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Faulkner and fetishism

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The University of Arizona, 1989

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Faulkner and Fetishism

by

Homer Boyd Pettrey

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As members of the Final Examination Committee, we certify that we have read
the dissertation prepared by Jomer B. Petkey
entitled Faulkner and Fetishism

and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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This study compares fetishistic desires exhibited within Faulkner's fiction to the narrative strategies governing those texts. It surveys Faulkner's thematic and narrative experiments with fetishism from his first poems and sketches through his major novels. His early works, especially "Nympholepsy" and The Marble Faun, capture fetishistic moments of longing and lack of fulfillment, attraction and repulsion. Faulkner's novels, though, re-enact the dynamics of fetishism by means of their narrative strategies; thus, Faulkner achieves a correspondence between the fictional form and the fetish depicted. Because his texts engage us within their shifting temporality and symbolic repetitions, as readers we invariably fall prey to the fetishistic desires his narratives initiate and imitate. Interpretive problems necessarily arise concerning the reader's relationship to the text and desire for meaning. In As I Lay Dying, multiple points-of-view call our attention to the validity of interpretive perception; in Sanctuary, rape operates as Faulkner's master trope for both the characters' and reader's struggles for dominance; in Absalom, Absalom!, writing and reading history are obsessions shared by the narrators and the reader. My readings are informed by several interdisciplinary approaches to fetishism, such
as: icon-worship and totemism from anthropology; object and linguistic substitutions from psychoanalysis; commodity exchange and reification from Marxist theories; and sign production and displacement from post-structuralism. Instead of imposing a general taxonomy for fetishism, I have allowed each text's narrative and thematic structures to guide my readings and, therefore, consciously matched my readings to the particular fetishes his narratives engender.
Fetishism and Faulkner's Early Career

Writing for Faulkner is an obsession. He sees himself as "demon-run, under compulsion, always being driven." Even so, he rarely speaks at any length about the act of writing; instead, he emphasizes the sensations of completing a work, that fulfillment from authoring a text. He desires to produce something lasting, "to reduce the passion and beauty that he saw of being alive into something concrete that can be held in the hand." Books, for him, are not words and abstractions on a page, but concrete objects; perceiving a text causes a stirring of emotions and produces a felt experience. In an introduction for The Sound and the Fury he fondly recalls that its creation produced in him the same fetishistic responses as those of "an old Roman who kept at his bedside a Tyrrhenian vase which he loved and the rim of which he wore slowly away with kissing it." This complex image conveys the "ecstasy of writing" Faulkner experienced, and it has been variously analyzed as

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a sign of his "autoeroticism," feeling of "self-castration," and sense of loss for his texts. Of course, the vase stands for the written text, but it also represents an artistic ideal, a vessel for the artist's genius, a substitute for a feminine lover, and, as with Keats's urn, a burial vase. A sense of forbidden allurement is suggested by the old Roman's nocturnal ceremony, a private act profoundly rich with personal significance. An implicit correspondence exists between writing and sexuality, between writing and desire. Kissing the bedside vase each night the old Roman both ritualizes his desires and slowly removes from his control the object he desires. Clearly, Faulkner recognizes the impulse to write as a fetishistic obsession. But, the old Roman's profane fetishizing of his sacred vase suggests as well the process of reading--possessing the text, making it conform to one's perceptions and sensations, and, thereby, replacing the text with one's desires. Faulkner emphasizes both the act of writing and the product of writing; the locus of desire is within the concrete thing, the text. For Faulkner, the writer must decide either

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"to tell the truth about people or... to tell the truth in a chalice."\textsuperscript{5}

And, the truth about people resides in the thing they create, long for, and fetishize:

So many people are seeking something and quite often it is love--it don't have to be love between man and woman, it's to be one with some universal force, power that goes through life, through the world. It could take the form of--the object of it could be a man or woman, because that is a part of man's or woman's instinctive nature to have an object, an immediate object to project that seeking for love on.\textsuperscript{6}

Seeking after an object is the sign of a need or instinct as basic as the sexual drive. That power moving through life, compelling people, is the projection of the self onto the world. It is a way of authoring and reading the world in terms of one's desires.

Most readers of Faulkner's works would agree that many of his principal characters exhibit strangely obsessive behaviors. In general, they fixate upon a particular ideal, object, or person to the point of neurasthenia, mania or dementia. When their desires remain unfulfilled, their already troubled psyches seek out some sort of relief from the pain and suffering caused by this lack of fulfillment. Usually, their desires for this object of fixation do not cease but increase, and their fixations lead to the most devastating


\textsuperscript{6} Faulkner, April 27, 1957, \textit{Faulkner in the University}, p. 95.
results. For Faulkner, obsessions become destructive to the individual when he is "in conflict with his heart, or with his fellows, or with his environment . . . that man is trying to do the best he can with his desires and impulses against his own moral conscience, and the consciences of, the social conscience of his time and place--the little town he must live in, the family he's a part of."7 Faulkner's thematics rest upon just these types of fixation coupled with problems of conscience, generally expressed in troublesome moments when desire and its object completely consume the individual. Conflicts of desire intrigued Faulkner from the beginning of his literary career. As a writer, his purpose is "to capture that dream, that image of man, either victorious or defeated, in some splendid, beautiful gesture inside the dilemma of the human heart."8 This rather ambiguous statement requires closer examination: the image of man can only be created in terms of a desire that rests upon universal conflicts, upon fundamental, though not fully resolved dilemmas. What a writer attempts to capture are those gestures (desires, fixations, obsessions) inherent in mankind so that he can retell "the same story of the human heart in conflict with itself for the eternal verities which haven't changed too much since man first found how to record them."9 Faulkner's texts repeatedly illustrate

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7 Faulkner, March 13, 1957, Faulkner in the University, p. 59.
8 Faulkner, April 20, 1962, Faulkner at West Point, p. 112.
9 Faulkner, April 19, 1962, Faulkner at West Point, p. 59.
those desires, those truths of man's existence: greed, lust, incest, murder, rape, hatred are displayed in graphic detail, but so too are compassion, love, charity, forgiveness, honor, and reason. Both the debased and elevated passions constitute the human spirit. All too often they compel man to act against himself, against his own moral and ethical assumptions, and against his heart. Obsessions, like those verities, "are the edifice on which the whole history of man had [been] founded and by means of which his--as a race he has endured this long."  

Faulkner devotes himself to expressing the truths of mankind, both the sordid actuality of man's existence and the ethical guidelines which never pass from his conscience. Truth, for Faulkner, "means what you know to be right and just, truth is that thing, the violation of which makes you writhe at night when you try to go to sleep, in shame for something you've done that you know you shouldn't have done. . . . Truth is a quality which one must accept or cope with. That is, he must accept or spend all his life running from it." 11 Fully to comprehend the scope of Faulkner's thematics of obsession is to understand his concept of truth. While many of his works, especially his major novels, have been read as contradictions to a substantive belief in truth, such readings either proceed from premises not fully based upon the texts' import or

10 Faulkner, May 8, 1957, Faulkner in the University, p. 133.
11 Faulkner, August 5, 1955, Lion in the Garden, p. 145.
from a miscomprehension of Faulkner's intention--an intention, obvious from the statement above--to impart a more generalized view of the nature of man. While Faulkner's statements are not interpretive in the strict sense of the word, they do provide us with useful concepts. Faulkner's comprehension of the eternal verities suggests that truth for him is both a thing and a quality, an object and an aspect. And it is also a felt experience for man, almost a bodily sensation. Ultimately, truth is not relative for Faulkner in a grand theoretical sense, but is a practical, living reality for man. Hence, in his work he never tells us what truth is, but instead provides us with man's painful, disorienting experiences of truth. Man, for Faulkner, needs to understand his relationship to truth in terms of how that thing, which he knows exists for himself, affects him intellectually, emotionally, and physically; moreover, man must not separate the object from its effects, or otherwise, he spends his entire life running from himself. His characters often mistake one for the other and, thus, further compound their fixations.

As a writer, Faulkner is vehemently opposed to meretricious novels immured in sex, violence, degradation, and obsessions without any understanding of their essential power in man: "But sex just for the sake of sex is like what I spoke of about violence and degradation. Just for the sake of violence or degradation, that's not good enough to write about. It's got to be sex as a force in man, in
human relations. . . ." 12 Faulkner emphasizes the paradox which constitutes man's impulses: man becomes obsessed with an immediate object to project upon when he neglects to consider that object in both its materiality and its idealization. Man creates out of his desires some-thing alone and untouchable, as though his desires were no longer a force or an internal drive, but an object now projected onto the world of other things. In this way, man acts both as author and reader of his existence. Truth affects man in just this way, not so much because he has created it ex nihilo, but because truth, like sex and violence, is always already a part of his dilemma. When man either externalizes the ideal or internalizes the material object, he hinders his capacity to confront his desires for what they are. When man loses this ability to perceive the truth of his situation he reduces himself to a fetishist. And this fetishism, as the outgrowth of desire, is what Faulkner claims his works address.

This is not to say that fetishism, fixation and obsession are always named as such in Faulkner's works. More often than not they appear in the form of literary and stylistic innovations--repetitions of images, characters' idiosyncratic symbology, as well as peculiar temporal shifts and internalized monologues replete with personalized tropes for designating characters' desires. As his interviews make clear, Faulkner was intrigued by a variety of fetishisms. His Japanese interviews are especially revealing in this

12 Faulkner, "Faulkner in Manila," Lion in the Garden, p. 207.
regard. When asked at a Nagano Seminar about rationality as a part of the Japanese character, Faulkner responded:

Well, I think of the Frenchman as the man who makes a fetish of rationality. To me the Japanese is a man who makes a fetish of intellectuality, that he prefers that all the frayed ends of the idea be trimmed off, that it be complete and intact, and exquisite and refined. But I still think, if you will pardon me, that sometimes that leads one into an impasse, where all he's got left is intellectuality, there's nothing in it any more.\(^\text{13}\)

Here, he seems to be employing the word fetish with its most common meaning; however, he extends his discussion to show how fetishism "leads one into an impasse." In this particular case, the fetish of rationality and intellectuality moves one away from the world of things, and the result is intellect alone without materiality. So, as Faulkner points out, there's "nothing" in it any more. Trimming off the edges and frayed ends of an idea mimics the wearing away of a vase's rim by kissing. What remains is not the revered object or idea, but rather the desire for an ideal. Fetishistic impulses also operate in the idealized realm when man becomes oblivious to his own materiality. By pointing out the extremes to which a specific fetish, as expressed in art and literature, has removed man from the world \textit{per se}, Faulkner discloses the dilemma of all writing. That artistic expression coincides with fetishism points

\(^{13}\) Faulkner, "Colloquies at Nagano Seminar," \textit{Lion in the Garden}, p. 105.
to a crucial, self-conscious assessment of his work. To Faulkner, literature invariably reflects man's fetishes and need for fetishizing his world. He was keenly aware of the way literature often repeats those fixations and his own narrative strategies mirror his characters' obsessions quite dramatically.

That Faulkner's old Roman is an idolator, icon-maker, and fetishist seems apparent. And yet fetishistic characteristics of Faulkner's narratives have been largely overlooked by his critics. Recently, though, Panthea Reid Broughton and John T. Matthews have opened the way for a consideration of this issue through their readings of Faulkner's treatment of perception, the constitution of the self, and language. Broughton's central complaint with critical evaluations of Faulkner is leveled against "aesthetic nominalism," that prevailing assumption that truth, especially as art renders it, is "objectively knowable."14 Concerned that criticism permits such reductionist assertions, Broughton maps out that common space in Faulkner's fiction where "the abstract dimension of his art . . . sublimates the actual into a creation saturated with being" (37). Rather than dismissing concrete reality in favor of abstraction, or vice versa, Broughton argues that Faulkner's fiction "suggests that life should and art must be a blend of the two" (37). Her common ground for this synthesis of the abstract and the actual can be

located in the minds of his characters— their need for objectifying
concepts, construing fixed codes for action and morality, and
conceptualizing existence in terms of configurations of reality which
do not necessarily correspond to reality. In this way, Broughton
hints at, although she does not demonstrate, the way Faulkner's
characters both author and read their world. While assuming that
language remains exterior to the realities of human experience,
Broughton admits that "to avoid being ravished by or inundated in
flux man mentally restructures it into fixed shapes" (51).

Matthews, whose book appears nearly a decade later, combats
and expands traditional Faulkner criticism by enlisting the aid of
Derrida's meditations on the nature of language as a signifying
process. However, Matthews analysis, by his own admission, does
not seek to deconstruct Faulkner's texts. Rather, he demonstrates
convincingly how principal themes—marriage, hunting, gaming,
storytelling, and rituals of loss and mourning—operate as "a kind of
language" for Faulkner.15 Centering his argument on several crucial
concepts from Derrida's early works—the supplement, differance,
free play, and the metaphysics of presence—Matthews scrupulously
reads Faulkner's works as a challenge to the "usual province of full
self-presence—imagination, memory, perception—" (30) in language
and successfully demonstrates how "characters constitute their

15 Matthews, The Play of Faulkner's Language (Ithaca: Cornell
consciousness as they invent suitable forms of language” (31). Instead of creating an abstraction or signifying system that arrests the thing itself, Matthews contends that "Faulkner's language plays with the loss of authoritative truth, the center, the signified realm, the place of origin, innocence" (36). Each utterance, like writing itself, perpetuates its own loss, its own deferral to other utterances, other signs. By embuing language with such significance, Faulkner's characters erect edifices of their desires and construct sanctuaries for their personal meanings. The process of signifying Matthew addresses is akin to the fetishizing instincts in man. Whether by way of abstract or artifice, perceived reality or concocted images of the real, man negotiates his complex and troubling world by expressions of his desires. If, as Matthews asserts, all man's desires and rituals are forms of language, then they are also icons and totems of desires, systematic representations of the logic of desire. In short, they are rudimentary fetishes. Furthermore, since man exists in a world of signs, his experience of the world is one of simultaneously reading and writing its meaning in terms of his desires and anxieties. And that signifying process which creates the world for man and constitutes his consciousness is the complex and multifarious process of fetishism itself.

Fetishism's diverse and somewhat indeterminate meaning is evident in its etymology--Portuguese *fetisso* and *feitiço*, meaning an icon or idol; French *fétiche*, meaning a charm or talisman and
implying sorcery; Spanish *hechizo*, meaning something created by art, an artifice; and its oldest root from Latin *facticius*, meaning artificial or factitious. Significantly, fetishism and fiction share the Latin root *facere*, to make. Both fetishism and fiction are artifices of man's desire for meaning. They often achieve the magical, mystical status of icons, as substitutes for reality. The connection between fetishism and icon-making has a long history, perhaps beginning in Western culture with Platonic idealism. David Simpson's recent study of literary fetishism traces use of the term fetish to early accounts of idolatry, such as: Bacon's discussion in *Novum Organum* of the four idols (Greek *eidola* meaning image, representation, and vision, but also implying deception); Dulaure's assessment in *Histoire abrégée de differens cultes* (1825) of fetishism as a sign, figure, or symbol assumed to have a supernatural powers; and Wordsworth's and Coleridge's views of the potential dangers of man's assuming that his perceptions are the sole measure of the external world.  

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16 Simpson, *Fetishism and Imagination: Dickens, Melville, Conrad* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), pp. 9-18 *passim*. Simpson also shows the distrust for fetishism (idolatry) in the nineteenth century as a backlash to traditional religious institutions by Kant and Hegel, as well as cultural critiques by Carlyle and especially Arnold against the mechanical, dead image of an object's exteriors held in seemingly profane reverence. While Simpson discusses theories that consider language fetishistic by its tropic nature and, therefore, to be held in suspicion, he neglects the Puritan reactionary tradition for both plain meaning and plain style in the works of John Cotton and the Mathers. Moreover, Simpson views fetishism almost exclusively in terms of icons and idolatry.
course, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century diatribes against ornamentation, caveats against commodification, and edicts addressing epistemological problems resulting from ornate language have contributed to modern pejorative uses of fetishism.

Today, fetishism has emerged as a crucial term in the paradigms of the human sciences. Anthropology and ethnography designate any natural or crafted object believed to hold magical or mystical powers as a fetishistic one. Psychoanalysis views any object, body part, or person onto which pathological sexual desires are projected or which substitutes for libidinal satisfaction as a fetish. In Marxist theory, fetishism applies to the creation of commodities of value and exchange; it also refers to an ideology that identifies material objects directly with capitalist production and assumes that the relationship between the two is natural and eternal. Meaning, then, depends upon "the productive process of language, but metaphysics would obliterate that intervening process and constitute meaning as a 'material' thing in relation to itself. Consciousness is then supposed to produce meaning independently of the intervening productive process and of the system of differential relations which gives rise to both consciousness and meaning."17 In each theory, fetishism is presumed to be an artificial contrivance, a

means of structuring reality to coincide with desires of one form or another. The concept of the fetish has also been extended to descriptions of the metaphysics of presence in language. We tend to presume that signs represent objects of the world and that language conveys those objects to us. In doing so, language is often seen as a passive or neutral agency through which meaning comes into existence. Language, though, is a movement of meaning from the world to its representation in signs. As such, signs register their difference from objects of the world. Signs both replace and displace objects and thereby defer their meaning. Thus, fetishism shares a reciprocal interdependency with language. According to Jacques Derrida, the production of signs closely corresponds to the nature and function of both totemic and commodity fetishism:

The sign is usually said to be put in the place of the thing itself, the present thing, "thing" here standing equally for meaning and referent. The sign represents the present in its absence. It takes the place of the present. When we cannot grasp or show the thing, we signify, we go through the detour of the sign. We take or give signs. The sign, is this sense, is deferred presence. Whether we are concerned with the verbal or the written sign, with the monetary sign, or with electoral delegation and political representation, the circulation of signs defers the moment in which we can encounter the thing itself, make it ours, consume or expend it, touch it, see it, intuit its presence. 18

Fetishes--icons, commodities, artifices, desires--can only represent the world through some signifying system. And for Faulkner, the writer exposes the fundamental operations of fetishism not just by the metaphors he chooses or the themes he presents, but through the very process of narrative itself. Surveying his early career, it is readily apparent that with each new literary work, Faulkner was experimenting not just with the depiction of fetishism in language, but its effects as presented by the form, the narrative.

Faulkner's fascination with fetishism is evident from the very beginning of his writing career. His first published work, "Nympholepsy," appeared in the University of Mississippi student newspaper in 1922 as a sketch entitled "The Hill." "Nympholepsy," aside from its classical reference to encounters with nymphs, suggests festishistic impulses coupled with festishistic ailments. The

August 6 issue of the New Republic contained Faulkner's first published poem, entitled, after Mallarmé, "L'Apres Midi d'un Faune." In it, the poet, a satyr figure, pursues a nymph, who becomes for him all of nature's elements amid time. The satyr's desires are projected onto both the nymph and his milieu and the poem evokes both sexual satisfaction and frustration. The poem concludes with a moment of contradiction and self-recognized lack of fulfillment:

Then suddenly on all of these,
A sound like some great deep bell stroke
Falls, and they dance, unclad and cold--
It was the earth's great heart that broke
For springs before the world grew old.20

Sentimentalizing the passage of time, longing for an impossible world immune to age or movement, the poet feels a "nameless wish" he knows can never be fulfilled. The striking of death knell exposes man's imaginary wishes and leaves him to dance life's dance "unclad and cold," without illusions and without fulfillment. With "Nympholepsy," Faulkner moved from sentimentality to a fuller depiction of the machinations of desire and its potentially devastating effects.

It begins with allusions to classical and biblical mythologies. The sketch's unnamed protagonist views his shadow as he ascends a hill "like a snake before him," dust covering him "like a benediction";

from his day's work he cannot recall "the falling of slain wheat" or "spinning chaff in the sunlight like an immortal dance" (331). The reference to autumnal harvesting of wheat suggests sacrificial myths, such as Prosepine's rape, and conjoin death with sexuality. "Snake," "benediction," and "immortal dance" interweave the sacred and the profane; they also grant the reader insight into the consciousness of the unnamed hero. At the crest of the hill, as "his sinister circling shadow" marks still another day's end, he spies the town nestled within "the valley of shadow" and he imagines his escape from this gloom with "a girl like defunctive music, moist with heat, in blue gingham" (331). No girl awaits our hero, but "here was the town anyway" (331).

While sexuality permeates the scene, it is always undercut, as though the protagonist's thoughts somehow check his urges. The town seems to be as sterile and devoid of sexuality as a monastery: gray walls outline apple trees which were "once sweet with bloom"; "the bees of sunlight" have flown away; all that remains are a pristine court-house and the measured ringing of a blacksmith's hammer "like a call to vespers" (331-32). And yet the vaginal imagery of the sun as "a red descending furnance mouth" "dripping from leaf to leaf" (332) exemplifies the fetishistic landscape of the protagonist's desires. His sexual frustration intensifies with each paragraph.
Suddenly, he sees a female figure for a brief moment before she disappears. His appreciation for the distant figure's beauty soon turns from "once-clean instincts" to "swinish" contemplation; he pursues his nymph awkwardly across a field, whose furrows and stalks of corn impede his progress "with wanton and static unconcern" (332). Paradoxical metaphors, wanton and static, increase the tensions between sexuality and repression, between attraction and repulsion. The sun "alchemized the leaden dust upon him," gilds the tips of his beard, and bathes trees in "unwordable colors" making them appear "like the hands of misers reluctantly dripping golden coins" (332). In Faulkner's theory of desire, what is desired is always "Unwordable"; desire is a "nameless" wish, incapable of being designated by language, and yet, paradoxically, always given some utterance. The seething landscape of signs demonstrates how the unwordable always finds its expression; the protagonist remains silent, but his desires are echoed back by the world. Magical qualities of alchemy and self-satisfying sensations of misers also accentuate the protagonist's fantasies. However, he moves through a "cathedral" of trees and feels the day depart from the world as "a bath-tub drains, or a cracked bowl"; he hears orisons repeating supplications and moves slowly "as though he expected a priest to stop forth, halting him and reading his soul" (332-33). And the priest, the judge, the arbitrator of reason does indeed stop and read his soul; it is the reader. In short, his psyche is divided
between feelings of unrestrained sexuality and an overpowering sense of social propriety. His steps are not impeded except by his own mind. Here, the image of the "cracked bowl" is significant, for it represents a flaw in the vessel he desires. Faulkner will later use this same image to signify the contradictory moment of attraction and repulsion experienced by many of his male characters when their sexual lusts for women appear before them. Like all women for the Faulknerian hero, the nymph is both ideal and material; she exists at once within the fantastic realm of idealized desires and within a grisly material world. Once the desire is incarnated, the woman transforms from ideal to thing. But the fetishistically afflicted male can never rationalize the incarnation, so desire becomes abhorrence, and fulfillment something tainted. One recalls Quentin Compson's obsessions with Caddy and Henry Sutpen's fixations with his sister Judith, Jody Varner's with Eula, Horace Benbow's with both Little Belle and Temple Drake, and Joe Christmas's with Bobbie and Joanna Burden.

