part to make my rational faculties come to terms with the serious and painful evocation of rational tyranny that these novels represent. We are raised to view the subject-object dichotomy as a matter of course and not a matter of danger, and we are permeated by the conventional dualist mythologies which tend to laud reason as the supreme sky-god, be He Zeus or Jehovah. A serious consideration of Blake's seamless reality and Christ-centered mythology is not safe from reprobation today, just as Blake's mythology cost him his reputation for sanity in his time. Indeed Faulkner's well-known alcoholic excesses, his contradictory statements about his views, imply that Faulkner was not at home in reality as his social milieu construed it, but his dogged determination to be a respectable citizen, as evidenced in his purchase of land and his setting himself up as a gentleman, shows how much he wanted to be a part of the mainstream despite his discomfort with it. Certainly the construction of A Fable manifests this split. At the same time that Faulkner is explicitly saing that the central position of rational forms breeds chaos instead of order, he uses a more rigidified, diagrammatic series of allusions than he had ever used, and despite

the fact that at the end of A Fable he trenchantly satirized pious patriotic slogans, his own speech in the later years is riddled with platitudinous descriptions of the "verities of the human heart" and with down-home wisdom, as though at the explosive moment of his breakthrough, he was paradoxically thrown into stereotype, encouraging the inclination of our dualistic society to perceive him in a rationalistic way, or at least confusing the issue.

But if my reader is still suspicious of what may seem my implicit claim here to a special courage in the face of a critique of mediation, which a greater soul, a Faulkner, could not match, I renounce all such self-praise and point only to the fact that using Blake I have solved problems in The Sound and the Fury, Light in August, and Absalom, Absalom! which have left conventional wisdom at sea.

I have shown how all three of these novels attempt and succeed at the monumentally difficult task of making visible to the reader the way in which dualist hallucinations of form make it impossible for the characters to escape from the prison of the self and see the phenomena of life. In doing so I have shown how the structures of the novels which have given critics so much difficulty from a coherent ironic context that the characters do not have, a way of interpreting relationships between specifics of unmediated experience which the characters do not even see. Thus the scene at the end of The Sound and the Fury is invisible from a dualist's point of view, but not to the reader

who has immersed himself in the novel's context. He does not see merely a disjointed fragment in the lives of Benjy and Jason, but the sterility of order which culminates the long and tortuous route he has taken into the Compson's fallen division and exclusion of Caddy. Questions about the moral and ethical norm in this novel have led to nothing but confusion, whereas the location of Caddy as the fount of life from the Blakean view of its priority makes the killing morality and ethics of the Compsons and their society fall into place, and yields a consistent ironic point of view in the novel. Similarly, the entire crucifixion of human connection among men and between man and direct experience in Light in August is invisible to the dualist looking for morality and ethics, as the critics have done. They find only the insane Hines, McEachern, and Joanna, and the callous and disoriented Joe. Asking, "Who is good" in the conventional sense must yield to the Blakean inquiry "Where is life?" before the murderous ratiocination that is acting in this novel becomes available to the reader in the sterility of the innocent-seeming closing scene between Lena and Byron narrated by the salesman, and before the reader can find coherence in the disparate elements in the book. Finally, in Absalom, Absalom! the dualist penchant for abstract truth must turn conventional wisdom into a dog chasing its tail. Instead, the reader must ask with Blake, "Where is life?" amidst all these words, recollections, guesses, and fantasies. Then the order of the thrice-told tale of Sutpen

begins to make sense as it reveals to the reader the ramifications (for those telling the tale) of giving up life for the rational forms of vicarious existence; only then will the novel yield a consistent point of view.

The justification for my approach is that it works where all others have failed, but in the last analysis it is not as fantastic as it may seem. Faulkner did not have to read Blake to arrive at the point of radical perception I claim for him. His "Blakean" point of view is equally possible as a syncretism of Christianity and Existentialism or Phenomenology, all of which were "in the air" of Faulkner's time: the visceral Christianity of the South, the European search for the confrontation of being that filled the intellectual climate of Faulkner's young manhood. Even the Blakean mythology of Christ, the Female Will, and the Hermaphroditic Cherub were all directly available in the Bible to Faulkner and Blake alike. Analogues with Blake's Orc and Urizen are more amazing, but not completely inexplicable in a country like the United States and in a region like the South, both steeped in the tradition of rebellion. Indeed the only reason to mention Blake at all is that though both Faulkner and Blake were drawing from the same well of archetypal knowledge, Blake was not afraid to say <u>explicitly</u> what he was doing, and makes a convenient alter-ego for Faulkner, retired behind a smokescreen, personifying, perhaps, what he told us of the complex, mammoth capacity of humanity for both creativity and self-deception.

Notes to the Conclusion

[1]Frederick J. Hoffman, "An Introduction," William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga Vickery (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1960), pp. 17-18.

[2]George Marion O'Donnell, "Faulkner's Mythology," William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, pp. 88-89.

[3]William Faulkner, Sanctuary (New York: The Modern Library, 1932), p. 32. All further citation of this edition will be accompanied in my text by parenthetical page reference.

[4]Olga Vickery, The Novels of William Faulkner (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), pp. 58-60.

[5]Hyatt H. Waggoner, William Faulkner: From Jefferson to the World (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1959), pp. 62-63.

[6]Peter Swiggart, The Art of Faulkner's Novels (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962), p. 116.

[7]Irving Howe, William Faulkner, A Critical Study (New York: Random House, 1951), p. 176.

[8]William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying (New York: The Modern Library, 1949), p. 339. All further citation of this edition will be accompanied in my text by parenthetical page reference.

[9]Duane Mac Millan, "Pylon: From Short Stories to Major Work," Mosaic, 7 (Fall, 1963), 188-90.

[10]Joseph J. Moldenhauer, "The Unity of Theme and Structure in The Wild Palms," William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, p. 305.

[11]Moldenhauer, p. 309.

[12]Ibid.

[13]William Faulkner, A Fable (New York: New American Library, 1968), p. 390. All further citation of this edition will be accompanied in my text with parenthetical page references.

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