As this sketch's title implies, the male is victim of his own obsessions; his visions of woman as nymph produce both a physical and mental paralysis. Almost like epilepsy, the disease occurs as a cerebral dysfunction that causes a loss of motor control; but unlike

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epilepsy, nympholepsy is a syndrome whereby the mere presence of woman triggers orgasmic responses. Much of the sketch parodies adolescent masturbatory responses of excitation and guilt; even the stream the hero must cross to capture the fleeing nymph appears like "the hand of the world, like a line on the palm of the world's hand--a wrinkle of no account" (333). He often feels the earth within his palms. His pursuit, like the stream itself, "seemed dark and forbidding" and his terror increases, yet he still seeks after his fantasy, "not knowing whether it was copulation or companionship that he wanted" (333).

He moves with trepidation. Yet, he feels his own desires pushing him forward like an "imminent Presence" about him, like a brooding god "to whose compulsions he must answer long after the more comfortable beliefs had become out-worn" (334). Faulkner makes a point of describing this god in terms that resemble the protagonist's plagued psyche: it "neither recognized him nor ignored him"; it seems "unconscious of his entity, save as a trespasser" (334). The only way to cross this stream is by means of a log fording it. The phallic log further integrates his desires onto the world, but the log is rotten and treacherous to the step. He pauses in fear, but moves again because his will propells him, "thinking of food and of a woman he hoped to find" (334). The association of food and woman identifies two instinctual drives within him, as though both were necessities he could not avoid without "abrupt and dreadful
annihilation" (334). As he struggles on the rotten log, he falls not into the stream but into sexuality, the metamorphosized world of his own fetishistic desire:

Then the water took him. But here was something more than water. The water ran darkly between his body and his overalls and shirt, he felt his hair lap backward wetly. But here beneath his hand a startled thigh slid like a snake, among dark bubbles he felt a swift leg; and, sinking, the point of a breast scraped his back. Amid a slow commotion of disturbed water he saw death like a woman shining and drowned and waiting, saw a flashing body tortured by water; and his lungs spewing water gulped wet air. (335)

Confusion between male and female, sexuality and death, occurs. He penetrates the water as though he were a phallus, but he feels a thigh and leg move like a snake. He experiences what should be the seductive caress of a breast as a scrape across his back; he perceives death as a woman and yet his physical reaction corresponds to sexual climax, with his lungs spewing forth the stream's fluid.

He finds a root to drag himself from the water and feels his clothes cling to him "like importunate sirens, like women" (335). Now, he cannot distinguish between his own body and his fetishistic impulses. Recovering from this near death, he envisions his nymph climbing the stream's embankment and disappearing over the crest of a hill; he mounts the hill and sees her in a wheat field. He "plunges" after his nymph, his "furrow" separating the wheat which
appears as "dull and unravished gold" (335). But the woman vanishes from sight and he laments to himself: "But I touched her! . . . I wouldn't have hurt you at all" (336). Still, the unseen god of his desires has not departed. As he struggles back toward the town, again the world he views mirrors his fetishistic longings, only now it evokes his inability to fulfill those urges: "Behind him labor, before him labor; about all the old despairs of time and breath. The stars were like shattered flowers floating on dark water, sucking down the west" (337). This story was Faulkner's first attempt to match a style with the particular fetish represented.

Keats's Odes of 1819 echo throughout this sketch. However, Faulkner combines and subverts Keats's imagery—nymph, dryads, unravished brides, fairyland, and the wakeful anguish of the soul—to fit his meaning. His tendency was to rewrite classical expressions of human passions in the idiom and motifs of modern fetishes. Cleanth Brooks has traced Faulkner's early literary thefts of Shakespeare, Gray, Tennyson, Swinburne, Housman, Eliot. In an April, 1925 essay for the Double Dealer, entitled "Verse Old and Nascent: A Pilgrimage," Faulkner praised Keat's poetry for its sexuality and Housman's The Shropshire Lad for "discovering the splendor of fortitude, the beauty of the soil like a tree about which fools might howl and which winds of disillusion and death and despair might

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strip, leaving it bleak, without bitterness; beautiful in despair."\(^{23}\)

That beauty of despair, that bleakness wrought without bitterness Faulkner successfully attained in "Nympholepsy." He also was able to relegate man's desires not to some romanticized ideal, but to a world of disillusionment and death. Man is shaped by his unfulfilled desires. Attempting to forget desires, to seek Lethe, is impossible for the protagonist of "Nympholepsy." The memory of woman persists, not as abstract beauty, but as a mocking, indefatigible presence of pure desire: "That troubling Presence was gone and land and shadows only mocked him" (336).

"Moonlight," another early piece, contains the same fetishistic elements of a nympholeptic experience. The protagonist, a sixteen year old boy, lures an unsuspecting girl, Susan, out for a date. The unnamed protagonist plans "to seduce her"\(^{24}\) but his seduction takes the form of physical domination and intimidation. He pulls Susan onto the steps of the dark veranda where he had planned his assignation, but she protests his assault with wailing sobs, fighting and shrieking at him with "terrific abandon" (502). He stops his rape and Susan clings to him for comfort and assurance. But now, after she agrees to another assignation, saying "Maybe I will tomorrow night" (503), he feels absolute alienation: "He felt like wood--the


carcass from which sense, sensibility, sentience, had fled along with the sweet fires of hope. . . . He felt nothing at all now, no despair, no regret, not even surprise" (503). Faulkner's conjoining of desires and the lack of sensation exposes a fetishist's turmoil when confronted with the object of desire. It was not the girl who was the boy's object, but the seduction: "I wouldn't have hurt her. All I wanted was just to seduce somebody " (503). As in "Nympholepsy" the seduction is one of the self: in pursuing the object of desire man seduces himself into accepting a fantasy which cannot be fulfilled. Unlike the protagonist of "Nympholepsy," the unnamed boy of "Moonlight" does in fact achieve his desires. Once they are fulfilled, though, he feels empty; the presence of object of desire within his grasp actually produces a lack.

This vacillation between desire and lack of fulfillment also occurs in Faulkner's anti-romantic parody of Malory's Arthurian legends, *Mayday*, written in early 1926. Sir Galwyn of Arthgyl, in his pursuit of the unattainable, is accompanied by two allegorical figures, Hunger and Pain. Both hunger and pain aptly describe the economy of fetishism, which produces both simultaneously, but never alleviates either. For example, Galwyn gazes into a stream and sees the girl's face, so enchanting that he must possess her. His desires overtake his reason, but they remain unfulfilled:

The face in the waters was the face of a girl, and
Pain and Hunger lay in all his limbs and body so
that he burned like fire. And the girl in the dark
hurrying stream raised her white arms to him and
he would have gone to her, but Pain drew him one
way and Hunger drew him another way so that he
could not move as she sank away from him into the
dark stream that was filled with darting fragments
of sound and color.25

Mayday plays out the unresolved desires of "Nympholepsy," and
combines insatiable longings with moments of fulfillment, even
though Galwyn, much like the protagonist of "Moonlight," experiences
the emptiness, the nothingness that follows the obtaining of the
object of desire. In his quest for his desires, he eliminates all
barriers in his path, slaying men or dragons who guard the women
he wants. Galwyn meets three princesses, Yseult, Elys, and Aelia; he
possesses them and they, in turn, are willing do his biding. Yet he
remains unsatisfied. Like all men, he "is a buzzing insect blundering
through a strange world, seeking something he can neither name nor
recognize, and probably will not want. . . . Man is a buzzing fly
beneath the inverted glass tumbler of his illusions" (80). Galwyn
rushes through the world of his own illusions, seeking after the
dream of his own making. It has no name he can readily recognize; it
is merely the shape of his own fetishizing. All women are
inadequate surrogates for Galwyn's desire. But, he finds peace at last
when he encounters the girl he saw in the stream, the one he has
been pursuing all along, "Little Sister Death" (87). His quest ends

25 Faulkner, Mayday, intro. Carvel Collins (Notre Dame:
with his suicide by drowning. This is Faulkner's allegory of man's fetishistic impulses: the fetishist metaphorically pursues the object of his desire like a knight off on a valiant, heroic quest; but he never fully discovers his object of his desire, only substitutions which afford a repetition of his longings; moreover, the fetishist never recognizes his object, except as a lack, an absence which increases his hunger to possess the object while simultaneously exacerbating his pain. Allegories of fetishism persist throughout Faulkner's later works, but he does not designate one pattern to man's fetishistic experience. Instead, his works convey the multiplicity of fetishisms man suffers and endures.

Faulkner's first attempts at poetry, which he considered failures, also demonstrate his interest in conveying man's fetishes. The Marble Faun, published in 1924, presents an imprisoned faun who desires to escape his marble bonds and experience real sensations, but realizes he cannot, and that realization causes him sorrow:

Why am I sad? I?
Why am I not content? The sky
Warms me and yet I cannot break
My marble bounds. That quick keen snake

26 Faulkner often referred to his poetry as failures; see Faulkner in the University, p. 4: "It may be--I've often thought that I wrote novels because I found I couldn't write the poetry, that maybe I wanted to be a poet, maybe I think of myself as a poet, and I failed at that, I couldn't write poetry, so I did the next best thing."
is free to come and go, while I
Am prisoner to dream and sigh
For things I know, yet cannot know,
'Twixt sky above and earth below.27

Imprisoned in a vital, almost hyper-sexual world of fecund
life--animal, vegetable, and human--the faun laments his impotent
stasis. The faun projects himself out into the moving world through
a series of self-delusions:

I am with the flowers one,
Now that is my bondage done;
And in the earth I shall sleep
To never wake, to never weep
For things I know, yet cannot know,
'Twixt sky above and earth below,
For Pan's understanding eyes
Quietly bless me from the skies,
Giving me, who knew his sorrow,
The gift of sleep to be my morrow. (49)

However much the faun imagines he senses real sensations, his
words betray his understanding that he can never become a part of
time's and the world's ebb and flow. Sleep, as in Keats's nightingale
ode, is Lethe, a forgetting of the self--a dissolving of self-awareness
into flights of fancy: it is a way of trading pleasure for pain. But, the
sad irony remains that the faun's pleasure, his desire, is the source of
his pain.

27 Faulkner, The Marble Faun and A Green Bough (New York:
Clearly, this is not great poetry--bad rhythms, coarse juxtapositions of pastoral and modern images, and odd stylistic admixtures of nineteenth century decadent and anti-pastoral poetry--but, Faulkner simulates the machinations of desire in verse, however awkwardly phrased. Knowing, yet being unable to know expresses the rudiments of fetishism. The faun's "nameless pain" (18) reminds him that he can witness seasonal changes occurring around him, the "lusty summer" (26) and "exploding oak" (41), but he will always remain "mute and impotent" (36). The faun, in short, represents unfulfilled desires:

The dark world's dumbly dreaming face,
For my crooked limbs have pressed
Her all-wise pain-softened breast
Until my hungry heart is full
Of aching bliss unbearable. (36)

Sexual overtones reinforce the impotency of bondage which is an allegory for man's entrapment in his own desires. Nature teases the faun, who seems to sense her physically, much as the protagonist of "Nympholepsy" does his nymph. The faun's unbearable bliss often consumes him, and he rages against all sentient creatures who pass in front of him:

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28 I disagree with Irving Howe's estimations of this poem in William Faulkner: A Critical Study 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1952): "These Swinburnian verses are little more than exercises in provincial romanticism, and they have met with deserved neglect" (15). Howe's neglect of this poem is shared by many Faulkner critics.
To stare at me with stupid eyes
Or stand in noisy ecstasies
Before my marble, while the breeze
That whispers in the shivering trees
Sings of quiet hills and plain,
Of vales where softly broods the rain,
Of orchards whose pink flaunted trees,
Gold flecked by myriad humming bees,
Enclose a roof-thatch faded gray,
Like a giant hive. (50)

The poem exposes the duality of desire which causes the faun to become attracted to life, yet disdainful of those exuding life. Nature and moon like a "mad woman" caress the earth and him; yet, he can only idealize the sensation while he still observes the earth's movements with each caress of season or moonlight. The faun broods dreamily and yearns for an existence beyond his ken. That desire can only lead the imprisoned mind afflicted with desire to fetishize the world into ultimate love object and despised object of scorn. Thus, the poem addresses Faulkner's fundamental concerns with the torment of desire--sexual, emotional, and intellectual. Its pastoral imagery can be easily misconstrued as nothing more than poetic imitations by the young poet. However, the faun's longings for the natural world are continually undercut by his representations of that world. Each new image of life's beauty and bounty resounds with a discordant cry of suffering, longing, and anger. This imprisonment of the senses colors the faun's world so that Nature itself seems to match his bitterness and frustrations. Like the world
of "Nympholepsy," the faun's world is a pathetic intermingling of enchantment and despair.

Up to this point in his career, Faulkner focused his literary efforts primarily upon describing desire as a lack of fulfillment. However, in the New Orleans Sketches (1925), he portrays a panoply of obsessions afflicting his characters. The sketches suggest that Faulkner was experimenting with fictional portrayals of fetishistic responses as a way to catalog the human heart. The first sketch, "Mirrors of Chartres Street," deals with the arrest of a crippled beggar, whom Faulkner raises to the stature "of Cæsar mounting his chariot among cast roses and the shouts of the rabble."29 As in "Nympholepsy," metaphors and allusions convey the perceptions of the central characters. He endeavors, though not always successfully, to disclose that controlling desire lying within each man; these sketches unveil an attempt at realism not present in his other early works. Each sketch involves a particular obsession which is worked out in precise images to match the character's view of his world. For example, the very brief introductory sketch, "Artist," betrays desires and impotence similar to those expressed by the marble faun:

For where is that flesh, what hand holds that blood to shape this dream within me in marble or sound, on canvas or paper, and live? I, too, am but a shapeless lump of moist earth risen from pain, to

laugh and strive and weep, knowing no peace until the moisture has gone out of it, and it is once more of the original and eternal dust.

But to create! Which among ye who have not this fire, can know this joy, let it be ever so fleet? (47-48)

In "Damon and Pythias Unlimited," Faulkner's narrator regales against human kind which has already transformed culture into the fetishes of comfort:

I ponder on the mutability of mankind--how imaginative atrophy seems to follow, not the luxuries and vices of an age as the Baptists teach us, but rather the efficiencies and conveniences such as automatic food and bathtubs per capita, which should bring about a golden age. One almost believes that the old farmer, who said he was not going to dilute his vigor by washing all over every day, was vouchsafed the true light. (61-62)

Two sketches in particular show the devastating results of consuming fetishes. In "Jealousy" the Sicilian proprietor of a restaurant accuses his wife of intrigues with one of the waiters. His rage engulfs him to such a degree that he no longer belongs to the real world, but moves like "a somnambulist" (86). His obsession centers upon his wife's infidelity, the idea that she, as his possession, might actually prefer another man. So, he considers the waiter his rival, his enemy, even though no battle, no power struggle exists, except within his own mind. Although later he appears to settle "his present obsession" (89) by selling the restaurant to the waiter, so that he and his wife can have a second honeymoon, he cannot deviate from the plot of rivalry and betrayal he has designed for his
world. When the waiter wants to present the signora with a parting gift, the husband goes with him to the pawnshop and is seized again with his obsession. He shoots the waiter dead with an "old pistol," obviously a phallic image of power, and stands "screaming with the burning pistol in his hand until a policeman plunged through the door" (90).

"The Kid Learns" begins with a cynical view of the world: "Competition is everywhere: competition makes the world go round. Not love, as some say. Who would want a woman nobody else wanted? Not me. And not you. And not Johnny. Same way about money. If nobody wanted the stuff, it wouldn't be worth fighting for" (161). In the sketch young Johnny imagines a successful coup over The Wop's criminal domain. He observes an attractive girl accosted by the Wop, but Johnny steps in and pistol whips the man. He runs after the frightened girl and consoles her; he departs to gather his things before making his get-away just ahead of the Wop's retaliations. But he stays to prove his bravery for the girl's sake; she comes to him again, except she appears to be different somehow. Johnny tentatively calls her name, but she corrects him with "Little sister Death" (167). Of course, the allusion to Mayday is evident. The allegorical ending equates the drive for competition with death. That competition leads him, like the husband of "Jealousy," to concoct an illusory plot for his life which ultimately produces death. The New Orleans Sketches demonstrate Faulkner's interests with
conveying not just expressions and images of desire, but fetishism's mastery over men's lives. In the two sketches discussed above, plot is the determining mode for expressing that mastery. The sketches are Faulkner's attempts at matching a narrative style with a character's obsession.

Faulkner earliest novels, Soldiers' Pay and Mosquitoes, experiment with thematic and narrative techniques in order to expose human alienation, disillusionment, and compulsions. As sardonic portraits of the twenties, both novels delve into the peculiar motivations behind human obsessions. Faulkner avoids pseudo-psychological or sociological analysis and, instead, unfolds his characters' consciousnesses through their metaphoric language and their perceptions of themselves and others. Critic have attacked both novels for their supposedly immature, unsophisticated style and lack of attention to detail. However, to dismiss them outright is to ignore the multiplicity of fetishes presented.

Soldier's Pay portrays human nature in now familiar terms that recall the passively impotent faun, the licentious, easily agitated satyr, and the elusive, taunting nymphs who inhabit a world of
sexuality, desire and death. Natural and mythical imagery reinforce the cult of fetishism in the novel. Donald Mahon, the passively and emotionally immobilized dying soldier, shares the same suspended, alienated feelings with Faulkner's marble faun; Januarius Jones, the flabby intellectual, functions as a randy satyr; Emmy, Donald's dreamy former lover, takes on the role of innocent nymph betrayed by fate, while Cecily, Donald's calculating, self-conscious fiancée, is the sexual nymph who attracts, yet eludes men. Margaret Powers, the war-widow caring for the dying soldier, manipulates the passions of everyone in Donald's life. Donald's father, an apostate rector, tends his garden, like a mock-fertility god, but life and regeneration only occurs within his sacred grove, not within the social scene. The novel uses Christian as well as classical symbolism but the intent is obviously ironic. Donald's scarred head bares the scourge of war; his death comes about in the early spring, but no resurrection is intimated; three women suffer for him and observe his passing; and his passion in the garden is greeted with calm indifference from his father. The cult surrounding Donald neither reveres nor mourns its dying hero; instead, Donald is merely a catalyst for the members' own obsessions.

Donald Mahon, dying and nearly blind, returns to his Charlestown home mortally wounded and suffering from severe loss of memory. His past no longer affects him, and he seems anesthetized to the life around him. Like the marble faun, he desires
something beyond his world, but is incapable of achieving his desires: "knowing Time as only something which was taking from him a world he did not particularly mind losing, stared out a window into green and motionless leaves: a motionless blur." Donald stares out into a world filled with life, but he remains outside of it, trapped by his own pain and disillusionment. His world, empty of meaning, is pure nothingness: "After a time the nothingness in which he lived took him wholly again, but restlessly. It was like a sea into which he could neither completely pass nor completely go away from" (292).

In direct contrast to the nihilistic Donald is his father, the rector, who spends his hours tilling and cultivating life. The rector's garden is likened to a Greek temple, whose poplars "themselves in slim, vague green were poised and vain as girls in a frieze" (61). The garden is the rector's family, "the wife of my bosom and the bread of my belly" (61). Ironically, and sadly, however, the rector is no different from his son, for both have deserted others for the security of worlds of their own creation. The rector admits to his own fetishizing needs when he describes his passion for the garden in terms of "the old pagan who kept his Byzantine goblet at his bedside and slowly wore away the rim kissing it" (61).

Emmy and Cecily, the women in Donald's pre-war life, are horrified by his condition. Before the war, Emmy and Donald swam
naked and made love one night under the moon. Now, because of her lover's multilated condition, Emmy sees herself as somehow tainted by the experience. Several metaphors associated with Emmy suggest her plight: Emmy's mop and pail are referred to as "a sodden Venus" (65); she is depicted as "the dishonored virgin" (69) and "that unfortunate virgin" (73). But the nature of her defilement is ambiguous: "you could imagine her developing like a small but sturdy greeness on a dunghill. Not a flower. But not dung, either" (120). She is trapped in a nexus of social images of woman, images of purity and impurity, but none of them really define her.

Unlike Emmy, Cecily exudes sexuality, though she calculates her every move, so that her sexuality is not natural, but feigned. Jones classifies her as "Hamadryad, a slim jeweled one" (77), envisions her legs, "like Atalanta's reft of running" (78), and calls her "Atthis" (227). Unlike Mrs. Powers, Cecily never "engaged in an unself-conscious action of any kind" (81). When Jones tries to seduce Cecily, he feels both the power and the sterility of her sexuality. Like Emmy, she is associated with natural symbols, especially the flower, and like Emmy, Cecily's self is an amalgam of paradox, lusty, yet lifeless, provocative, yet studied:

her lax hand between them grew again like a flower: it was as if her whole body became her hand. The symbol of a delicate, bodyless lust. Her hand seemed to melt into his yet remain without volition, her hand unawaked in his and her body also yet sleeping, crushed softly about with her fragile
clothing. Her long legs, not for locomotion, but for the studied completion of a rhythm carried to its nth: compulsion of progress, movement; her body created for all men to dream after. A poplar, vain and plaint, trying attitude after attitude, gesture after gesture. . . .(224)

By focusing upon Cecily's gestures as promoting a symbolic and compulsive presentation of self, Faulkner makes us aware not only of her power to evoke a fetishistic response in men, but also her own fetishizing of herself.

Juxtaposed to Donald's former lovers is Margaret Powers, his angel of mercy. She meets Donald on the train to Charlestown along with Joe Gillian, a veteran of no war since he had no chance to serve; both help to bring the semi-alive Donald home. Margaret suffers from emotional uncertainty, due not just to the death of her officer husband, but also to her inability to comprehend her desires. Her husband was no husband to her, merely a moment of passion:

Just when she had calmly decided that they had taken advantage of a universal hysteria for the purpose of getting of each other a brief ecstasy, just when she had decided calmly that they were better quit of each other with nothing to mar the memory of their three days together and had written him so, wish him luck, she must be notified casually and impersonally that he had been killed in action. (26)

Still young, she knows "that passionate desire to cling to something concrete in a dark world" (26). So, she felt sexual desire, but not love and now she cannot feel either. She sees Donald as a means to regaining her feelings. At Donald's father's house, the
rectory, the rector shows her a photograph taken of Donald before the war, and in it, she sees "the serenity of a wild thing, the passionate serene alterness of a faun" (82-83). Her perception of Donald as a faun suggests that she sees in him a wildness, a passion she hopes to reawaken. But, she cannot. When she decides to marry Donald, after Emmy and Cecily refuse to, Margaret merely has rejoined her husband, coupled herself to the memory of sexuality. She could marry the willing Joe Gilligan, but she feels no sexual passions any more, just the longing for a past experience. Joe Gilligan wants her, and he kisses her, but there's no passion in "her firm sexless embrace" and he stares at her "in longing and despair" (165). In this sense, she is Donald's perfect mate, because both are dead in life. For them the past no longer recalls sensations, love, or passion, and the present is a torturously inert.

If Donald is a static, impotent faun, then Januarius Jones certainly fulfills the role of satyr. He has "unblinking goat's eyes" (80) and his face is "a round mirror before which fauns and nymphs might have wantoned when the world was young" (58). He often muses about "the women he might have seduced and hadn't" (59), and he sighs with "pure ennui" (315). Jones jokes about fornication, peeps through keyholes to try to catch a glimpse of women, imagines that Emmy and Cecily long to kiss him, and, at the same time, cynically curses all women. He exemplifies the fetishistic movement from attraction to repulsion; he is "a fat Mirandola in a chaste
Platonic nympholepsy, a religio-sentimental orgy in gray tweed, shaping an insincere, fleeting articulation of damp clay to an old imperishable desire, building himself a papier maché Virgin" (225). This exaggerated description at once suggests Jones's excesses, and undercuts his vision of himself as an intellectual Don Juan. He is, in fact, trapped within a chaste nympholeptic desire, which he fulfills only briefly by making love to Emmy on the day of Donald's funeral. Jones's desire, though, like all the characters' desires, is "imperishable":

Sex and death: the front door and the back door of the world. How indissolubly are they associated in us! In youth they lift us out of the flesh, in old age they reduce us again to the flesh; one to fatten us, the other to flay us, for the worm. When are sexual compulsions more readily answered than in war or famine or flood or fire? (295)

Sex and death are coupled together in each character's consciousness: the sexualizing of the self's private and death-like world (Donald, the rector, Emmy) and the death of the self due to unfulfilled or unfelt sexuality (Margaret, Cecily, and Jones). Sexual compulsions afflict nearly every character, but Jones's musings are incorrect, because it is not just war or natural disaster which brings them out—they thrive in every moment of man's life. Sexual obsessions and the fetishizing of the self which Faulkner depicts metaphorically in Soldiers' Pay are investigated in greater depth and with greater skill in Mosquitoes.
Mosquitoes, Faulkner's second novel, like so much of Faulkner's early fiction, is an exercise in developing fetishism both thematically and narratively. Claims that it is a novel about the travesties of art and artists, the disillusionment of the lost generation, or about the nature of writing are accurate, but narrow. Mosquitoes carefully renders the fetishizing of the self in a way that brings characters and reader together and generates a disturbing sense of recognition.

We may begin an investigation of the process with the epigraph of dense, poetic prose with which Faulkner prefaces the novel:

_In spring, the sweet young spring, decked out with little green, necklaced, braceleted with the song of idiotic birds, spurious and sweet and tawdry as a shopgirl in her cheap finery, like an idiot without money and no taste; they were little and young and trusting, and you could kill them sometimes. But now, as August like a languorous replete bird winged slowly throght the pale summer toward the moon of decay and death, they were bigger, vicious; ubiquitous as undertakers, cunning as pawnbrokers, confident and unavoidable as politicians. They came cityward lustful as country boys, as passionately integral as a college football squad; pervading and monstrous but without majesty: a biblical plague seen through the wrong end of a binocular: the majesty of Fate become contemptuous through ubiquity and_
Spring and August are juxtaposed and bring to mind several other oppositions—youth and middle age, men and women, power and impotency. Purposefully, Faulkner avoids the use of the word mosquitoes, making each reference to "them" highly ambiguous. In spring, the world is exuberant, fresh, and yet tawdry and cheap as a shopgirl; but, in August, the world is languid with a sense of death and decay. And "they" are so little and trusting in spring, "you could kill them sometimes." Since Faulkner often equates sexuality with death, killing suggests a loss of innocence as well as an exercise of sexual power. However, by August, "they" are big, vicious, confident, cunning, unavoidable, and "ubiquitous as undertakers" are themselves ministers of death. Like a plague "seen through the wrong end of a binocular," "they" descend upon and engulf the world. This curious description aptly befits Faulkner's style and theme within the novel, for his focus is on a destructive force but one reduced, without the dignity and power of the biblical model. In the novel each character is reduced down to his fundamental dualities, to his driving force and his contradictory sense of morality or ethics. And through this reduction, Faulkner shows man trivialized, his life no more than a process of "sheer repetition."

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Repetition is a crucial stylistic element in the novel. Characters almost blend together because the storylines of the various sub-plots nearly mirror one another. Outlining each day and hour as subdivisions rather than chapters Faulkner creates not so much the sense of temporal progression, but of repetition. Sexual intrigue, sexual passions are prominent in the novel, to such an extent that almost every character seems utterly and hopelessly obsessed with his relationship to sex. In fact, the novel begins with the supercilious Mr. Talliaferro trying to explain to his self-absorbed artist friend, the sculptor Gordon, that "The sex instinct . . . is quite strong in me"(9). But Talliaferro, who fears women, is fascinated by the idea of sex and has no interest in the act itself. He is fascinated by that which he is incapable of obtaining and is enamored with his own rhetoric, being unable to fulfill his desires except through "conversation--not talk" (9). His "dominating compulsion" (9) is clearly an overriding concern for him, but he is hopelessly impotent, emotionally as well as verbally. Even his words cannot achieve the sense he wishes and he "often mused with regret on the degree of intimacy he might have established with his artistic acquaintances had he but acquired the habit of masturbation in his youth" (10). Thus, his sexual instinct and his words are impotent, self-delusions.

Like Talliaferro, most of the characters in the novel deal with sex by talking about it or around it. Faulkner is concerned here with man's need to create, whether through art, words, or flights of fancy.
When man's basic desires transform into artistic or poetic expressions, their artificiality comes through. They are not real desires, but artifices of reality; they are, as Faulkner will contend in the novel, mere fetishes.

Talliaferro's sexual repulsion is revealed when he passes two people kissing passionately in a dark corridor. He moves quickly by them and searches in his coat for a bottle, which feels "clammy in his hand" (13); he senses an "acute repugnace" as though the bottle had become "unbearably dirty" and yet he "desired something, vaguely" (13). This description recurs in numerous other forms in Faulkner's novels. Here, as in the case of the protagonist of "Nympholepsy," the dual conditions of attraction and repulsion dominate the obsessive character's psyche. Talliaferro returns to Gordon's studio with Mrs. Maurier and her niece, Patricia, in tow. Gordon's amorphous sculpture--"the virginal breastless torso of a girl, headless, armless legless, in marble temporarily caught and hushed yet passionate still for escape" (11)--captures the niece's attention immediately. Gordon explains that it is his "feminine ideal: a virgin with no legs to leave me, no arms to hold me, and no head to talk to me" (26). She asks to touch it because "It's like me" (24).

The niece attracts the attention of both Gordon and Talliaferro. Gordon closely examines the living embodiment of his marble Pygmalion, noticing her flat breasted "boy's body" (24) with great interest, because she seems "sexless, yet somehow vaguely troubling"
Talliaferro, too, notices her troubling sexuality, but reacts to her as a "bodiless evil" (31). Faulkner emphasizes the disturbing effects the niece has over the two men rather than her youth, vitality, and sexuality as such. Although Gordon's sexual interest in the niece becomes more and more exaggerated in the novel, the homoerotic impulse remains central. Faulkner's point is not that Gordon is homosexual—he clearly is not—but rather that the relationship between man and his obsession ends up being a false expression of difference. The difference, the other, the feminine, for man is reduced to an image of himself. The niece leaves the studio only after she has fondled the sculpture and whispered to it "O beautiful" (30). Her parting words emphasize how obsessions are generated out of narcissistic needs. And the irony of the scene is exposed in this final gesture, because neither Gordon's nor the niece's desires can be fulfilled.

Talliaferro's self-absorption as well as self-delusions spring from his chosen vocation, a salesman of women's clothing: "He knew women's clothes and, interested in women, it was his belief that knowledge of the frail intimate things they preferred gave him an insight which no man had into the psychology of women" (32-33). Transferring women onto their clothing is an obvious fetishistic gesture, and it reveals Talliaferro's typical divorcement from reality. Because for him women are their things, his fetishistic impulses are themselves delusive and darkly comical. The narrator informs us
that for Talliaferro desire "had long since become an unfulfilled habit requiring no longer any particular object at all" (26). Of course, Talliaferro substitutes words for his desires and, thereby, abstracts his sexual longings through speech. But his fetishistic impulses are shared by virtually every character in the novel. In fact, much of the novel is dominated by dialogue--conversations, arguments, confessions--and yet, the dialogue is not entirely about art and artists, as critics often contend, but about sex, power struggles between men and women, and the pursuit of the opposite sex.

Significantly, most of the novel's action takes place aboard the Nausikaa, the ship of fools which proceeds on a slow voyage on Lake Pontchartrain. The name of the yatch, of course, is important, recalling as it does Nausikaa, Phaïkian daughter of King Alkinoös, who in Homer's Odyssey greets the half-naked, wild-eyed Odysseus by the shoreline, where she has been commanded by Athena to launder the royal wedding linen. Unsure whether or not to knell before this feminine figure, Odysseus, "streaked with brine, swollen," approaches Nausikaa speaks:

"Mistress: please: are you divine, or mortal? If one of those who dwell in the wide heaven, you are most near to Artemis, I should say--great Zeus's daughter--in your grace and presence. If you are one of earth's inhabitants, how blest your father, and your gentle mother.
blest all your kin."32

Odysseus's confusion over Nausikaa's ontological status corresponds to the confused perceptions of males toward females in the novel. Moreover, Nausikaa represents an idealized woman, one obediently bound to male customs and ceremonies, especially marriage. Nausikaa is an ironic choice for the boat's name, since none of the romantic intrigues evolve into marriage.

For example, David, the cabin boy, epitomizes man's fetishistic enchantment with women. Lured away from the yacht for a midnight swim with the niece, David becomes infatuated. She lures him into the swamps with the promise of elopment, but the natural scene impedes their flight at every turn. Mosquitoes attack them and the niece stares at them "with a sort of fascination at a score of great gray specks hovering about her blood-flecked stockings" (179). Here is the plague presaged in the novel's epigraph. Symbolically, the mosquitoes have penetrated the virginal girl, but this announcement of sexuality is hardly joyous, because for David it entails a painful burden. Faint and near exhaustion, he carries the niece on his back and hallucinates with each step: "Three steps. All right. One. Two. Three. Gone. Gone. Gone. It's a red sound. Not behind your eyes. Sea. See. Sea. See. You're in a cave, you're in a cave of dark sound, the sound of the sea is outside the cave. Sea. See.

See. See. Not when they keep stepping in front of the door" (206). This passage with its blendings and confusions suggests the way words mimic yet defer and camouflage reality. While the "red sound," sea and cave images signify woman, their relationship to other words is problematic. The pun of sea and see hints at the tensions between the verbal and the visual: words and things remain distinct from one another, yet man invariably tries to link them. The seduction of words, like the niece's seduction of David, is doomed to failure.

But David is not the only male in the novel to confuse words with women, utterance with sexuality. Gordon's sexual advances toward the niece become more overt on board the Nausikaa as his sexual aggressiveness is juxtaposed to Talliaferro's sexual inadequacy. Gordon grabs the niece and swings her lean body in the air; in mid-flight, Gordon perceives "her taut simple body, almost breastless and with the fleeting hips of boy" as "an ecstasy in golden marble" (82). Talliaferro's interests in the womanly, buxom and full-hipped Jenny, who moves are calculated, obsessive, and deeply disturbing. Seeing Jenny alone on deck sleeping in a chair, Talliaferro is overcome with a "surge of imminence and fire and desolation [that] seemed to lightly distend all his organs" but as he approaches her, he feels "an alarm like nausea" (127). Distended organs matched with nausea are symptomatic responses of a fetishist, who cannot resolve the dual forces within him. Nor can he
resolve his image of woman: is she goddess or mortal? His hands tremble as he knells before his goddess:

Hard this floor his old knees yes yes Jenny her breath
Yes yes her red soft mouth where little teeth but showed
parted blondeness a golden pink swirl kaleidoscopic
a single blue eye not come fully awake her breath
yes yes He felt eyes again, knew they were there, but
he cast all things away and sprawled nuzzling for Jenny's
mouth as she came awake. (128)

The staccatic rhythm of Talliaferro's thoughts and actions suggests a sexual preoccupation with body parts, as well as "an utter and dreadful need to complete the gesture" (129). But Talliaferro is inept as his sprawling nuzzling implies. His sensual moment is abruptly checked, not so much by Jenny, but by himself, because he cannot help but speak ridiculous, laughable words: "Wake sleeping princess. Kiss" (129). His kiss is met by Jenny's indignation: "Whatcher doing, you old---" (129). Her direct and vulgar words deflate Talliaferro's absurd ideal.

Later, as, Jenny, in her "sleazy scrap of slightly soiled applegreen crepe" (129), dances with Talliaferro, he proffers an "endless flow of soft words against her neck, hardly conscious of his hand sliding a small concentric circle at the small of her back" (130). At the same time, Fairchild, the novelist, and the Semetic man exchange ideas about women and words. Fairchild explains that Talliaferro's trouble is that he believes he can seduce women with
words, but the Semetic man again corrects Fairchild's hasty assumptions:

"And you are a funny sort to disparage words; you, a member of that species all of whose actions are controlled by words. It's the word that overturns thrones and political parties and instigates vice crusades, not things: the Thing is merely the symbol for the Word." (130)

This reverence for the word is evident throughout the novel. Fairchild, the novelist, tells the ship's party that his generation has succumbed to fetishism: ". . . we have reduced the whole of existence to fetiches" (37). As Gordon has reduced women to art, Talliaferro and others have reduced all human activity to words, to the icons of their desires. As the novel demonstrates, the "fetich of culture" (243) and the "modern day fetich of virginity" (318) are troublesome and inescapable problems for modern man, who seeks refuge in words to minimize the effects of the inscrutable world around him.

The final scene of the novel has Talliaferro pantomiming the role of a man without words, trying to curb woman's "natural perversity" (348) with the tactics of a bully. But, it is all gesture, without substance. Talliaferro cannot help but tell his inspired solution to his detached mentor Fairchild; yet, Fairchild hangs up on him. And in his new silence, all Talliferro can hear is the disembodied female voice echoing in his room: "'You tell 'em, big boy; treat 'em rough!" (349). And the man of words is left in silence, mocked and dismissed by words.
Not until his third novel, *Flags In the Dust* (1929), did Faulkner greatly refine his narrative techniques for expressing fetishism. This novel is the first Faulkner sets in Jefferson, Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi. And it is this setting which affords Faulkner the security to delve more deeply into workings of fetishisms of family, history, genealogy, and self. The stories of the Sartoris family and the Benbows are integrated in several respects, especially through motifs of doubles, in names and persons, occurring in different generations of each family. Colonel John Sartoris, Jefferson's legendary Civil War figure, resembles Old Bayard, the crusty banker, who constantly evokes the Colonel's presence through retelling stories about his father. Old Bayard's son, also named Bayard, had a twin brother, John, who died in World War I; during the Civil War, John Sartoris's brother Bayard died. The deaths produce almost mirror opposites in the succeeding generations. Bayard Sartoris died ignominiously trying to steal anchovies from a Yankee camp when a cook shot him in the back with a derringer. His heroics, as if he were "a paladin out of romance,"33 match John Sartoris's flying antics when he jumps

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from his Sopwith Camel under German fire. When Old Bayard dies, young Bayard, like Colonel John, is left to sire sons to continue the family name.

While the Sartorises seem to reduplicate one another over generations, the Benbow doublings only occupy the present and have nothing to do with genealogy. These doublings, more complex in their significance and less mythic in their import than the Sartoris doubles, express the troublesome nature of inter-familial relationships. To begin with, Horace Benbow creates these doubles by means of his sexual desires. Horace's subconscious incestuous longings for his sister Narcissa are expressed in complex repetitions of images and metaphors--vases, caves, peace, chastity. Through his penchant for glass-blowing Horace recovers the "meaning of peace" (179), which is his sister's affections; he even refers to Narcissa as "'O Serene'" (187). To Narcissa he describes the glass-blowing techniques he learned in Europe, but his depictions are charged with sexual meaning. The wet cave walls where the hermit-like glassblowers work, Horace says, feel "just like blood" (180). The cave is a womb and glass-blown products are also distinctly feminine to Horace: "'Sheerly and tragically beautiful. Like preserved flowers, you know. Macabre and inviolate; purged and purified as bronze, yet fragile as soap bubbles'" (180). Obviously, Horace transfers his contradictory sexual yearnings onto the vessels. Beautiful, macabre, fragile and inviolate, and purified--these vessels reveal Horace's own
paradoxical longings for Narcissa and his attempts to repress those feelings. He creates his own cave to make his own precise shapes, the cellar of the house, but Narcissa persuades him to move to a room over the garage. After several mishaps, Horace succeeds in his design and produces his desired vase:

... one almost perfect vase of clear amber, larger, more richly and chastely serene and which he kept always on his night table and called by his sister's name in the intervals of apostrophising both of them impartially in his moments of rhapsody over the realization of the meaning of peace and the unblemished attainment of it, as Thou still unravished bride of quietude. (190-91)

Horace's vase and sister are one in his mind; they are reciprocal signs of one another. Both are "serene," chaste, and unspoiled in his eyes. Faulkner's reference to Keat's Grecian Urn here does not suggest that either the vase or Narcissa is a thing of beauty, but that they are objects whose meaning derives from Horace's creation. They are "unravished" brides of peace, but Narcissa cannot always remain chaste and pure because Horace's desires disrupt the peace he creates. That "meaning of peace" he seems to discover with the creation of this vessel is not a perfect peace, any more than the vase or Narcissa are perfect. He knows this serenity is doomed but sees his peace in terms that imply fetishism:

The meaning of peace; one of those instants in a man's life, a neap tide in his affairs, when, as though with a premonition of disaster, the moment takes on a sort of fixed clarity in which his actions
and desires stand boldly forth unshadowed and rhythmic one with another like two steeds drawing a single chariot along a smooth empty road, and during which the I in him stands like a tranquil deciduated tree above the sere and ludicrous disasters of his days. (195)

That "fixed clarity" aptly describes the fetishistic moment for Faulkner. Actions and desires double one another like twin steeds; their rhythm, though, is the contradictory movement of desire and repression. The chariot's ride along the road suggests a sexual rhythm, but one which is paradoxical. And the "I," which is Horace's self, is not intact, but falling and withering away dominated by the movement of his yearnings and his inability to act on them.

Horace couples together his future wife, Belle, and her daughter, little Belle. He admits that Belle once made him afraid because "She's so cannily stupid" (186). And little Belle, he fears just as much for her "awkward virginal grace" (202). His fear is part of his attraction for both females. When he watches Little Belle play tennis, Horace's desires surface in a monologue rife with sexual confusion, repulsion, and attraction; he begins his fetishistic thoughts when he notices that Little Belle's underpants are "Girlwhite and all thy little Oh. Not pink, no. For a moment I thought she'd no. Disgraceful, her mamma would call it. Or any other older woman. Belle's are pink. . . . Oaten reed above the lyre. And Belle like a harped gesture, not sonorous. Piano, perhaps. Blended chorus, anyway. Unchaste ? Knowledgable better. Knowingly
wearied. Weariedly knowing. Yes, piano" (203). The force of Horace's repressions are designated by the halts and blank spaces on the page. Horace sees her white undergarments and moves upward toward the source of his attraction, but he cannot say or think of little Belle's unravished vase. He distinguishes between little Belle's virignal white shorts and Belle's womanly-stained pink underwear. The reed above the lyre is overtly sexual, but Horace transforms the image from its poetic suggestions to the reality of Belle and her daughter's piano playing. Belle and little Belle are a "blended chorus" in Horace's sexual imagination. The curious "Unchaste ?" again displays Horace's inability to name what fixates him.

When he tells Narcissa that he wishes to marry Belle, Narcissa says to him with disgust: "'You've got the smell of her all over you. Oh, Horry, she's dirty!'" (223). To Narcissca, and perhaps to Horace also, all women are dirty. Horace creates more vases and shows them to Narcissa each time, but the two are becoming progressively estranged with this new wedding looming:

But then the dark would descend once more, and beyond the black and motionless trees Belle's sultry imminence was like a presence, like the odor of death. And then he and Narcissa were strangers again, tugging and straining at the shackles of custom and old affection that bound them with slipping bonds. (228)

Filth, odor, and death are emblematic of women for Horace, because the presence of sexuality disturbs his fetishistic dream of pure chastity. Narcissa seems to share Horace's longings, for she confuses
Horace and Bayard Sartoris. When she marries and bears Bayard a child, she names the boy after her brother, calling it Benbow Sartoris. Thus, the two family sagas merge through marriage; the result is not comedy, but tragedy. The mythic heraldry of the Sartoris past becomes the present psychological mythos of the Benbows' failed and secret desires. The significance of *Flags in the Dust* remains its experimental mixing of two family plots by patterns of repetition. Those repetitions not only enable the reader to discern the novel's theme, but also allow the reader to experience the fetishes portrayed within the novel.

Like *Flags in the Dust*, *The Sound and the Fury* is a family saga, a story of death, grief, loss, and obsession. But with this novel Faulkner, more than ever before, fully allows his fetishistic theme to inform and shape the narrative. Structurally, the novel breaks down into four distinct narratives, the first three of which are first person accounts by the three Compson son--Benjy, Quentin, and Jason, respectively. The final third person narrative concentrates upon the Compson's black maid, Dilsey Gibson. At the center of each narrative is the Compson's only daughter, Caddy. However, within the temporal frame of the story Caddy is absent. In fact, she only appears as a memory, representing losses and absence.

For the retarded Benjy, Caddy's departure from Jefferson signals the loss of his mother. Caroline Compson, Benjy's true mother, has rarely expressed any maternal fondness for any of her
children. She views Benjy as a curse and her feigned vapors weaken her condition to the point where Caddy assumes all maternal duties. For Quentin, Caddy is a source of sexual feelings, frustration, and obsession. Her lost virginality and marriage inaugurates both her symbolic death and his suicide. To Jason, Caddy has always been his antagonist; her devotion to Benjy and her love for Quentin have left him without a role to play in her life. Seeking to regain the absent Caddy, all of the brothers perform fetishtic substitutions: Benjy with sensory images; Quentin with time; and Jason with money. Each first person narrative begins with a representation of the absent Caddy: Benjy hears a golfer call out for his caddy; Quentin obsessively listens to the sound of his watch ticking; and Jason curses and repeats the word "bitch."

But Benjy and Quentin's narratives reveal the most extensive fetishizing of Caddy. Temporal shifts in Benjy's section occur when he experiences a sensation reminding him of Caddy. Smells, trees, mirrors, fire, mud and earth—all produce a memory of Caddy in Benjy's mind and they come to stand for her. In a sense, Benjy tries to cull from the world around him significant objects which will replace his absent sister. He tries to write a natural signifier for Caddy, to inscribe a primitive cartouche—trees, weed, bottle—which signify in the form of a sensory hieroglyphic his sister. And as we read Benjy's section, we are forced into his rhythms and memories. We cannot understand the ruptures in time and imagery without
following the operations of his language. In this way, Faulkner's style both resembles Benjy's fetishistic view of the world and reduplicates that response in our reading.

Quentin also tries to capture Caddy's presence in language, but his attempt is far more sophisticated than Benjy's. Yet, the primitive and ritualistic qualities are still present. Time is Quentin's nemesis, because it represents both the past and memories of Caddy's innocence as well as suggesting the inevitability of her sexual maturation, hence her departure from his life. He realizes that he can only conquer time through death: "I don't suppose anybody ever deliberately listens to a watch or a clock. You don't have to. You can be oblivious to the sound for a long time, then in a second of ticking it can create in the mind unbroken the long diminishing parade of time you didn't hear. Like Father said down the long and lonely light-rays you might see Jesus walking, like. And the good Saint Francis that said Little Sister Death, that never had a sister."³⁴ The little sister signifies Caddy and death for Quentin. Walking the streets of Boston just prior to his suicide, Quentin encounters a "little dirty" girl, whom he addresses as "sister"; she follows him like the ghost of Caddy. He feeds and protects her, yet he finds her "moist

and dirty" touch and smell repulsive. As Warwick Wadlington has pointed out Quentin's response to his sister is an ambivalent one:

According to the Compsons' orientation, the chosen one must be uniform, without the 'impure property' represented by the young Caddy's muddy drawers. Further, her many anonymous suitors undermine the idea of possessing her exclusively or distinctively. Thus Quentin is both fascinated and nauseated by sexuality, which subverts instead of supporting his dualism. When he imagines anonymous intercourse, vital boundaries dissolve between an impure 'imperious' inner realm and a vulnerable outer...

It is important to emphasize however, that for Faulkner the dynamics of fetishism are not those of simple oppositions; the operations of fetishism are a bit more complex than inner/outer, ideal/material, fixation/denial, attraction/repulsion. Fetishism both blends together dualisms and radically separates them, so that, as Faulkner's "Nympholepsy" illustrates, the image of woman achieves the status of both and neither. Quentin's incestuous attraction to Caddy forces him to repel her. His fetish is not for Caddy his sister, but for Caddy the feminine, the other:

Because women so delicate so mysterious Father said. Delicate equilibrium of periodical filth between two moons balanced. Moons he said full and yellow as harvest moons her hips thighs. Outside outside of them always but. Yellow. Feets soles with walking like. Then know that some man that all those

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mysterious and imperious concealed. With all that insider of them shapes an outward suavity waiting for a touch to. Liquid putrefaction like drowned things floating like pale rubber flabbily filled getting the odour of honeysuckle all mixed up. (159)

The paradoxical filth and enticements of thighs reinforce Quentin's attraction to and repulsion from the image of woman. He is sexually excited by the "hips thighs" he imagines. But as he figuratively nears that which is "waiting for a touch," the imagery turns again to filth and death: "liquid putrefaction like drowned things." Quentin confuses the erotic and the forbidden in his mind; the odors of filth and honeysuckle are "all mixed up." The displacements and caesuras in the above passage mirror the stylistic ruptures in much of his narrative, ruptures which engage us directly into the fetishizing process.

The Sound and the Fury initiates a transformation in Faulkner's fiction. While his early works attempted to capture the fetishistic moment for the reader, The Sound and the Fury conveys fetishistic movement, creating metaphoric language and temporality which re-enact the process of fetishizing. The nature of Faulkner's fictional design calls attention to the fetishistic problem thematically represented. Moreover, this fetishistic movement extends to the

reader's participation with the text. Caddy absence is never resolved for us in the novel; we move from narrative to narrative acquiring linguistic substitutions for her, but she is never present. Thus, we read the novel not only in terms of the fetish depicted, but also in terms of the fetishistic experience. In the major novels, especially *As I Lay Dying, Absalom, Absalom!, and Sanctuary*, Faulkner achieves the perfect correspondence between form and fetish. As we shall see in these novels, the narrative styles directly match the fetish described.

Faulkner's narratives demand of us as readers that we engage them, that we interact with their perplexing logic and modes of representation, and that we try to create order out of their multiple perspectives and shifting temporal sequences. In doing so, we invariably fall prey to the fetishistic desires which the narratives initiate and imitate. My own readings, informed by current studies in anthropology, psychoanalysis, feminism, and post-structuralism, each word, like an obscene and obstrcuting presence, more or less condensed, depending upon the particular case. It would be a mistake to regard these irregularities as gratuitous exercises in virtuosity. A fictional technique always relates back to the novelist's metaphysics. The critic's task is to define the latter before evaluating the former. Now, it is immediately obvious that Faulkner's metaphysics is a metaphysics of time" (84-85). While Sartre brilliantly identifies the inherent connection between technique and metaphysics, he restricts Faulkner's metaphysics to being "time-bound" (85). Surely narrative technique also expresses prevailing fetishes in mankind; and, in the case of this novel, the fetish is with language as well as time.
try to weave together close textual analyses with specific critical theories that the texts invite. That is say that I try to allow the work itself to govern my reading. As I read Faulkner's texts in terms of the prevailing fetish they express, I assume that fetishes are not embedded within a them, but are essential components of their basic structure, narrative, and theme. Most methods of reading, whether heuristic or hermeneutic in intent, superimpose a structure upon the text under investigation. That structure betrays specific presuppositions--sets of governing principles, ideological concepts, or philosophical grounds--held by the critic. Interpretive readings, therefore, are rarely neutral.

I wish to expose how Faulkner entraps his reader into performing a fetishistic reading of his narratives. I feel comfortable submitting myself to the allurement of Faulkner's texts, perhaps because fetishistic attraction is inevitable. Therefore, I self-consciously try to match my readings to the particular fetishes his narratives engender and to disclose his sympathy for man's inescapable fetishizing of his world. He believes that fetishes are inherent characteristics of man's perceptions of himself and the world around him and splendor and failure of the human heart, which he writes about, grow out of man's devastatingly destructive fetishes.
Perception and Reading in *As I Lay Dying*

I believe that what drives anyone to write is the discovery of some truth that had been in existence all the time, but he discovered it. It seems so moving to him, so necessary that it be told to everyone else in such a way that it would move them to the same extent that it moved him. . . He will try through methods, through style, because simply he is not trying to be difficult, to be obscure, he is not trying to be stylish, he is not trying for method, he is simply trying to tell a truth, that which troubled him so much he had to tell it in some way that it will seem troubling or true enough or beautiful or tragic enough to whoever reads it. . . And that, I think, is the reason for the obscurity; there is nothing deliberate in it because no writer has got the time to be too interested in style or method. The story, the truth he is telling, invents its own style, its own method.

--Faulkner

Virtually every novel Faulkner undertook might be examined as modernist experimental fiction. Most of Faulkner's works invert and subvert traditional narrative techniques: they disrupt time sequences, give voice to multiple narrators or sometimes more than one authorial voice, entangle plot elements, and exhibit several stylistic conventions simultaneously. Quite often his major works especially have been judged according to the success or failure of

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1 Faulkner, "Faulkner in Manila," *Lion in the Garden*, p. 204.
these generic innovations.\footnote{For the best examples of aesthetic evaluation and analysis see both Walter J. Slatoff, \textit{Quest for Failure: A Study of William Faulkner} (1960; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961) and Arthur F. Kinney, \textit{Faulkner's Narrative Poetics: Style as Vision} (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1978). These studies investigate prevailing techniques in Faulkner's fiction, such as polarities of sound and silence, quiescence and turbulence, and narrative antitheses (Slatoff) or styistic experiments with structural, narrative, and consitutive consciousness (Kinney), in order to draw aesthetic conclusions about how closely Faulkner's method matches his expectations for his fiction. See also Albert J. Guerard's \textit{The Triumph of the Novel: Dickens, Dostoevsky, Faulkner} (1976; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) which vacillates between approval of and sharp denunciations of "Faulknerese," "Faulkerian self-imitation," and stylistic methods that are "meant as freedom from presentness, from the obligation to report things happening in a time flowing onward at an even pace" (338).} Aesthetic considerations aside, Faulkner's fictional experiments forged together poetics and thematics, so much so that his fictive methods call attention to and demonstrate philosophical problems raised in his texts. And no novel more clearly conjoins theory and practice than \textit{As I Lay Dying}. Its style mirrors its thematic and epistemological concerns with perception. But its shifting points-of-view purposely confuse and frustrate even the most astute reader at every turn. The novel almost defies systematic order; it transforms a relatively simple plot line into a complex, fragmentary series of narrative perspectives; and yet, it relies upon these perspectives to unfold the events while, at the same time, undermining their effect. Presenting Addie's death
and burial through fifteen distinct first person narrators, who unfold the events in fifty-nine narratives, the novel renders one, unified text into several texts. As I Lay Dying questions the idea of perception and brings to bear upon the reader a recognition of his own contingent perceptions.

Each narrator frames a scene in the novel by means of private, idiosyncratic language, visions, images, and remembrances. The reader unavoidably recognizes these framing devices as expressions of the character's desires for meaning. However, the novel's apparent lack of a consistent narrative structure obfuscates and confounds the reader to such an extent that the very narratives themselves almost occlude any coherent meaning. When the reader attempts to construct some order for the events, some interconnection among narratives and their respective narrators, he becomes self-consciously aware of his own need for similar framing devices. Consequently, he is awakened to the problematics of his own perceptions, as well as the desire, if not obsession within man for translating immediate perceptions into profound and stable meaning. Faulkner's style and language express this self-referentiality. Just as he implies in his account of a novelist's style

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3 The breakdown is as follows: Darl 19 chapters; Vardaman 10; Tull 6; Cash 5; Dewey Dell 4; Cora 3; Anse 3; Peabody 2; with one chapter by Jewel, Samson, Addie, Whitfield, Armstid, Mosely, and MacGowan. Obviously, Darl's chapters far outnumber any other character's and must be seen as the focal points, the dominate perspective, for the novel as a whole.
and method, his characters' own styles emerge out of the meaning, that truth they perceive and wish to tell. As I Lay Dying, then, dramatizes the inseparable connections between human perception, language, and desires for meaning.

Faulkner's experiments with perception began with his aspirations to become a successful artist. Early in his career Faulkner dabbled in pen-and-ink sketches and watercolors, but never achieved the acclaim he aspired to. David Minter speculates that Faulkner's fictional representations of the obsessive artist, in an early New Orleans sketch "The Artist" and also in a later short story "Elmer," were self-parodies of Faulkner's own dismal career as an artist. In a sense, he relived his artistic desires through his fiction. Even though many of his own art works amounted to no more than poor copies of Beardsley and Daumier, he eventually moved away from imitations of earlier styles to fictional imitations based upon contemporary artistic theories. While in New Orleans, Faulkner, befriended and supported by Sherwood Anderson, resided in the French Quarter, a bohemian colony of would-be artists and posturing

4 Minter, William Faulkner: His Life and Work (1980; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982) pp. 56-60. Minter attributes to "Elmer" religious, sexual, and artistic metaphors that continue in Faulkner's later fiction, such as the use of the Keatsian urn motif. However, Minter does not develop how Faulkner's use of this classic literary convention was similar to modernist alterations of classical forms. Faulkner's innovations with the model certainly align him with contemporary artistic trends.
aesthetes. There he became acquainted with current artistic debates and, under Anderson's tutelage, he began to see the possibilities open to fictional experimentation. And his early 1925 pieces for *The Double Dealer* put him, at least in his mind, in the modern company of Ezra Pound, Hart Crane, and Djuna Barnes. However much Faulkner associated himself with literary modernists, he never made contact with them, though he did go to Europe in the summer of 1925 and put himself in situations to be near them. In Rapallo, he hoped to exchange ideas with Pound, but, his travelling companion, William Spratling, claimed that Faulkner could never muster up the courage to visit the poet; and in Paris, Faulkner often went to the Place de l'Odéon just to catch a glimpse at James Joyce.

But his European excursion that summer, especially his stay in Paris, gave him the opportunity to develop his own critical

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6 During the period 1914-17 Faulkner was exposed to modern poetry by his friend and self-appointed mentor, Phil Stone, as Minter in *William Faulkner: His Life and Work* reveals: "In particular, he turned William, first, toward the more familiar poets of the nineteenth century, and then, toward the Symbolists. . . . he prided himself on knowing both the background of the Modernist movement and the works of Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and Joyce" (27). For an explication of Faulkner's knowledge and use of Barnes see Doreen Fowler and Carl Herzig, "The Faulkner-Djuna Barnes Connection: An Answer to Calvin Brown," *The Faulkner Journal* 1, no. 2 (Spring, 1986): 77-78.

assessments of modernism. From Paris, during August of 1925, Faulkner sent a letter to his mother expressing his appreciation for both classical and modernist works:

I spent yesterday in the Louvre, to see the Winged Victory and the Venus de Milo, the real ones, and the Mona Lisa, etc. It was fine, especially the paintings of the more-or-less moderns, like Degas and Manet and Chavannes. Also went to a very very modernist exhibition the other day--futurist and vorticist. 8

The mention of Futurism and Vorticism indicates his familiarity with movements merely a decade old. Later, Faulkner would take elements of their transformations of representational art, even some aspects purported to be nonrepresentational, 9 and adopt them in his

9 For a discussion of vorticism see David Perkins's A History of Modern Poetry: From the 1890s to the High Modernist Mode (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 465: "They were foes to sentimental prettiness but did not therefore go in for realistic 'analyses of the fatty degenerations of life' as Pound explained, for their word was nonrepresentational...Art was an expression of emotion ('certain emotions which I get from your character,' as Gaudier had explained) by means of lines, planes, colors, or, in the case of poetry, images"; and Hugh Kenner's The Pound Era (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 238: "The Vorticists disowned Futurism because it denied tradition, and were wary of Cubism because it seemed indifferent to personality." Faulkner's knowledge of specific modernist tenets remains uncertain, although his acquaintance with Pound's works, either through Phil Stone or his own readings in New Orleans, implies that he was somewhat versed in modernist poetic techniques and critical debates.
style. In another letter to his mother, written one month later, Faulkner again concludes with his exuberant approval of modern artists, particularly Cézanne:

I can tell you about the paintings when I get home. I have spent afternoon after afternoon in the Louvre--(that Carnegie was a hot sport) and in the Luxembourg; I have seen Rodin's museum, and 2 private collections of Matisse and Picasso (who are yet alive and painting) as well as numberless young and struggling moderns. And Cézanne! That man dipped his brush in light like Toby Caruthers would dip his in red lead to paint a lamp-post. (24)

These letters reveal more than Faulkner's eye for technique; he was acquiring some fluency with modernism's history, artists and schools of thought. What is also telling is his inclusion of classical and modern art. His prose works relocate classical themes within a modernist style, as Albert Camus observed:

Faulkner's style, with its staccato breathing, its interrupted sentences, its repeats and prolongations in repetitions, its incidences, its parentheses and its cascades of subordinate clauses, gives us a modern, and in no way artificial, equivalent to the tragic soliloquy. It is a style that gasps with the very breathlessness of suffering. An interminably unwinding spiral of words and sentences that conducts the speaker to the abyss of sufferings buried in the past.10

The rhetorical and syntactical patterns Camus attributes to Faulkner's style also reflect the shifting planes of reference exhibited in the works of Cézanne, Matisse, and Picasso. Moreover, Faulkner's style patterns itself after the perceptual interruptions and displacements of his characters. He does not reject mimetic traditions out of hand, but generates a new mimesis by having his style match his characters' fixations. Like so much of early modern art, Faulkner's works do not foresake the classical, but rather seek to alter traditional assumptions about human consciousness and perception.

The Paris Faulkner visited in the mid-1920s reveled in volatile profusions of artistic theories about perception. Of primary concern to the avant-garde was the relationship between subject and object, but not in terms of Impressionism which had assumed that the essence of realism "represented one thing at a given moment in time, an effect of light and colour that was by definition fugitive; ideally, an Impressionist landscape should have taken only as long to paint as it took to see." Faulkner was excited by the possibilities

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11 Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1981), p. 113. See also Stephen Mallarmé's "The Impressionists and Édouard Manet" in *The New Painting: Impressionism 1874-1886* (Switzerland: The Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, 1986), p. 33: "The noble visionaries of other times, whose works are the semblance of worldly things by unworldly eyes (not the actual representations of real objects), appear as kings and gods in the far dream-ages of mankind; recluses to whom were given the genius of dominion over an ignorant multitude. But today the
afforded by "very very modernist" ideas, especially those which had moved beyond Impressionism to demonstrate how the subject and its object inhabit the same plane and influence one another mutually and reciprocally. Theories of consciousness and perception were undergoing profound rethinking which were subsequently reworked through art. What modernism purported, and what Faulkner later assimilated into *As I Lay Dying*, was a radical reassessment of the subject's relationship to its object. And what stimulated and greatly affected the subject's experience of an object were private sensations, emotions, and a coloring of the immediacy of the object by its associations with and remembrances of other objects. In effect, the world represented was not the world as it actually is, but as it appears to the artist, often in the flash of an instant. Clearly, art

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12 Many modernist theories seem to rehearse tenets more than a century old, developed out of Romanticism's continual rebellion against empiricism. However, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley focused their poetic philosophies upon the loosely defined faculty called the imagination, which could express the external world's reality in terms of associations, analogies, and symbols. Shelley himself thought that divisions between perceiver and thing perceived were nominal at best and that the ground of knowledge rested solely in the act of perception. For a sound account of Romantic epistemology see Earl R. Wasserman's "The English Romantics: The Grounds of Knowledge," *Romanticism: Points of View* (1962; rpt. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), pp. 331-346.
could no longer represent the world as somehow immune to sensations and experience, but should, as Cézanne contended, give "concrete shape to sensations and perceptions."  

Modernism, by the 1910s, steered away from methods which still betrayed a devotion to traditional resemblances of reality. Apollinaire, in his 1913 manifesto on Cubism, celebrated the transformations of space wrought by Picasso and Braque as enabling art to enter "the fourth dimension," a dimension constituted by the artist's own expression. Faulkner not only concurred with the chaotic perspectivism of Cubists and sensual dynamics of Futurists, but

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13 Paul Cézanne, To Emile Bernard, 26 May 1904, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, ed. Herschel B. Chipp (1968; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 20. Cézanne, like so many moderns, admired classical expressions but warned against pursuing them as models, as his letter to Bernard of 1905 advocates: "The Louvre is the book in which we learn to read. We must not, however, be satisfied with retaining the beautiful formulas of our illustrious predecessors. Let us go forth to study beautiful nature, let us try to free our minds from them, let us strive to express ourselves according to our personal temperaments. Time and reflection, moreover, modify little by little our vision, and at last comprehension comes to us" (21).

14 Guillaume Apollinaire, "Les peintres cubistes: méditations esthétiques," *Theories of Modern Art*, p. 223. This new dimension, according to Apollinaire, allows for art to escape from mimetic traditions to become "an art of conception" (227).

15 See Pablo Picasso's "Statement, 1923," *Theories of Modern Art*, in which he summarizes the object of Cubism: "We have kept our eyes open to our surroundings, and also our brains. We give form and color all their individual significance, as far as we can see it; in our subjects, we keep the joy of discovery, the pleasure of the unexpected; our subject itself must be a source of interest. But of
showed how literature could also create new space, a field of unexpected possibilities. Cubism liberated artists from illusions of realistic perspectivism, undid classical assumptions of reality, and turned reality on its head by, as Joseph Riddel explains, concentrating upon juxtaposition and relation, so that "particularity and difference, not a expected syntax of relations--this defines the 'field' lifted out of the ordinary."16 By a synthesis of memory and perception, Futurism expressed a sensation of the turbulence and motion which exists in the world. Literature, by means of stylistic detours and inversions, could expand these problematics of perception and consciousness. For Faulkner, this could be achieved through language; in fact, he explored new possibilities in language out of a sense of duty, because "The artist must create his own language."17 His fascination with modernist perceptual experimentation is evidenced in As I Lay Dying by its stylistic debts

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17 Faulkner, "Interview with Loïc Bouvard," Lion in the Garden, p. 71.
to Post-Impressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Surrealism, and even Dada. Its fragmented, multiple narratives recall the fragmented perspectives of Braque and Picasso; its characters' penchant for arresting and propelling movement simultaneously resemble the obsessions with motion by Severini and Balla; its employment of physical descriptions colored by evocative emotions call to mind the landscapes of desire created by Cézanne and Van Gogh18; and its absurdist imagery and dissociative, often sexualized depictions of reality suggest the influence of Duchamp. Even though these influences are readily visible in the novel, Faulkner's purpose was not solely imitation of plastic arts in literary style. He employed heterogeneous styles to disclose the disturbing consequences of his characters' perceptions, as well as to impart the ways their particular styles, their language, inform our concept of the processes of perception.

In *As I Lay Dying* narrators rely upon metaphors of transformation to express their perceptions of the world and its effects upon their existence. For example, Dewey Dell, distraught

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18 Calvin Bedient in "Pride and Nakedness: *As I Lay Dying*," *Faulkner (New Perspectives): Twentieth Century Views*, ed. Richard H. Brodhead (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1983), focuses upon the force of the novel's "opacity," its aesthetic and non-analytical aspects, which require one to look for "analogies in painting and music"; the experience of the novel's opacity is likened to "an expressive verbal gesture, a mood-painting; they are as immediate in interest as the sudden clutching of a hand or the swirls in a Van Gogh cypress" (136).
over her pregnancy, views her uncertain existence as shaped by death: "The dead air shapes the dead earth in the dead darkness, further away than seeing shapes the dead earth. It lies dead and warm upon me, touching me naked through my clothes." She apparently assumes that the world affects her existence far more than her own perceptions, more than her "seeing shapes" the world. Yet, air, earth, and darkness are not dead, just perceived by Dewey Dell as such, so much so that these paradoxical death-as-life sensations can actually penetrate to her naked body. She feels her sexuality lie both "dead and warm" upon her. Here, she relinquishes herself to a moribund life, caused not by Addie's demise, but by Lafe's impregnating her. For her, life seems futile and terrifying: "I feel my bones and flesh beginning to part and open upon the alone, and the process of coming unalone is terrible" (382). Her metaphor depicts both sexual intercourse and birth, but the sensation of her body being torn apart also reinforces her fixation with death. Through her eyes the world has now taken on "the alone" and, in turn, appears to touch and re-form everything, including herself, in terms of that new death.

Clearly, Dewey Dell's emotions rule her perceptions. Her sense of powerlessness and her hatred for her own transformed condition

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have necessarily become objectified. She frames her sullen desperate world in the shape of death, because death only has meaning for her when she perceives it as an object. Her world is one of sensations; consequently, she feels death as something experienced. Like the cow's breath upon her hips and back "warm, sweet, stertorous, moaning" (384), the world repeats Dewey Dell's state of sexual confusion and seems tender, yet apoplexic. But, by perceiving death as an object, she can control and arrest its troubling effects. Her perceptions of the world are certainly projections of her emotionally confused state, but they are also the articulation of her obsession with her new state of death, her pregnancy. Dewey Dell must fetishize death in order to bring the elusive, uncertain world

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20 Broughton in William Faulkner: The Abstract and the Actual characterizes just this sort of objectification as preoccupation and abstraction: "The abstract may be defined as thought apart from substance, as whatever is not concrete. Yet man finds it difficult to image the nonsubstantive or totally abstract. Paradoxically he tries to congeal even his abstractions into concrete entities. He remodels them into objects, or formulas, or labels which his intellect can readily grasp. These fixed representations are constrictions of the vast into the little, the complex into the simple. A further denotation of the word abstracted is preoccupied; in other words it means to be mentally withdrawn... Though they seem to be concretions, such representations are, in fact, then abstractions. To rely upon them is to make a mental withdrawal from actuality" (52). She also loosely employs the term "fetish" to describe abstracting an object for the purpose of possessing it. Objectifying emotions or obsessions is not complete withdrawal from reality, but a way to control perceived reality in terms of the personal significance attached to what has now become the object of fixation.
into some kind of equilibrium with herself: "I feel like a wet seed wild in the blind earth" (384). She has impregnated the world with her being and with her language, reciprocating the very act which has brought about her sense of death. This simile articulates the way her perceptions themselves are immediately translated in terms of her fetish for sexuality and death. And like the fetishist, she imbues each perception, chaotic and frightening in its immediacy, with personal significance. Dewey Dell, although still vexed by what has shaped and touched her, metaphorically reshapes the world in order to obtain meaning from its uncertainty.

Faulkner repeatedly employs "shape" as a metaphor for the way his characters visualize their world and reconstruct its meaning. This shaping of existence expresses the insecurity of perceptions and it sharpens our awareness of the way consciousness functions, implying that man's world is always already reshaped by his perceptions. Significantly it is man's language, his metaphorical reshaping of the world, which grants us this access to consciousness. The characters re-form and, thereby, alter their milieu according to their sensations, emotions, and memories. The Bundrens are acutely aware of their world, but only inasmuch as they can transform, by language, that world into their own idiom.21 Objectification of

21 Cf. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), pp. 5-6: "We find that perceived things, unlike geometric objects, are not bounded entities whose laws of construction we possess a priori, but
emotions and passions is the outcome of these transformations of the world; it is a way of limiting meaning to the immediacy of personal sensations and significance.

This fetishizing of perceptible objects, even people, is most evident in Darl's narratives. Darl often relies upon artistic metaphors to demarcate his affinity toward and rejection of members of his family. For example, Darl sees Jewel in terms of banal, crude modes of art, as though the form itself will be the summation of what Jewel is. In the novel's opening chapter he sardonically refers to Jewel as a cigar-store Indian (339); several times Darl refers to Jewel's face as having a "wooden" quality, as though he were devoid of human sensations and emotions. In the dramatic scene of the conflagration of the barn housing Addie's coffin, Jewel's heroic rescue of his mother's corpse is satirically rendered by Darl, who sees him as "a flat figure cut cleanly from tin"

that they are open, inexhaustible systems which we recognize through a certain style of development, although we are never able, in principle, to explore them entirely, and even though they never give us more than profiles and perspectival views of themselves. Finally, we find that the perceived world, in its turn, is not a pure object of thought without fissures or lacunae; it is, rather, like a universal style shared in by all perceptual beings. While the world no doubt co-ordinates these perceptual beings, we can never presume that its work is finished. Our world, as Malebranche said, is an 'unfinished task.' While Merleau-Ponty understands this unfinished task as a strongly positive force in man, Faulkner presents this necessary reshaping of the world as a source of dread, uncertainty, and alienation in man.
When Jewel struggles with Gillespie, who tries to stop Jewel from entering the burning barn, Darl envisions them as "two figures in a Greek frieze, isolated out of all reality by the red glare" (500). This Keatsian image does not elevate Jewel to a heroic status but dissociates him from reality. This dehumanization of Jewel both relegates him to the status of villain and asserts Darl's hatred for him. In this manner, Darl has shaped Jewel for himself--as well as for us.

Darl also perceives Jewel and his beloved horse as "two figures carved for a tableau savage in the sun" (345). Like so much of Darl's imagery, this tableau isolates the object before his gaze and transforms the real into an ideal fixed by his metaphor. Jewel and his horse are imitations of living beings; frozen in motion they exude purely savage qualities. Darl draws the antithesis of a tableau vivant; he presents figures without consciousness, just the pure embodiment of savagery, some thing so lacking in humanity that it cannot be described except as what it lacks. Their presence is arrested in metaphor, so that "the transitoriness of the real world is magically transformed into an ideal fixity."22 We, therefore,

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22 Jay Caplan, Framed Narratives: Diderot's Genealogy of the Beholder (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 18. Caplan's discussion of tableaux in Diderot's works corresponds closely to patterns found in Darl's metaphors, whereby the isolated image and the fragmented tableau "have the same fetishistic structure" and "nearly always possess a disquieting intensity. That intensity
discover not the essence of Jewel by beholding him through Darl's eyes but merely his appearance as shaped by Darl's fixations.

Similarly, Darl equates his father and Jewel with caricatures: he sees Anse's face as "carved by a savage caricaturist in monstrous burlesque" (394) and perceives Jewel as "a figure carved clumsily from tough wood by a drunken caricaturist" (457-58). Again, these savage, monstrous, clumsily shaped images are not Anse and Jewel, but Darl's representation of them, his fetishistic arresting of their presence within metaphor. In both cases the caricaturist is Darl, who has "carved" them into the shape of his own perceptions, his own fixations. Even Addie's coffin amid the explosion of flames in the barn is metaphorically rendered: "The front, the conical façade with the square squat shape of the coffin on the saw-horses like a cubistic bug, comes into relief" (498). Darl reduces his mother, whom he hated, to the same dehumanized status as Jewel. Moreover, as a "cubistic" object, whose several surfaces can be viewed simultaneously, the coffin suggests the extent to which Addie is the focus of the Bundren's efforts, frustrations, and fixations. This multiplicity of surfaces, as we shall see, corresponds to Darl's paradoxical hatred of and fixation on his mother. Darl's metaphoric perceptions, like Dewey Dell's objectifications of her world, are his means of defining objective reality, yet they indicate his distance
from that reality, as Olga W. Vickery has observed: "Consequently, Darl's is a world of consciousness exclusively, and this, of course, renders his connection with the external world increasingly precarious and insecure."23

Faulkner makes us keenly aware of the problem of perception by his characters' repeated reliance upon the visual; nearly every narrative concentrates upon observations, looks from others, and the narrators' own gazes. Eyes have peculiar significance for the Bundrens and for those who encounter their stares. As primary organs of perception eyes inspect, survey, and arrange the world for man; but, they can also penetrate and fix others within their domain. Darl, especially, disturbs others with his eyes. Dewey Dell and Anse observe an unsettling distance in his eyes, which are "full of the land all the time" (363). Both recognize, although incompletely, Darl's mental sojourns, his lapses into contemplation, but fail to comprehend the effects of his stare. That distance, that alienating presence granted to Darl, actually expresses their perceptual displacements of themselves. Sartre explains this distance created by the look of the Other in terms of shifting fields of perception: another's gaze creates the paradoxical illusion of being at a distance from the beholder and also sharing an uncomfortable immediacy; in

order to compensate for this integration of presence and distance, the individual confronted by another's look feels his perception "decompose and pass into the background." 24 When they behold Darl, his alarmingly inscrutable look removes their immediacy and they experience a disquieting shifting of their own perceptions which now are constituted by Darl. Still, it is that distance which they believe affords Darl a mystical, almost clairvoyant vision of their secrets. Dewey Dell, after her assignation with Lafe in the secret shade, encounters Darl and immediately suspects that "he knew without the words, like he told me that ma is going to die without words, and I knew he knew because if he had said he knew with the words I would not have believed that he had been there and saw us" (356). She seizes upon this certainty of Darl's knowledge, not by words directly, but implicitly by his gaze. And she hates him for knowing her secret. Anse, too, feels the power of Darl's eyes, which see through his ruse concerning his inability to work, his comic physical aversion to sweating. Anse senses his paternal status, as

24 Sartre, Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), p. 258: "The Other's look hides his eyes; he seems to go in front of them. This illusion stems from the fact that eyes as objects of my perception remain at a precise distance which unfolds from me to them (in a word, I am present to the eyes without distance, but they are distant from the place where I 'find myself') whereas the look is upon me without distance while at the same time it holds me at a distance--that is, its immediate presence to me unfolds a distance which removes me from it."
well as very his existence, undermined by Darl's eyes: "they begun to threaten me out of him" (363). Both Dewey Dell and Anse assume their existence is compromised by a stare, as though Darl were able to penetrate through and expose them completely.

They are not alone in their uneasiness with Darl's gaze. Tull, when confronted by Darl's "queer eyes," finds himself in the awkwardly unnerving predicament of self-evaluation and self-perception: "He is looking at me. He don't say nothing; just looks at me with them queer eyes of hisn that makes folks talk. I always say it ain't never been what he done so much or said or anything so much as how he looks at you. It's like he had got into the inside of you, someway. Like somehow you was looking at yourself and your doings outen his eyes" (426). Like Anse and Dewey Dell, Tull sees himself mirrored in Darl's eyes; his perceptions are also displaced, so that as Darl looks at him, Tull sees himself looking at himself. And that's what "makes folks talk." That's what unsettles Darl's family and others, not so much his gaze, but the way it transforms them. They become objects of Darl's subjectivity but he does not become the object of their subjectivity.25 Hence, they frame their existence

25 Cf. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 263: "But with the Other's look a new organization of complexes comes to superimpose itself on the first. To apprehend myself as seen is, in fact, to apprehend myself as seen in the world and from the standpoint of the world. The look does not carve me out in the universe; it comes to search for me at the heart of my situation and grasps me only in irresolvable relations. . . ."
in terms of Darl; this process is akin to Dewey Dell's objectification of the world. Tull feels the imposition of Darl's perceptions intruding upon his existence. This objectification, however, relieves the tension and uncertainty prompted by interospection; by an act of transference, Darl is the one who inspects, not Tull. Thus, Tull's uneasiness is caused not by himself, but by Darl's queer eyes. Actually, it is Tull who frames the scene, who objectifies himself in the presence of what he cannot comprehend.

Addie, too, shares this ability to fix others with her eyes, almost as though the trait were genetically passed from mother to son. When Peabody attends to Addie on her death bed, he observes how her eyes affect everyone in the room with a paradoxically imperceptible presence: "She looks at us. Only her eyes seem to move. It's like they touch us, not with sight or sense, but like the stream from a hose touches you, the stream at the instant of impact from the nozzle as though it had never been there." (368-69). Peabody's disquisition on death, as not "a phenomenon of the body" but "merely a function of the mind--and that of the minds of the ones who suffer the bereavement" (368), uncovers the real force behind Addie's gaze; it is the perception of others. Her omniscience, like Darl's, seems to emanate from perceiving eyes, which can touch without touching and make present what is merely illusory. Her eyes objectify others and, thereby, make them self-consciously aware of their own perceptions. Later, Peabody senses Addie's eyes
"shoving at me" and recognizes the force of her presence which expresses itself, like Darl, without words:

I have seen it before in women. Seen them drive from the room them coming with sympathy and pity, with actual help, and clinging to some trifling animal to whom they never were more than pack-horses. That's what they mean by the love that passeth understanding: that pride, the furious desire to hide that abject nakedness which we bring here with us, carry with us into operating rooms, carry stubbornly and furiously with us into the earth again. (370)

That "abject nakedness" of being, which Addie's eyes hide and Darl's gaze conceals from others, ironically discloses the nakedness of others, exposing their pride and furious desires. These desires, passions, and fixations invariably alter perceptions of the world, self, and others; moreover, world, self, and others become objectified in order to fulfill this pursuit for stable meaning.

Darl, of course, is not immune to this process of objectification. His metaphorizing of the visual discloses his need for order. Consider, for example, his description of Cash's showing Addie the coffin he builds for her:

He looks up at the gaunt face framed by the window in the twilight. It is a composite picture of all time since he was a child. He drops the saw and lifts the board for her to see, watching the window in which the face has not moved. He drags a second plank into position and slants the two of them into their final juxtaposition, gesturing toward the ones yet on the ground, shaping with his empty hand in pantomime.
the finished box. For a while still she looks down at him from the composite picture, neither with censure or approbation. Then the face disappears. (371-72)

Darl reconstructs this scene in terms of frames: Addie's gaunt face, itself a composite picture suggestive of a framed image, is framed by the window; Cash's pantomine of the completed coffin frames Addie; and Darl's narrative frames the scene. Although Darl provides exacting details within these frames, he is not present to observe what occurs. He and Jewel have gone off to cut and haul another three dollar wagon load of wood; so, Addie's death scene is played out in Darl's imagination. And Darl's absence, often ignored by critics, further complicates these frames.

The boys' departure from the farm has previously been described by Cora Tull, who reports that her husband saw Darl

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26 See Patrick O'Donnell, "The Spectral Road: Metaphors of Transference in Faulkner's As I Lay Dying, PLL 20 (1984): 74: "The image corresponds to the scene of Addie framed in the window while Cash imagines her 'framed' in the uncompleted coffin, suggesting that the act of framing or shaping infers the limits of art and language, and that what is within is 'empty,' a lack of presence." While O'Donnell's analysis is rich with implications about frames and their relationship to metaphors of transference operating throughout the novel, it is based upon a common error that assumes this scene is real and not imaginary, because the details given add so much understanding to the Bundren family constellation. Addie's domination of the Bundrens as well as the framing devices of the scene add to the novel's meaning as a whole, even though both elements are constructs of Darl's imagination. Of course, the "reality" of the text is itself a construct, not of Darl's imagination, but of Faulkner's.
almost begging Anse "on his knees not to force him to leave" Addie in her condition (352). But Anse and Jewel want that three dollars; Cora expects as much of the uncaring, materialistic Anse, but not of Jewel: "to think of that boy, that Jewel, selling all those years of self-denial and down-right partiality" (352). Darl's insistence upon remaining on the farm until Addie Bundren is dead and Jewel's seeming indifference to his mother's death are misread by Cora, who concludes that Darl and not Jewel actually shared a "true love" with Addie (354). Cora's sanctimonious and sentimentalized Christianity misleads her into believing that Darl's actions were "the sweetest thing I ever saw. It was like he knew he will never see her again" (351). And yet Cora hits upon the reason for Darl's emphatic, emotional protests, for he does know that he would never see Addie again. Darl needs to see Addie die because the act will be the culmination of his hatred; viewing her death will be a final act of defiance. So, he must see her before he goes. But Cora describes the scene with her characteristic lack of understanding Darl's motivations:

It was Darl. He come to the door and stood there, looking at his dying mother. He just looked at her, and I felt the bounteous love of the Lord again and His mercy. I saw with Jewel she had just been pretending, but that it was between her and Darl that the understanding and the true love was. He just looked at her, not even coming in where she could see him and get upset, knowing that Anse was driving him away and he would never see her again. He said nothing, just
looking at her. (354)

Darl's position in the doorway produces a framed perception of Addie similar to the composite picture in the window frame. Cora's repetition "He just looked at her" informs us of Darl's intention. He does not want a "good-bye kiss" (352) as Cora implies earlier, nor just a last look; instead, he wants to look at Addie without her looking at him. If Darl were to stand where she might gaze upon him, then she would rob him of this triumphant objectification. He must fix Addie in order to limit the possibility of her objectifying him. The power of Addie's gaze is diminished by this act, but not the power of her being. For Darl, that could only happen if he were to witness her demise. Since he cannot, he reconstructs her death in his mind. Yet, the very act of reconstructing the death scene, especially with the repetition of frames, demonstrates Addie's unceasing control over Darl.

This control is evidenced in Darl's fixation upon her face and eyes. The imaginary death scene opens with Addie lying motionless upon her bed, as "all her failing life appears to drain into her eyes," yet "her eyes alone listening" (371) to Anse's voice. Again, Addie's eyes manifest her entire being; they even act, as Peabody also feels, as the organs for all her senses. Upon hearing that Jewel and Darl are gone, Addie rises from her deathbed, looks out the window and shouts to Cash. After seeing Cash's work, she returns to her bed and dies, her eyes ignoring Anse, but glaring at Dewey Dell and
Vardaman: "her eyes, the life in them, rushing suddenly upon them; the two flames glare up for a steady instant" (372). Even in death, Addie's presence continues to exert itself. As the sound of Cash's saw continues, her face appears to react to each steady stroke: "her face seems to wake a little into an expression of listening and of waiting, as though she were counting the strokes" (374). By focusing upon her face and eyes, Darl's narrative exposes his fixation with Addie's undying presence.

Even though Darl has already performed a kind of ceremonial death rite for Addie, by objectifying her with his final gaze, he has not vanquished her completely from his life. This narrative functions as a replacement for his actual witnessing of her demise; re-enacting her final moments is yet again another ritualistic performance of her death. But his imaginary reconstruction of the events does not bring about the closure Darl desires. Instead of purging Addie from his mind, he continually repeats her image almost as though she were still exerting her presence. In ritual, repetition is essential to produce an illusory catharsis, but its effects are never lasting and require further re-enactments. Hence, each

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27 René Girard in Violence and the Sacred, trans. Patrick Gregory (1972; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977) analyzes ritualistic violence in terms of reciprocal violence and sacrificial substitutions that point to man's need for mimetic repetitions of a communal moment of crisis. Darl's narrative is somewhat analogous to Girard's discussion of communal rites involving purgative sacrifice, but his crisis reflects his desire to
repetition of Addie's being frames the next. Darl's use of frames clearly points to his fetishistic need to reduce Addie to an object. His frames have the same effect as the frame circumscribing a work of art.\textsuperscript{28} Frames, by their very nature and function, set boundaries for the object perceived and create borders to contain the object; frames delineate both what resides inside and what remains outside; frames differentiate between what constitutes the text and what is exterior to it. The framing metaphors expose Darl's desire to arrest Addie's power over him, as well as to bring about a cessation of her being. However, each frame\textsuperscript{29} depicts fixed images whose visual effect is maintain his mother as an object, not to rid himself of her completely.

\textsuperscript{28} For a discussion of frames governing a text, as margins, points of differentiation, limits, boundaries, borders, as well as \textit{récit} and \textit{débordement} see Derrida, "LIVING ON . border lines," Deconstruction & Criticism: Harold Bloom, Paul de Man, Jacques Derrida, Geoffrey Hartman, J. Hillis Miller (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979).

\textsuperscript{29} A useful discussion of frames as fictional devices is Mary Ann Caws, Reading Frames in Modern Fiction (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), which grants a generic development of pre- and post-modern framing elements: "delays and pauses to surround, with temporal and spatial borders, the central focused part, architectural surrounds to further mark them, repetitions and drastic contrasts to call attention either to the borders or to the dramatic quality of the scene pictured in them, an included picture to develop by nonverbal means the significance of the moral or psychological issues implied in the motifs thrown in relief or an included observer to eye the picture from within it, making an inner frame of vision useful (at times by its very deformation) for the reading from the outer border". (262).
not totality but rather fragmentation. Darl's frames, like the face at
the window, are only composites of Addie, not Addie herself.

For Darl the act of framing is an act of representation and an
act of re-presentation. Representation relies not on how the object
depicted conforms to or deviates from reality, but, as Wittgenstein
would contend, on the structuring system which achieves a sensation
of reality. Structuring and framing Darl's narrative is his desire for
presence. To frame an object, then, is to conceive of its meaning, its
significance, as though it were a thing. Moreover, frames make no
sense if there were not already a grammar or language which

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Anscombe (New York: Haper & Row, 1969), 1.11.14: "The picture has
whatever relation to reality it does have. And the point is how it is
supposed to represent. The same picture will agree or fail to agree
with reality according to how it is supposed to represent"; and
25.4.14: "Since language stands in internal relations to the world, it
and those relations determine the logical possibility of facts. If we
have a significant sign it must stand in a particular internal relation
to a structure. Sign and relation determine unambiguously the
logical form of the thing signified."

§120: "You say: the point isn't the word, but its meaning, and you
think of the meaning as a thing of the same kind as the word, though
also different from the word. Here the word, there the meaning."

32 Henry Staten, _Wittgenstein and Derrida_ (Lincoln: University
of Nebraska Press, 1984), p. 78: "But in Wittgenstein's account the
illusions are not of sense but of _penetrating vision_. It is unities,
stable forms, essences, that are illusory, and accidence, errancy,
contingency, that are actual. The eye that sees truly is the eye that
knows, not how to penetrate, but how to follow the play of surfaces,
and what Wittgenstein calls 'depth grammar' is not something that
employs frames and grants them significance. As we have seen, Darl's artistic metaphors are his means of capturing the very essence of the objects he views. His metaphors operate much like visual phenomena; in this case, they can produce the sensations of actually seeing Addie die. Here, though, one frame is insufficient to represent Addie's death. Darl's framing frames within frames implies a movement not "from world to mind to language, but from one kind of sign to another."33 His imaginary reconstruction of Addie's death is a desperate act of signification, a way of representing his mother so that she cannot plague his consciousness anymore.

lies beneath appearance but in the subtle articulation of appearance, of the material of language." For an insightful and convincing discussion of Wittgenstein's work and its relationship to modern fiction's experiments with perception and language, see Allen Thiher's _Words in Reflection: Modern Language Theory and Postmodern Fiction_ (1984; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

33 W. J. T. Mitchell, _Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology_ (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 27. Mitchell, moreover, discusses Wittgenstein's demystification of our concepts of language: "The pictures that seem to reside in our language, whether they are projected in the mind's eye or on paper, are artificial, conventional signs no less than the propositions with which they are associated. The status of these pictures is like that of a geometrical diagram in relation to an algebraic equation. That is why Wittgenstein suggests that we demystify the notion of mental imagery by replacing it with its material equivalent ('replace every process of imagining by a process of looking at an object or by painting, drawing, or modelling'). That is why 'thinking' is, for Wittgenstein, not a private, occult process, but "the activity of working with signs, 'both verbal and pictorial'"(26).
Addie, though, does preoccupy Darl. Each time Darl frames Addie, he recontextualizes her, and, in turn, reveals the extent to which she resists being caught within his frame of reference and defies the imposition of his interpretation. Barbara Johnson has discussed how frames imply the status of a literary text, which supposedly confines itself between certain and definite borders, and yet the frame "becomes not the borderline between the inside and outside, but precisely what subverts the applicability of the inside/outside polarity to the act of interpretation."34 Darl's frames entices us with a sense of referentiality, one grounded in his consciousness, one residing within the borders of the text; however, frames always alert us to our relationship to the text and to the fact that we are establishing the borders and marking the frames of reference. In essence, we become acutely aware of the struggle for dominance between Addie and Darl replayed here as analogous to the act of interpretation itself. Addie's powerful and disturbing gaze affects Darl even when he does not directly confront it. Moreover, Darl's fixation with her face and eyes unveils his own sense of objectification. To apprehend his mother Darl resorts to metaphors of enclosure--composites, borders, coffin, window--but each metaphor fails. Like the face in the window, Addie disappears from

sight and will not remain within his gaze. Darl's acts of framing and reframing inscribe limits for the image of his mother, but this image, unlike the representational logic generally associated with fetishism, does not fully substitute for Addie herself.\textsuperscript{35} In fact, Darl's metaphors indicate not so much a presence, but more a lack of presence.\textsuperscript{36} Darl's frames refer not to Addie, but to his own obsessions with her. His frames are truly self-referential devices.\textsuperscript{37}

Within these frames, as within the empty window frame and the incomplete coffin, no object resides, merely the desire to frame. When Cash looks up at Addie's face at the window he sees Addie as a


\textsuperscript{36} Derrida, \textit{The Truth In Painting}, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 71: "This lack, which cannot be determined, localized, situated, arrested inside or outside before the framing is simultaneously. . .both product and production of the frame."

\textsuperscript{37} See David Carroll's \textit{Paresthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida} (New York: Metheun, Inc., 1987), which discusses this problem in terms of the integrity of literature to ensure that external, exterior challenges to its authority are prohibited: "Whether it is in terms of the self-referential characteristics of poetic language, the self-conscious nature of a narrator or narrative function, or the self-reflexivity of a play within a play, the construction of the frame used to distinguish the literary from the nonliterary has, more and more frequently, come to be seen as an important and even primary function of the literary text itself. . .Passage from inside-out and outside-in is prohibited--if for no other reason than it interrupts and complicates the process of self-reflection and, thus, the mastery the specific literary texts has over itself" (144-45).
"composite picture" of memories. "Composite" reinforces this lack of presence by creating not one image, but several framed images; the composite is not of the immediate present, but recollections of the past. Moreover, this framed image is not part of Cash's perceptions, but belongs entirely to Darl's imaginative perceptions. Cash's pantomime encloses Addie within an imaginary coffin, but the act is a substitutive performance of Darl's desires. Darl concludes his narrative in real time, with Jewel struggling to pry loose the wagon's wheels and axle from a muddy ditch; he repeats to Jewel the fact that Addie Bundren "is dead" (375). His statement culminates his earlier tormenting questions to Jewel as they began their journey for the timber: "'Jewel,' I say, 'do you know that Addie Bundren is going to die? Addie Bundren is going to die?'" (366). It also demonstrates Darl's own need to give voice to repetitions of Addie Bundren's death throughout his narrative.

While perception is the ground of being for Darl, he, nevertheless, recognizes how external qualities of the world trouble his consciousness. Disparities between the perceiver and the thing perceived are rarely resolved, and Darl feels abjectly helpless to discern what the world means. For example, during the ill-fated fording of the flooding river, Cash breaks his leg, the mules drown, Addie's coffin is nearly lost, and the world seems on the verge of absolute chaos. During the comic cementing of Cash's leg, Darl speculates about man's bewildering existence in world gone awry:
"How do our lives ravel out into the no-wind, no-sound, the weary gestures wearily recapitulant: echoes of old compulsions with no-hand on no-strings: in sunset we fall into furious attitudes, dead gestures of dolls" (491). This fusion of silence and sound, negation and identity defines the ontological fate Darl laments. Man escapes from his existence momentarily, only to have it echo back to him his own obsessions, to recapitulate his furious and weary desires. The world Darl envisions entangles him within a web of paradoxes and absurdities; Darl wants to disentangle himself from it: "If you could just ravel out into time. That would be nice. It would be nice if you could just ravel out into time" (492). His crucial trope, "ravel," describes paradoxical entanglement and disentanglement of man and the world brought on by perception. Ravel originally meant to weave together or to make more complicated, but it now generally means the exact opposite, to untwist, unweave or to make clear; hence, ravel also means unravel.38 Darl cannot free himself from the world, because his perceptions already entrap him into the text of his

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38 See J. Hillis Miller, "The Problematics of Ending in Narrative," Nineteenth Century Fiction 33 (June, 1987): 3-7. Miller theorizes that the "indeterminable oscillation" of ravel and unravel leads narratives not to closure nor to opening up the text, but rather to "the paralysis of this inability to decide" between these movements (6-7).
own making, his translations of phenomena into his own meaning. 39 His only recourse is to read that text of his existence and perhaps unweave its meaning.

Yet, perception, time, and familial relationships conspire to frustrate Darl’s understanding of his own existence. His language, although highly poetic, often cryptic and allusive, divulges how his mind works; it also betrays his obsession with who he is. And the verb *is* proffers Darl a framing device to structure and to evaluate his existence:

> In a strange room you must empty yourself for sleep. And before you are emptied for sleep, what are you. And when you are emptied for sleep, you are not. And when you are filled with sleep, you never were. I don't know what I am. Jewel knows he is, because he does not know whether or not he is or not. He cannot empty himself for sleep because he is not what he is and he is what he is not.

Beyond the unlamped wall I can hear the rain shaping the wagon that is ours, the load that is no longer theirs that felled and sawed it nor yet theirs that bought it and which is not ours either, lie on the our wagon though it does, since only the wind and the rain shape it only to Jewel and me, that are not asleep. And since sleep is is-not and rain and wind are *was*, it is not. Yet the wagon *is*, because when the wagon is *was*,

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39 J. Hillis Miller, "Topography and Tropography in Thomas Hardy's *In Front of the Landscape*," *Identity of the Literary Text*, eds. Mario J. Valdés and Owen Miller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), p. 88: "Perception is the figure and reading is the literal activity, in more senses than one. . . . It is always already translation. It is an activity positing, reading, misreading, transposing. . . ."
Addie Bundren will not be. And then I must be, or I could not empty myself for sleep in a strange room. And so if I am not emptied yet, I am is.

How often have I lain beneath rain on a strange roof, thinking of home. (396)

Darl's ontological explanation juxtaposes sensory, temporal, and familial terms—sleep, being and non-being, time, and Addie and Jewel. Confusion naturally arises upon first reading this passage, especially since Darl provides few clear divisions within his argument; his words comprise a strange, provocative interplay of sights, sounds, and memories. But he cannot separate those visions and sensations that engage his consciousness simultaneously; they are his existence at this moment. Like a "cubistic" painting the surfaces of his perceptual field converge upon another, each contingent upon, yet defining the next. Sorting through these disparate images affords the reader a chance to view the world as Darl does. To ignore this passage, as so many critics of the novel have done,40 is to misconstrue Darl's internal crisis of being.

Characteristically, Darl articulates the phenomenon of being in sensory metaphors. Perception awakens Darl to an awareness of his own existence. Darl must, therefore, "empty" himself of perceptions

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40 To his credit, Bedient analyzes this passage in terms of Darl's freakish "plurality of being," his inability to become himself because he is unloved, and the fact that "Darl is not made present to himself as an object until he is acted upon, literally apprehended by the world and conducted to the insane asylum" (142-144). However, Bedient does not work through the passage's logic thoroughly.
before he can enter into a new state of not-being, of sleep. But time also intercedes, transforming being progressively from "are" to "are not" to "never were." Sleep resembles a death-like state. Darl's sleep is the converse of Addie's empty, lifeless coffin, carried by Cash and the others to her bed, where it slumbers as though filled with life: "It is light, yet they move slowly; empty, yet they carry it carefully; lifeless, yet they move with hushed precautionary words to one another, speaking of it as though, complete, it now slumbered lightly alive, waiting to come awake" (395). Darl reverses the succession of sensations achieved through sleep and death: Addie's death seems to resurrect her being, whereas Darl's sleep annihilates his existence. By transposing his sleep with Addie's death, Darl discloses how his mother's presence predicates his perceptions about himself. Because of Addie's omnipresence, Darl sees himself as an object and confesses his uncertainty about his existence: "I don't know what I am."

Existence attains a thing-like aspect, a "what you are." Darl examines being in terms associated with ownership; however, the logic of the possessive pronouns actually denotes states of perception rather than direct possession. Since this narrative occurs after Darl's recreation of Addie's death scene, correlations between the mule-wagon and its load and a hearse and its coffin spring to mind. In reality, the wagon does belong to Darl and Jewel, but the load, that will be exchanged for three dollars, does not. Perceptually, rain and wind "shape" the wagon for Darl and Jewel; it is theirs because it
belongs to the immediacy of their perceptions. The load, on the other hand, has no immediacy, but exists in a state of transition: in the present, the timber is no longer theirs who felled and sawed it nor is it yet theirs who will purchase it. Those who were conscious of it in the past have a similar relationship to those who have yet seen it; for both it does not exist as a presence. The load simply is not \textit{is}. Symbolically, the load represents Addie's coffin, itself now in a transitional state from the hillfarm where it resides to its future gravesite in Jefferson. The wagon will at some future time accomodate the family as Addie's hearse. But for now, it hauls timber and \textit{is}; when it substitutes as a hearse, the wagon will be \textit{was}. Transformation from wagon to hearse ushers in a new state of existence for Addie as well, who "will not be."

Consciousness determines being for Darl. \textit{Is} is a perceptuality of an object, even if that object is the self. Jewel \textit{is} by the sheer fact that Darl perceives him. Sleep constitutes an \textit{is-not}, a state of non-immediate consciousness of objects. The state of not perceiving is likened to not-being. According to Darl's temporal and perceptual scheme, rain and wind form an \textit{is} which is also a \textit{was}. Because of their direct and exacting immediacy, rain and wind "shape" instantaneously and then fade just as instantaneously into other sounds that shape. Their immediacy continually engages with a past perception, with the non-immediate. The wagon still \textit{is} because rain and wind continually form it in the present; and when rain and wind
cease to form it, the wagon becomes *was*. At that time, Darl and Jewel will have returned to discover that Addie Bundren has died, that she "will not be." By logical extension Darl's argument seems self-evident: if consciousness determines being, and death or sleep is not being conscious, "then I must be, or I could not empty myself for sleep in a strange room." However, Darl's musings are not semantic plays upon variations of *to be*. Sequentially the propositions lead to the conclusion that Addie predicates Darl's consciousness: "Addie Bundren will not be. And then I must be" (emphasis mine).

When Darl says that Jewel *is* he refers to the indeterminate state of being in which Jewel exists. As we will see, Jewel's awareness of self, according to Darl, is not problematized by self-reflection. But like his, Jewel's existence is bound inextricably to Addie. Darl had long observed with perplexity Addie's undying affections for Jewel. At age fifteen, as Darl recounts, Jewel would sneak out at night to an unknown destination and return around morning completely exhausted. At first Darl and Cash assume that Jewel's out "rutting" (430) with some young hill girl, but since his nocturnal escapades occur with alarming regularity, disbelief sets in, as Darl sarcastically tells Cash: "'She's sure a stayer,' I told Cash. 'I use to admire her, but I downright respect her now'" (431). Darl suspects some secret motivation for Addie's uncharacteristic outpourings of motherly affection:

She would fix him special things to eat and hide
them for him. And that may have been when I first found out, that Addie Bundren should be hiding anything she did, who had tried to teach us that deceit was such that, in a world where it was, nothing else could be very bad or very important, not even poverty. And at times when I went in to go to bed she would be sitting in the dark by Jewel where he was asleep. And I knew that she was hating herself for that deceit and hating Jewel because she had to love him so that she had to act the deceit. (429)

But Jewel has not been with a woman; he has been clearing of forty acres of old Quick's ground by lantern light so that he could buy a horse. When he pridefully returns home with his new horse, that night Addie cries hard and bitterly by his bedside. And Darl understands the true deceit in an instant: "... hating herself for doing it, hating him because she had to. And then I knew that I knew. I knew that as plain on that day as I knew about Dewey Dell on that day" (435). What Darl uncovered was the same knowledge he understood about Dewey Dell and Lafe; it was not Jewel's sexuality which was the question, but Addie's. Cora Tull explains that Addie "had never been pure religious, not even after that summer at the camp meeting when Brother Whitfield wrestled with her spirit" (459). Of course, Reverend Whitfield wrestled with more than Addie's spirit. Addie admits to Cora that "My daily life is an acknowledgment and expiation of my sin" (459). But Cora dismisses her protestations and self-atonement, because "the only sin she ever
committed was being partial to Jewel that never loved her and was its own punishment, in preference to Darl" (460).

Addie's own narrative explains that her adulterous affair with Reverend Whitfield was an act of vengeance against Anse. To her, his word "Love" was "just a shape to fill a lack," suggesting that his intrusion upon her existence, "My aloneness had been violated," objectified her (464). She could care for Cash, her first child, with motherly affection, so long as no other child intruded upon her. When she discovers that she is pregnant with Darl, Addie, in her rage, perceives Anse as a lack: "I would think about his name until after a while I could see the word as a shape, a vessel, and I would watch him liquefy and flow into it like cold molasses flowing out of the darkness into the vessel, until the jar stood full and motionless: a significant shape profoundly without life like an empty door frame" (465). Her metaphors remind us of Darl's emptying of consciousness, perception, and self in his act of sleeping.41 But Addie transposes

41 James A. Snead, *Figures of Division: William Faulkner's Major Novels* (New York and London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1986), pp. 68-69: "Addie, 'emptying out,' embraces the lack. She does not pretend that 'love' has made her whole. 'Violation' is inevitable in life. But the remnant--her insight and her violation--is hers. Women have the opportunity to understand better than men the real violations of language and society." This weak appeal to feminism is typical of critics who envision Addie as somehow marshalling a feminist response to social conditions; however, these extremely naive interpretations conveniently forget Addie's sadism toward her pupils, her bitter rejection of her own children, and her horrifying
that emptying of being onto Darl by her denial of his existence; hence, Darl perceives his world in terms of existence and non-existence. However, this empty shape only partially resembles Darl's discussion of existence, because for Darl the empty shape is what he desires for himself. For Addie, though, that lack is her annihilation of another's existence.

Her mathematical evaluation of her motherhood grants and denies her children's existence. Her first child, Cash, was negated by Darl, so she slept with Whitfield to negate Darl. And she continues this addition and subtraction game with all her children: "I gave Anse Dewey Dell to negative Jewel. Then I gave him Vardaman to replace the child I had robbed him of. And now he has three children that are his and not mine" (467). Addie's name resonates with an allegorical meaning, as though she adds to her children's being. Addie's selfish and self-fixated calculations recall her sado-

presence throughout the novel. They also forget that Addie's consciousness is, after all, Faulkner's construct.

42 See T. H. Adamowski, "Meet Mrs. Bundren: As I Lay Dying—Gentility, Tack, and Psychoanalysis," Travaux du Cercle Methodologique: monographies, prépublications et documents de travail (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), p. 12: "The novel speaks clearly enough of the nurturing and the hatred of children, of children so close to Addie as to overcome the barrier of otherness, and of children cast outside the circle of Addie's wordless love. Cash is firmly within that circle, and Jewel, we recall, exists in that nutritive circuit established between him and his mother by the calm flow of milk. As for the other children, they are Other." But Cash resides in that circle of wordless love only until Darl is born; from that point on, he is disowned by Addie.
masochistic desires to make her pupils aware of her presence: "I would look forward to the times when they faulted, so I could whip them. When the switch fell I could feel it upon my flesh; when it welted and ridged it was my blood that ran, and I would think with each blow of the switch: Now you are aware of me!" (462) A sadistic drive to subjugate others to her existence is evident in Darl's hatred and fixation for her.

Her masochism is present too in her ceaseless, smothering devotion to Jewel: "With Jewel--I lay by the lamp, holding up my own head, watching him cap and suture it before he breathed--the wild blood boiled away and the sound of it ceased" (467). Jewel's consciousness of himself involves his consanguine, "wild blood," relationship to his mother. He does not know he is because his being is already determined by Addie; like Darl, his perceptions of the world are colored by Addie. So long as Jewel is, Addie Bundren must be. Yet, Jewel embodies a lack of being, his desire for Addie, which constitutes his existence, "he is what he is not and is not what he is." 43 By the same token, Jewel's antagonistic relationship to Darl

43 Cf. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, p. 575, which accounts for desire as a lack of being, so that: "The limiting terms of this relation are first the original In-itself, fixed in its contingency and its facticity, its essential characteristic being that it is, that it exists; and second the In-itself-for-itself or value, which exists as the Ideal of the contingent In-itself and which is characterized as beyond all contingency and all existence. Man is neither the one nor the other of these beings, for strictly speaking, we should never say of him that he is at all. He is what he is not and he is not what he is. . . ."
makes Darl is. Addie's rejection of Darl and her perverse obsession with Jewel continually allow Darl to be is. Darl's being is determined first by Addie and then by Addie again through Jewel. In a sense, Addie and Jewel in their relationship to Darl work as "supplementary mediations that produce the sense of the very thing they defer: the mirage of the thing itself, of immediate presence, of originary perception."^{44}

Darl's world is constituted in terms of the presence of others. His perception of his self is adumbrated by a haunting shadow of his absent mother's presence. Darl's perceptions radically transmute the immediate with memories of Addie; every perception Darl has is always already a part of the remembered experience.\textsuperscript{45} Darl views


\textsuperscript{45} Cf. Edmund Husserl's \textit{Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness}, ed. Martin Heidegger and trans. James S. Churchill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), p. 83: "The memory really implies, therefore, a reproduction of the earlier perception, but the memory is not in the true sense a representation of the perception. The perception is not meant and posited in the memory. What is meant and posited in the memory is the object of perception together with its now, which last, moreover, is posited in relation to the actual now." This Being-Present is both immediate and intuited because, as T. K. Seung makes clear, Husserl's "doctrine of phenomenological constitution, namely, the theory that all the noematic structures intuited by the transcendental consciousness have been constituted by the transcendental consciousness itself. The transcendental consciousness can have absolute certainty of its cognition, because the domain of its cognition is coextensive with that of its constitution" [\textit{Structuralism & Hermeneutics} (New York:
the Mississippi landscape and road as merely an extension of his mother's presence: "It wheels up like a motionless hand lifted above the profound desolation of the ocean; beyond it the red road lies like a spoke of which Addie Bundren is the rim" (413). She encircles and enscribes the world for Darl; he cannot escape her presence because she enframes each of his perceptions. Darl's world is not the result of a subject visualizing objects, but of a subject deeply and profoundly affected by the perceptions and presence of others.

The novel begins with an example of Darl's collective point of view, which fuses together Darl and Jewel as though they were one person: "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" (339). Darl's tendency to stand outside himself and observe himself as other accentuates his recognition of how others intrude upon his existence. Although Jewel and Darl appear to be one person, Darl tends to divorce himself from the brother he despises. Yet, as this scene suggests, Darl is never

completely free of Jewel's presence any more than he is free of his mother's presence. However, with Cash Darl shares a close affinity, as though he and Cash truly were one person. Addie's narration partially explains this curious affiliation, for she has lumped the boys together and disowned them both: "It was not that I could think of myself as no longer unvirgin, because I was three now. And when I would think Cash and Darl that way until their names would die and solidify into a shape and then fade away. I would say All right. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter what they call them" (465). Addie's collective rejection of the boys pairs them in Darl's mind also. Darl experiences others in terms of contradictory modes: he often remains detached from their experiences, but he is integrally connected to them. Darl's conceptualization of others comes from his experience of what it is to perceive them. Darl's perceptual metaphors always indicate a deeper sedimentary level, what is his and what is the other. Addie, Jewel, Cash—all contribute to Darl's perceptions of self and the world.

Vardaman offers a simplistic representation of Darl's dilemma. Darl speaks to him about the confusion of fish for mother as a problem of misperception:

"Jewel's mother is a horse," Darl said.
"Then mine can be a fish, can't it, Darl?" I said. Jewel is my brother.
"Then mine will have to be a horse, too, " I said. "Why?" Darl said. "If pa is your pa, why does your ma have to be a horse just because Jewel's is?"
"Why does it?" I said. "Why does it, Darl?"

Darl is my brother. (409)

Of course, Vardaman's experience of the world is already so profoundly confused that Darl's sympathetic discourse cannot alleviate his misconceptions. Darl earnestly prevails upon his younger brother to comprehend how Addie affected all the children. By associating Addie with a mare, he is imploring Vardaman to acknowledge Jewel's obsession with his horse as tantamount to his fixation with his fish. "Jewel's mother is a horse" (406) because his horse and his mother are the only ones with whom he ever experienced devotion and love, whereas, Darl "cannot love my mother because I have no mother" (406). In this case, Darl no longer has a mother because unlike Jewel and Vardaman, he has no word for her, just sensations of her presence. However, when Darl explains the problem in ontological terms, Vardaman is more confused than ever:

"Then what is your ma, Darl?" I said.
"I haven't got ere one," Darl said. "Because if I had one, it is was. And if it is was, it can't be is. Can it?"
"No, " I said.
"Then I am not," Darl said. "Am I?"
"No," I said.
I am. Darl is my brother.
"But you are, Darl," I said.
"I know it," Darl said. "That why I am not is."Are is too many for one woman to foal." (409)

Ironically, Darl's plays upon the verb to be are a means of explaining the the concept of death to Vardaman. But Darl himself has not fully
come to grips with his mother's death. Darl realizes, though, that he has no mother because she no longer exists as someone who is something. The point eludes Vardaman. Nevertheless, Darl's elliptical equation of is and are express his recognition of Addie's rejection of him. For Addie, are, more than one child, truly was "too many for one woman to foal."

The fish has symbolic value for Vardaman. He wanted to show his mother the fish he caught, but Anse would not permit it. Vardaman is denied the chance to see his mother before she dies; now, his desire for his mother manifests itself in the object he wanted her to see. Seeing and being are tied together for Vardaman. His childish misapprehension of death also equates his mother with the fish; in Vardaman's mind, if he can save one, he can save the other:

I can feel where the fish was in the dust. It is cut up into pieces of not-fish now, not-blood on my hands and overalls. Then it wasn't so. It hadn't happened then. And now she is getting so far ahead I cannot catch her. . . . If I jump off the porch I will be where the fish was, and it all cut up into not-fish now. I can hear the bed and her face and them and I can feel the floor shake when he walks on it that came and did it. That came and did it when she was all right but he came and did it.

"The fat son of a bitch." (376)

Both Addie and the fish depart at the same time for Vardaman, but he cannot believe that they are dead. He blames Doc Peabody--"He
kilt her. He kilt her" (376)--for his mother's death, but also blames himself. So, the fish substitutes for Addie, but that doesn't assuage his sense of guilt: "It was not her because it was laying right yonder in the dirt. And now it's all chopped up. I chopped it up. " (386).

This transference is not the only one Vardaman makes. He worries about Cash nailing the coffin lid down because "I got shut up in the crib the new door it was too heavy for me it went shut I couldn't breathe..." (384-85). Vardaman substitutes crib for coffin; again, an object he associates with himself also recalls his mother's presence. If his mother were to occupy this new crib, then she would experience the same form of suffocation he did. Dewey Dell tells him that Addie has gone to a different place than that designated for rabbits and possums. To Vardaman's twisted logic Addie is neither rabbit nor possum, so she then must be the fish. When the fish is cooked, Vardaman believes it will substitute for Addie's death; Addie, then, will be able to survive the enclosure of the coffin: "Then it wasn't and she was, and it is and she wasn't. And tomorrow it will be cooked and et and she will be him and pa and Cash and Dewey Dell and there won't be anything in the box and so she can breathe" (386). The fish can be seen and Addie cannot, so it is and she no longer exists, but when it is "et," she will again exist.

Like Darl, Vardaman perceives the temporal changes affecting phenomena, but he has absolutely no comprehension of them. Eating the fish will symbolically remove Addie from the world. However,
laying the body into the coffin dispels this illusion. When Cash nails the coffin shut, as much to finish his job as to keep Vardaman from raising its lid, Vardaman realizes he must save his mother: "And the next morning they found him in his shirt-tail laying asleep on the floor like a felled steer, and the top of the box clear full of holes and Cash's new auger broke off in the last one" (390). The auger in the hole, an obvious phallic image, suggests a sexual longing for Addie; and the reference to the felled steer reinforces the futility and impotency of Vardaman's actions. Clearly, a sexual play exists in these transferences of objects for mother. Vardaman has screwed two holes into his mother's face by trying to save her, almost as though he had made not just air holes for her corpse, but had given back her sight in the form of monstrous eyes. The location of the holes allows his mother to perceive him and he her. She can exist once again because he can sense her existence. When he first had the fish on the ground he stuck his toe in its eye, an act which echoes his frenzied boring of the holes into the coffin. Yet, Vardaman's fetishistic response cannot be equated with Darl's, because each has his own perceptual confusion. Addie does intrude upon both but differently in each case. Vardaman is the child who has lost a presence he always wanted to exist, while Darl still feels the presence he never wanted to exist.

As complex as Darl's perceptions have been throughout the novel, his final narration poses considerable problems for the reader.
First of all, critics have generally assumed that Darl's wildly imagistic perceptions are indicative of a mental breakdown; thus, these readings tend to justify the Bundrens' decision to ship Darl off to the sanitarium. Second, two narrative points of view come into play, since Darl refers to himself in both the first and third person. Third, ambiguous passages hardly afford straightforward interpretations. The main passage in question distorts normative narrative perspectives to such a degree that critics have generally avoided analyzing it, either out of neglect, dismay, or confusion. When Darl boards the train to be carried to his confinement in the Jackson sanitarium for the insane, he describes the scene in a way that confirms his madness:

They pulled two seats together so Darl could sit by the window to laugh. One of them sat beside him, the other sat facing him, riding backward. One of them had to ride backward because the state's money had a face to each backside and a backside to each face, and they are riding on the state's money which is incest. A nickel has a woman on one side and a buffalo on the other; two faces and no back. I don't know what that is. Darl had a little spy-glass he got in France at the war. In it it had a woman and a pig with two backs and no face. I know what that is. "Is that why you are laughing, Darl?"
"Yes yes yes yes yes yes." (526-527)

These seemingly random images are Darl's final pronouncement upon his world. At this moment the reader is led to question both Darl's and his own perceptions. While Darl's perceptions are given in
highly figurative language, they do not function to stabilize meaning; the tropes are too ambiguous to produce any concrete meaning. What exactly does Darl see? Amorphous shifting figures, faces and backs: men with no real faces or actual backs, a nickel which is not just a nickel, and a woman fucking a pig?

In this passage all the figures--attendants, nickel, and pornographic characters--are in profile before Darl. Profiles show part of a face while occluding a back. Now, Darl's world is made up of profiles and perspectives, its objects exist as incomplete, partial fragments. No one unifying structure can reproduce the perceptions of objects or describe the sensation of the perspectival views. All of Darl's objects share this profile condition, whereby faces and backs are essentially interchangeable. Like Addie's face in the window frame, Darl sees the visual manifestation of some otherness.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{46} Sartre in \textit{Being and Nothingness} accounts for this other-ness in terms of its fundamental relationship to perception and Being: "In other words, the problem of Others has generally been treated as if the primary relation by which the Other is discovered is object-ness; that is, as if the Other were first revealed--directly or indirectly--to our perceptions. But since this perception by its very nature \textit{refers} to something other than to itself and since it can refer neither to an infinite series of appearances of the same type--as in idealism the perception of the table or of the chair does--nor to an isolated entity located on principle outside my reach, its essence must be to refer to a primary relation between my consciousness and the Other's. This relation, in which the Other must be given to me directly as a subject although in connection with me, is the fundamental relation, the very type of my being-for-others" (253). The relationship between Addie and Darl points out just this very perceptual inconsistency and this
Moreover, this text is the verbal representation of that otherness because it forces the reader to perceive faces, backs, nickel and spyglass as Darl does. To do so requires that the reader once again read these images as framing devices; they make sense only within Darl's structuring system of his perceptions.

This framing motif can be seen in his admitted affiliation with Cash. Once when he gazes at Cash he sees, without realizing it, his own fetishistic mode of being. In Cash Darl sees not just himself, but an other who perceives as he perceives: "Cash's face is also gravely composed; he and I look at one another with long probing looks, looks that plunge unimpeded through one another's eyes and into the ultimate secret place where for an instant Cash and Darl crouch flagrant and unabashed in all the old terror and the old foreboding, alert and secret and without shame" (439). This secret place enframes both image and perception. Within a womb two twins share a past of terror and foreboding. That past is Addie's dismissing of her two eldest sons. In Darl's mind, he and Cash are equals, so much so that Cash, Dad believes, even shares his masturbatory fantasies: "Then I would wait until they all went to sleep so I could be with my shirt-tail up, hearing them asleep, feeling myself without touching myself, feeling the cool silence blowing upon my parts and wondering if Cash was yonder in the darkness doing it too. . ." (344).

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objectification of the Other which invariably makes one self-aware of his being-for-others.
The looks Darl interprets as a kind of bonding between Cash and himself, as though they understand in a glance the same feelings of the other. He desires this close kinship with his brother, one he does not have with any of his other siblings, because they share flagrant, unabashed disregard for their mother. After all, Addie vanquished both boys from her life at the same moment. Darl feels that he and Cash share reciprocal and reflexive perceptions.

But this is hardly the case. Cash rarely discusses his perceptions of what might be the sensations, emotions, or passions of his family members. His portions of the novel consist primarily of his coffin-making descriptions; in fact, one chapter is a point by point list of his craftsmanship. When the first catastrophe strikes the family on their journey, Cash breaks his leg. His subsequent narrative is so matter-of-fact that it supplies comic relief for the tragedy which has just ensued: "It wasn't a balance. I told them that if they wanted it to tote and ride on a balance, they would have to----" (458). Darl often projects his own emotions and sensations onto Cash, but Cash feels no identification with him whatsoever. Of that old terror, that secret realm of obsession which Darl inhabits with Addie, Cash has no idea. No reflexivity exists between Cash and Darl. The image Darl sees in Cash's eyes remains his own reflection.

Oddly, the novel does not end with Darl's final narration, but with Cash, who performs what seems to be on the surface his usual third person oblivious narrative. However, after he has betrayed
Darl, Cash takes on a voice characteristic of Darl and not himself, one characterized by a plurality of perceptions: "So when we stopped there to borrow the shovels we heard the gramophone playing in the house, and so when we got done with the shovels . . ." (529). This changed perception occurs after the final catastrophe—Darl's setting the barn containing Addie's fetid corpse on fire. Cash sees Darl's actions as perhaps the correct solution to the incredible onus Addie has brought down upon her family. He also recognizes the extreme animosity between Jewel and Darl, even to the point of believing it to be the catalyst for Darl's arson. Cash even sympathizes with what Darl has done:

Because Jewel is too hard on him. Of course it was Jewel's horse was traded to get her that night to town, and in a sense it was the value of his horse Darl tried to burn up. But I thought more than once before we crossed the river and after, how it would be God's blessing if He did take her outen our hands and get shut of her in some clean way, and it seemed to me that when Jewel worked to get her outen the river, he was going against God in a way, and then when Darl seen that it looked like one of us would have to do something, I can almost believe he done right in a way. (510)

Darl's justification for burning the barn is insufficient for Cash, because a "fellow can't get away from a shoddy job" (514). He hesitates to call Darl crazy, even though he finds him culpable. The concept of insanity is merely a social construct for Cash and nothing more: "Sometimes I ain't so sho who's got ere a right to say when a
man is crazy and when he ain't. Sometimes I think it ain't none of us pure crazy and ain't none of us pure sane until the balance of us talks him that-a-way. It's like it ain't so much what a fellow does, but it's the way the majority of folks is looking at him when he does it" (510).

Cash's meaning hinges upon perceptual metaphors. Those who view Darl conclude he is insane, but only because they have forgotten that insanity within themselves. Cash correctly adduces that the normal range of behavior for his family draws a very fine line between lucidity and complete absurdity. He has a chance to save Darl from the sanitarium, but he refuses, because he cannot relinquish his concept of one's responsibilities for one's actions, no matter how just those actions be. When the Bundrens besiege Darl to insure his confinement, Cash acquiesces to their madness. Dewey Dell jumps on Darl "like a wild cat so that one of the fellows had to quit and hold her and her scratching and clawing at him like a wild cat" (514). Jewel intercedes by saying "Kill him. Kill the son of a bitch" (514). Jewel despises Darl for destroying his mother; Dewey Dell attacks out of sheer fear that Darl will divulge her pregnancy.

Earlier in the novel, Darl and Dewey Dell share a perceptual moment. He visualizes her talking to Doc Peabody, but the reader hears not the earthy simplistic rhetoric of his sister, but Darl's own familiar language:

I am I and you are you and I know it and you
Dewey Dell does not know that Darl has any idea of her pregnancy; she merely suspects because of the way he gazes at her. As Darl translates it, to perceive in this passage is to know. Dewey Dell, to his mind, would not need to tell Doc Peabody she is with child if he were capable of actually seeing it in her gaze, even though she shows no signs. She fears Darl's perceptions. Hence, both Dewey Dell and Jewel attack Darl out of hatred, but it is Cash who confuses Darl.

Darl reacts to this fracas with laughter. He looks imploringly into Cash's face, asking him why he had not told him of the plot against him. When Cash tells him that it's better that he go away, Darl can only laugh at the patent paradox of the entire affair. It was Darl, after all, who tried to save Cash's leg, who did save Jewel and his pride during the knife fight, and who sympathized with Dewey Dell's predicament. The absurd irony for Darl, the paradox of his plight, is that all three have now turned against him. He could accept the betrayal of Jewel and Dewey Dell, but not of Cash, with whom he has been convinced he shared some secret understanding, some reflexive perception of the world, of the family. When Cash betrays him, Darl begins his endless laughter which continues even as he boards the train for Jackson. And much of his symbology in the final narration depends upon how Darl now views Cash.
Darl's final narrative begins with his describing himself in the third person. Several times during the course of this narrative Darl questions himself about his laughter. This self-conscious dialogue leads the reader back to the reason for his laughter in the first place--Cash. When Darl asks himself "'What are you laughing at?''' (526), he desires an answer in the form of an object. Here, the reader must go back to the initial moments of this crazed laughter to understand the objects of his fixation--his family. From the train Darl can see his family's wagon, and he describes it objectively: "The wagon stands on the square, hitched, the mules motionless, the reins wrapped about the seat-spring, the back of the wagon toward the court-house" (527). The family members are arranged in a similar fashion. Jewel does not look at him, but stares up the street "like any other man in town that day, yet there is something different, distinctive" (527). The other family members are the last things Darl perceives on his way out of Jefferson: "There is about it that unmistakable air of definite and imminent departure that trains have, perhaps due to the fact that Dewey Dell and Vardaman on the seat and Cash on a pallet in the wagon bed are eating bananas from a paper bag. 'Is that why you are laughing, Darl?'" (527). Darl has seemingly attained a new perception of his family, one of indifference to Jewel and mockery to his other siblings. However, his perceptions of the world are still intruded upon by Addie, Jewel, and Cash.
Without arbitrarily assigning family members to the particular signs Darl claims he sees, the reader can rely upon his perceptual and ontological fixations to divulge their meaning. These totemic images do stand for Jewel, Cash, and Addie. The asylum attendants who ride, with faces and backs, on the state's money represent Jewel. Darl has used the word "ride" to describe Jewel's favorite passion. Of course, the horse comes into play by way of the iron horse that carries them and through the implied reference to Jewel's heroic saving of Addie's coffin from the burning barn. Darl describes Jewel's heroic action in terms that associate Jewel's fixation with his mother and with his horse:

We see his shoulders strain as he up-ends the coffin and slides it single-handed from the saw-horses. It looms unbelievably tall, hiding him: I would not have believed that Addie Bundren would have needed that much room to lie comfortable in; for another instant it stands upright while the sparks rain on it in scattering bursts as though they engendered other sparks from the contact. Then it topples forward, gaining momentum, revealing Jewel and the sparks raining on him too in engendering gusts, so that he appears to be enclosed in a thin nimbus of fire. Without stopping it overends and rears again, pauses, then crashes slowly forward and through the curtain. This time Jewel is riding upon it, clinging to it, until it crashes down and flings him forward and clear and Mack leaps up forward into a thin smell of scorching meat and slaps at the widening crimson-edge holes that bloom like flowers in his undershirt. (501)
Darl pictures the coffin, Addie, in terms of the motion of a struggling horse; the coffin rears, pauses, looms, and crashes and all the while Jewel rides upon it. The suggestions here are, of course, sexual. His movements almost mimic the action portrayed in the pornographic spyglass. Darl construes Jewel's obsession with Addie as incestuous. The second image in Darl's chain of associations, the nickel, has no back, but two faces: one a beast, the other a female figure. Literally, a nickel is a form of currency--it is Cash. This pun befits the Janus faced image of the coin; for, to Darl's mind Cash no longer shares that same look which Darl has believed was his own. Darl always believed that when he looked into Cash's face he saw his own reflection. Unlike Jewel, Cash was never an intrusive presence, but Darl's own perception of his feelings, passions, and secret thoughts. Cash's face was not sympathetic to Darl at the crucial moment of his imploring. Cash's face has now been distorted into that of a beast; it is no longer human. Cash's betrayal of Darl causes his laughter to turn into a maddening wail of hysterical laughter. For Darl, Cash is now aligned with his mother's betrayal of him as a child. And that betrayal represents woman. The last image of a woman fucking a pig can only be Addie herself. Her adulterous affair begat Jewel and begat her denial of Darl. Darl expressed his resentment for this exclusion in nearly everything he perceived; Addie was a haunting presence without a face, especially in her death. He says he knows
what this is because he has always known, always perceived her presence.

But why is Darl laughing? He laughs, not because he is insane. Now, he laughs because he perceives the absolute chaos of the world. He laughs because he can name what he previously could not articulate. He laughs because he sees his world with an order and regularity he never completely grasped before. His fetishistic symbols are the culmination of his speculations into the meaning of his existence. They are totems carved and shaped by an anguished mind searching for meaning. And their totemic quality echoes Lévi-Strauss's conclusion about every imagistic, metaphoric resemblance of reality: "Its image is projected, not received; it does not derive its substance from without. If the illusion contains a particle of truth, this is not outside us but within us."47 If perception does resemble the act of reading, then we understand *As I Lay Dying* not from outside its frames, but within them. If the novel confirms that all perceptions are always already metaphoric, then it also affirms that all perceptions are fetishistic. And such is the case. Our reading of the novel is predicated by our own longing to comprehend the world and its texts, whether they are phenomenological, onotological, or

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literary. We acquire meaning, order, and articulation the same as Darl. Whatever we read reflects back upon us; whatever we analyze mirrors our own desires, fixations, and frustrations.
Reading and Raping in Sanctuary

Imagine that an explorer comes in his travels to a region of which but little is known and that there his interest is aroused by ruins showing remains of walls, fragments of pillars and of tablets with obliterated and illegible inscriptions. He may content himself with inspecting what lies there on the surface and with questioning the people who live near by, perhaps semi-barbaric natives, about what tradition tells of the history and meaning of these monumental remains, and taking notes of their statements—and then go his way. But he may proceed differently; he may have come equipped with picks, shovels and spades, and may press the inhabitants into his service and arm them with these tools, make an onslaught on the ruins, clear away the rubbish and, starting from the visible remains, may bring to light what is buried. If his work is crowned with success, the discoveries explain themselves; the ruined walls are part of the ramparts of a palace or a treasure-house, from the ruined pillars a temple can be constructed, the many inscriptions, which by good luck may be bilingual, reveal an alphabet and a language, and when deciphered and translated may yield undreamed-of information about the events of the past, to commemorate which these monuments were built.

Saxa loquuntur!

--Sigmund Freud

Freud's metaphor for the analyst's search for the origins of hysteria as an archaeological excavation also applies to literary interpretation, for it exposes an underlying desire inherent in psychoanalytical and critical readings. The critic, "aroused" by a desire to know, performs an "onslaught" upon the text, an apparent rape, in order to discover the hidden meaning within this cryptic "temple." The phallic tools ("picks, shovels, and spades") represent language systems already imbued with the codes of power of a patriarchal order; they separate and lay bare what is buried beneath the surface of the text, exposing a "treasure-house" of languages, a thesaurus of synonymous, seemingly interchangable signs. Inscribed upon these ruined walls of the temple are "bilingual" inscriptions, that "when deciphered and translated" will yield a rational, "undreamed-of," solution. Obviously, Freud refers to a Rosetta stone of sorts, upon which hieroglyphics correspond to words of another language. To decipher, then, means to translate one system of signs into another; Freud indicates not just conjunction but similarity between the signs represented. Two such linguistic systems are at work in psychoanalysis: the cryptic discourse of the patient, her ciphers comprising a text of enigmatic images and associations; and the ordinary language in which this text is presented to the analyst. Since the analyst believes he comprehends this system of ciphers as a familiar language, he can thus decipher those inscriptions by association, by exchanging those utterances for
terms he understands. This form of analysis assumes that the signifiers (hieroglyphics) directly relate in some way to signifieds (the known language). Yet, these talking rocks speak only to the analyst and have meaning only in relation to his particular signifiers. The analyst can only decipher by means of translating symptomatic signs into another cryptic inscription—his own. As excavations "bring to light what is buried," so presumably does psychoanalysis uncover and elucidate cryptic symptoms and signs. Now, the temple has been transformed by this process of translation, by this double inscription.

Sanctuary invites such a psychoanalytical reading, as Lawrence S. Kubie's famous study affirms, since it calls into question "the genesis of anxiety" and "the paradoxical pleasurable utilization of horror... the 'erotization of anxiety.'" Faulkner arranges the novel's temporal structure so as to suspend the main action of Temple's rape, while simultaneously enticing the reader to experience her subjugation voyeuristically. On first reading of the novel the circumstances of the rape appear unclear. Time is ruptured, leaving a space to be filled by the reader, who, in turn,

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3 See George Toles, "The Space Between: A Study of Faulkner's Sanctuary" Texas Studies in Literature and Language 22, No. 1 (Spring, 1980): 22-47. Toles describes the impulse for scopophilia within the novel, but does not extend it fully to the reader's role in the novel's construction.
must penetrate beneath the surface of the text to discover even the most basic elements of plot. But more than simple reader curiosity is at work here; Faulkner directs his narrative strategy to excite and repulse the reader, thereby raising the question of the reader's own relationship to the text, as well as its perplexing effects upon him. Faulkner's style goes beyond Gothic parody, beyond the fable-like elements of a tormented virgin terrorized by a thoroughly evil, nefarious villian. Faulkner paints a nightmarish landscape with disturbing images of defilement and rape, and populates this world with characters suffering a range of psycho-sexual symptoms, from anxiety and hysteria, and onanistic delights to sadism and incestuous yearnings. And placed within this modern nightmare world is the reader.

For example, Faulkner develops Temple's peril among the bootleggers in such a way that she becomes the object of perversion. 

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4 Eric J. Sundquist, Faulkner: The House Divided (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), describes the Gothic elements often assumed to exist in the characterization of Temple and the basic emplotment of the novel: "...Temple remains a victim in the more traditional gothic sense of the imperiled maiden, the virgin who is not quite willing to be seduced but who gets what the novel says she really wants and needs" (54); "...the gothicism of Sanctuary is most conspicuously modern and, perhaps, American in its illumination of those primitive, atavistic strains of violence and sexual obsession that may be the most essential underlying feature of American culture but cannot--not yet, for Faulkner--be articulated in convincing historical terms" (55). See also David L. Frazier, "Gothicism in Sanctuary: The Black Pall and the Crap Table," Modern Fiction Studies, 2 (1956): 114-24.
He purposefully includes a urination scene to expose the sordid, voyeuristic world of Temple's entrapment. When Temple asks Ruby about the sanitary facilities, she tells her that the bathroom is the same place shared by both men and women—the barn—and only offers her sheets from a mail-order catalogue with which to sanitize herself. (The other implements available for this function could well be corn-cobs, which would doubly compound Temple's defilement during the subsequent rape.) Temple cringes at the sight of the empty barn stalls and, instead, wanders off to urinate in a ditch, where she notices someone has been watching her:

She followed the dry runlet to where a jutting shoulder formed a nook matted with briers. Among the new green last year's dead leaves form the branches overhead clung, not yet fallen to the earth. She stood here for a while, folding and folding the sheets in her fingers, in a kind of despair. When she rose she saw, upon the glittering mass of leaves along the crest of the ditch, the squatting outline of a man.\(^5\)

Then, Temple sees herself "run out of her body" (89), scrambling toward the front porch, to the blind man, then to Ruby, screaming "'He was watching me!'" From the kitchen she races to the barn and into the corn-crib, where a rat crouches, "its eyes [glowing] suddenly like two tiny electric bulbs" (90), "glowing and fading as though worked by lungs" (91). Men and rat (later equated to Popeye) fix

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their gaze upon Temple, with the exception of the ancient patriarch, whose blindness indicates the inadequacy of male protection. The anonymous figure observing Temple could be any man, but it is also the reader. Faulkner, in his brilliant play of enticements, of suggestive perverse sexuality, foils and anticipates the reader's repressions, perhaps his own blindness, with this scene. The reader's predicament is that he cannot stand back and observe the scene objectively, but must also fix his gaze upon Temple.

Shoshana Felman's discussion of the reader's position in James's *The Turn of the Screw* clarifies the participatory function Faulkner assigns to his reader. Reading can never extricate the reader from the novel's fetishistic allurements, because reading re-creates and re-enacts them:

The scene of the critical debate is thus a *repetition* of the scene dramatized in the text. The critical interpretation, in other words, not only elucidates the text but also reproduces it dramatically, unwittingly *participates in it*. Through its very reading, the text, so to speak, acts itself out. As a reading effect, this inadvertent "acting out" is indeed uncanny: whichever way the reader turns, he can but be turned by the text, he can but *perform* it by *repeating* it.6

To use Freudian terms both the text's manifest and latent content are recast by the reader's own consciousness. In short, the reader

responds much as the analyst who engages in the symptoms of his patient and who "must be patient too in order to hear what is going on, to decipher or even redeem from the res the rebus presented to him."7 Both critic and analyst seem blind to their involvement with the text, as well as their identification with and repetition of symptoms exhibited by the characters. Faulkner's style plays off this repression.

What neither the analyst nor the critic at first sees are the implications of his own infatuation with the text. In this endeavor to find the "what" of the text, this res or rebus, both analyst and critic fall prey to an unconscious desire to reify and to transform signs of the puzzle into a thing. Jacques Lacan describes the hermeneutics of analysis in terms of cryptographs, a language of symbols and ciphers: "Hieroglyphics of hysteria, blazons of phobia, labyrinths of the Zwangsneurose--charms of impotence, enigmas of inhibition, oracles of anxiety, talking arms of character, seals of self-punishment, disguises of perversion--these are the hermetic elements that our exegesis resolves, the equivocactions that our invocation dissolves, the artifices that our dialectic absolves."8 This operation resembles a classical Freudian description of the fetishist, who demands that

there exist something when no thing, in actuality, exists, except the
desires of the fetishist. For the analyst the fetish object is the
patient; for the critic, the text. Faulkner himself refers to literary
meaning, the goal of the writer, as a tangible thing: "But he is trying
to reduce the passion and beauty that he saw of being alive into
something concrete that can be held in the hand. . . ."9

Correspondingly, Roland Barthes writes that the "text is a fetish
object, and this fetish desires me." The text chooses, me, by a whole
disposition of invisible screens, selective baffles: vocabulary,
references, readability, etc.; and, lost in the midst of a text (not
behind it, like a deus ex machina) there is always the other, the
author."10 In this perverse act of reading--what all readings are
subject to--meaning represents what the critic has displaced, a
substitution for the unattainable Other. Faulkner jokingly admits to
a similar authorial displacement in his preface to Sanctuary: "...I
began to think of myself again as a printed object."11 This other,

9 Faulkner, April 20, 1962, Faulkner at West Point, p. 78. This
fetishistic impulse in the writer is apparent in his discussion on
April, 19, 1962: "...that the reason they call it fiction is it is fiction--
that any writer is a congenital liar incapable of telling the truth, and
so even he can never say how much he embroidered, imagined
anything because he simply could not take any fact he saw and let it
alone. He's convinced he can do much better than God could, so he's
going to improve it--change it" (57).

10 Barthes, The Pleasure of the Text, trans. Richard Miller (New

11 Faulkner, "Introduction," Sanctuary (New York: Modern
then, becomes not only text or author, but the reader's own (un)consciousness and serves to put into question the secure distinctions between perception and knowledge of the text. So, this knowledge derives from the Other--patient or text--but is obtained through possession, gaining mastery, of this object. As Robert Con Davis asserts, the act of reading itself creates a paradoxical interchange between subject and object:

That is, we turn to and read a text as if, by giving attention to it, we look into it and master or possess it as an object. But while reading, in fact, we are focused upon and held by a Gaze that comes through the agency of the object text. . . . we--as readers--then become the object of the Gaze. The Gaze--which inscribes the Other's desires in a discourse of positioning--is trained on readers from the outside as they read, and through willing surrender to active/passive alternations of reading, readers (subjects who become objects) play within and also escape the confines of voyeurism and exhibitionism.  

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12 Felman, p. 156: "Seeing, in other words, is of the order of the signifier (that which is perceived as a conveyor of signification, in the very process of signifying), while knowing, on the other hand, is of the order of the signified (that which has been meant; the accomplished meaning which, as such, is mastered, known, possessed). 'Knowing,' therefore, is to "seeing" as the signified is to the signifier: the signifier is the seen, whereas the signified is the known. The signifier, by its very nature, is ambiguous and obscure, while signified is certain, clear, and unequivocal."

Sanctuary illustrates Davis's thesis in one especially troubling way, for it entices the reader to participate in scenes of voyeurism, exhibitionism, and rape. Faulkner's narrative so compels his reader into a complicitous role with the novel's events that any escapes from the voyeurism and exhibitionism inevitable in reading are momentary and fleeting. Hence, the critic in order to come to grips with his own role in the formation of the text's narrative, must, like the psychologist, become both analyst and analysand.

Part of the delusion of reading occurs by way of the search for meaning. The analyst or critic, as Freud's analogy demonstrates, constructs a meaning for the peculiar narrative and imagistic sequences, but fails to acknowledge the operations of the signifier. Freud replaces detached signifiers with seemingly concrete signifieds: he hopes to construct a reality from his text. Instead, he merely places one signifier upon another signifier. Lacan challenges this sort of reciprocity of signifier and signified by his algorithm S/s, the signifier "over" the signified, which removes "the illusion that the signifier answers to the function of representing the signified, or better, that the signifier has to answer for its existence in the name of any signification whatsoever." Lacan contends that meaning

occurs as a result of relational differences which are at play within language; but, he, too, emphasizes that real meaning is determined by the signifier. That signifier is not to be confused with Saussure's linguistic paradigm, wherein the signifier is in relationship to some actual thing. Instead, for Lacan, the signifier is determined only in terms of its relationship to other signifiers.

To illustrate his point Lacan supplies one rather telling visual analogy for this process:

![Twin identical doors, whose only distinction is the signifier above them, demonstrate how it is the signifier which articulates difference and not the signified. Lacan points out that meaning is not derived from the signifier in isolation, but rather from a signifying chain, like](image_url)

by the master-signifier's production of knowledge in the place of truth" (360), ultimately as "one's final signifier, one's meaning, the end of one's desire, one's deepest self: a self that invariably turns back into one's signifier, at once escaping and imprisoning itself" (362). Clearly, sexual designation fits into this pattern of domination, whereby the process of designation escapes and imprisons the designator. Moreover, the reader's position when confronted with the text follows this impossibility of mastery.
"rings of a necklace that is a ring in another necklace made of rings" (153). The two doors indicate a type of metaphor which admits to seemingly identical or synonymous discourses whose meaning occurs because of a sliding effect along the chain of signifiers. Thus, terms such as man, woman, self, other cannot be evaluated as having a reality beyond their cultural meaning. As we will see, the choice of sexually segregated signifiers befits Lacan's understanding of psychoanalytic process in general. Lacan's examples are noteworthy here because they correspond to dual systems already at play within Sanctuary's language, between the phallogocentric and the feminine, between self and other, between reader and narrative.

Faulkner anticipates interpretive problems inherent in these two systems of signifiers. His construction of the novel initiates a series of symptomatic responses from his reader. No matter how much psychological data the text appears to yield, many interpretive questions remain unanswerable. However much textual conditions induce us to produce a reading, Faulkner continually undercuts that reading by reflecting back those symptoms and aberrations upon the reader. Moreover, the two conflicting discourses do not resolve the reader's predicament, because the reader ultimately falls between both, becoming still another signifier in the chain. Each time the reader purposes a solution, Faulkner undercuts this meaning by having the Other's--masculine or feminine--discourse speak through (un)conscious symbols or parapraxes of the characters. Faulkner
implicates his reader in Temple's rape by seducing his reader, enticing a series of meanings, and creating an object to be fetishized. Our abhorrence of the crime is also undercut by Temple's subsequent reactions to the violation, if one indeed did occur. As readers, we are inculcated into a culture of rape--social, psychological, textual--from which we cannot escape any more than Temple could. We uncover several Temples in our reading, several discourses playing off one another, and we become ensnared in a vicious circle of transference, one which indict as it portrays. So, we proceed cautiously with this reading, still (un)conscious of our own complicity with this culture.

Sanctuary opens with Horace Benbow observing his own reflection in a spring just beyond Lee Goodwin's bootlegging hideout at the Old Frenchman's Place. Unlike Narcissus, he views a "broken and myriad reflection" (4) in which he can see "the shattered reflection of Popeye's straw hat, though he had heard no sound" (4). What Benbow experiences in this instance encapsulates how the self does not consist of an undifferentiated ontological whole, but rather a series of disparate images. Moreover, this natural mirror of the
spring reflects not just Popeye, the Other, but also that Other which constitutes Horace. Freud's concept of the "split," which does not imply a dissociation so much as a division between the conscious and unconscious, may aptly depict what Horace perceives; his consciousness observes many fractured selves, equivalent to divisions struggling for dominance within him--or, perhaps more precisely, within his (sub)consciousness. Horace epitomizes Faulkner's modern man, who is perplexed by multiple and conflicting drives which shatter the illusory projection of an immutable, indomitable stability of a unified ego. This almost Cubist portrait of Horace, in turn, suggests Faulkner's narrative stylistics--fractured and recombined images, internal monologues, dialogues, and time sequences--which simulate these splits exhibited by all his characters. Horace ignores the significance of this mirrored image as himself because of Popeye's presence. Moreover, this intrusive image further complicates Horace's self, whose existence is now contingent upon Other.

However, the complications raised by the mirror image seem to be partially resolved by some emblematic aspects of the opening scene. Horace carries a book, Popeye a gun, apparent images of textual and social order and that force which will disrupt it. But in the novel these signifiers coalesce, because the one requires the other to make us see it as such. Throughout the novel, dual systems of law, civilization and justice collapse in upon injustice, barbarism
and immorality. His narrative style does not insure a separation, but instead, leaves it up to the reader's particular interpretation of the events.

Faulkner accentuates Popeye's Otherness by making him appear object-like, inhuman: "he had that vicious depthless quality of stamped tin" (4); his eyes are "two knobs of soft black rubber" (4); his tight suit and hat give him an appearance "like a modernistic lampstand" (6). Physically, Popeye is small and fragile, nearly feminine: his hands are "doll-like" (5); and "His face just went away, like the face of wax doll set too near a fire and forgotten" (5). Indeed the description of Popeye suggests two conflicting codes at work, that of the masculine and that of the feminine. He has a sense of disease and putrification about him that Faulkner's characters often associate with the feminine. Horace senses that "he smells like that black stuff that ran out of Bovary's mouth and down upon her bridal veil when they raised her head" (7). On one level, this image anticipates Popeye's rape of Temple later in the novel, but, on another level, it tells as much about Horace's view of women as it

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15 Cf. Adamowski, "Faulkner's Popeye: The 'Other' as Self," *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 8 (1977): 36-51. This sound Sartrean reading of the novel shows Popeye's object-ness as the source of his power to induce fascination from the other characters. This fascination for the Other, which Adamowski implicitly suggests, also controls the reader's approach to the text. The text itself is Other to the reader, who, following Adamowski's argument, becomes fixated on, although not indifferent to it.
does about Popeye; Horace's life is also intruded upon by a threatening Other, the feminine. Popeye's gestures of potency, his manipulations with his gun, naturally threaten Horace, but so too does his paradoxical femininity.

Horace also confronts a fragmental image of himself in the figure of his step-daughter, Little Belle. While speaking to Ruby at the bootlegger's hideaway, Horace re-enacts an incestuous rivalry which occurred between him and one of the boys Little Belle's picks up on the train. His disgust for her tawdry liaison enrages Little Belle, who attacks his masculinity, calling him "Shrimp! Shrimp!" (14), a term that echoes Horace's own sense of self. Horace has also contemplated this image as himself; as he carries the stinking, dripping package of shrimp from the station, on his weekly errand for his wife Belle, he equates shrimp droppings with his own life: "Here lies Horace Benbow in a fading series of small stinking spots on a Mississippi sidewalk" (17). This sort of doubling is significant, since Horace sees himself at once as other than himself and as others see him.

Angered by her defiance, he grabs Little Belle but then notices their bodies reflected in two facing mirrors, and he smells the scent of "slain flowers, the delicate dead flowers and tears" (14):

"There was a mirror behind her and another behind me, and she was watching herself in the one behind me, forgetting about the other one in which I could see her face, see her
In the opening scene, nature creates the mirror, not progress; moreover, the grape arbor's sexual connotations are Horace's projections, not Little Belle's. That "pure dissimulation" Horace perceives ironically reflects his own need to separate male from female: he views Little Belle in terms of her absolute dissimilarity because she epitomizes his own sexual desires, which he must repress. Here as in the incident at the spring, Horace perceives only fragments of himself always intruded upon by someone else. In this case, his fixation with Little Belle displays itself before him, although he cannot comprehend her actions except within a dual system of signifiers that remind us of the Lacanian doors.

His fascination with symbolic representation of women is obvious earlier in his discussion with Ruby; he speaks of the hammock, now overgrown with the grape arbor, where his stepdaughter would murmur with her beaux. Since he cannot possess her, even in the reflection of the mirror, he metaphorizes her and all women into "that conspiracy between female flesh and female season" (13). He equates female voices with sounds of nature: "...in the twilight, her--Little Belle's--voice would be like the murmur of the wild grape arbor" (13). Horace admits his alienation from her, but it is one curiously bound up with fictions of dominance: "And I
couldn't have felt any more foreign to her flesh if I had begot it myself" (13). Implicit in Horace's admission is the converse, which is the reality of their sexual relationship. Horace did not beget her and does not feel foreign to her flesh, except as the product of repressed desires. Aunt Jenny identifies the problem with Horace and men in general: "'I'll declare, a male parent is a funny thing, but just let a man have a hand in the affairs of a female that's not kin to him . . . What is it that makes a man think that the female flesh he marries or begets might misbehave, but all he didn't marry or get is bound to?'" (161). Clearly, Horace's tirades against Little Belle's natural sexuality spring from a hostility produced by her disinterested attitude toward him. To quell women's sexuality, he fetishizes all women as an unattainable object of desire, but that "she" he views with disgust as well as attraction.

By designating sexual difference, Horace invents a phallic distinction to assuage his impotent and ineffectual desires, but difference now points to an absence, a lack. The mirror enables Horace to see and create a Lacanian objet a, the object other, that ungraspable essence which always eludes the subject. Moreover, this object defines and specifies the signs which control Horace's life--male and female--and, as Lacan explains, "sex and significations are always capable of making present the presence of death."16 It is not

what Little Belle lacks, that is sexual potency, as much as what
Horace himself lacks. His attributing the smell of dying flowers to
Little Belle reinforces both sexuality's and death's presence. Horace's
rivalry turns from suitors to Little Belle herself, and the dying
flowers and the grape arbor, "a wild and waxlike bleeding less of
bloom than leaf" (13), represent a fetishistic identification with the
prohibited step-daughter. Bleeding and death identify a figural
castration, a symbolic vanquishing of Little Belle's power over him:
"In Lacan's view of the perversions, the barred Other, Ø, is replaced
by the 'objet a'. Thus, the fetishist identifies the Other's lack (e.g. the

supports that which, in the drive, is defined and specified by the fact
that the coming into play of the signifier in the life of man enables
him to bring out the meaning of sex." While Lacan generally takes a
Freudian stance in accordance with this definition, that objet a need
not be just what is lacking in the Other, but a reminder of what the
subject himself lacks. If the phallus translates as this object, then its
power must also be part of its presence or its lack; therefore, a
woman's sexuality can equally suggest a potency which a man, such a
Horace, cannot face directly.
castration of the woman) with the objet a."\(^{17}\) The mirror image for Horace is not reflection of an ego so much as it is a sign of the Other, as something beyond and within the self.\(^{18}\) However, this realization does not actually affect Horace. He still searches for that object he desires, but ironically, it is that object which he has symbolically destroyed, cut out of his psyche.

\(^{17}\) Bice Benvenuto and Roger Kennedy, *The Works of Jacques Lacan: An Introduction* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), p. 181. See also Juliet Flower MacCannell, *Figuring Lacan: Criticism and the Cultural Unconscious* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986) for a discussion of "the little letter a": "In the metapsychology Freud had distinguished between *aim* --satisfaction--and *object* --the means of satisfaction. With the advent of *desire*, or human alienation, the aim is definitively bracketed or deferred, so that all the affective drive is displaced into the object. But the object, no longer a means but an end, never satisfies, becoming instead the source of repeated, futile (the acceleration of the drive) attempts to satisfy desire. The object as pseudo-aim, then, is also the source of the metaphoric drive towards substitutability: one thing is as good as another in attempting the impossible" (166).

\(^{18}\) See Jean Laplanche, *Life & Death in Psychoanalysis*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 81: "Now Lacan's intention is certainly not to link in any necessary way the appearance of the human ego to the creation of the *instrument* of the mirror, nor even, for example, to the fact that like Narcissus, the infant can see his reflection on the surface of a body of water. The scenario of the child at the mirror is only the index of something that occurs, in any event, without that apparatus: the recognition of the form of another human and the concomitant precipitation within the individual of a first outline of that form."
Later, after Horace has learned from Ruby that Temple was at the Old Frenchman's Place, he observes Little Belle's photograph and again relates it to an alienating landscape of femininity:

He shifted the photograph until the face came clear. He stood before it, looking at the sweet, inscrutable face which looked in turn at something just beyond his shoulder, out of the dead cardboard. He was thinking of the grape arbor in Kinston, of summer twilight and the murmur of voices darkening into silence as he approached, who meant them, her, no harm; who meant her less than harm, good God; darkening into the pale whisper of her white dress, of the delicate and urgent mammalian whisper of that curious small flesh which he had not begot and in which appeared to be vatted delicately some seething sympathy with the blossoming grape. (162)

This passage obviously recalls the mirroring scene already described. Little Belle's image remains innocent, yet desirable, and still inscrutable to Horace because of that underlying sexuality. Women are also represented in terms of sounds, which echo a natural, non-masculine world of mammalian, seething sexual activity. Throughout the novel female sexuality is associated with natural sounds, especially with the repetitious sound of corn shucks, which both Temple and Horace hear often. The feminine third person is ambiguous in the passage. Does Horace mean Temple? But he is gazing at Little Belle. So, he might mean her, too? But then, who meant her no harm, the men at the Old Frenchman's Place, men in general, or maybe Horace himself? These ambiguities enhance
Faulkner's thematics of female representation; for just as Horace confuses various women, designations for women are based upon a confusion of familial, social, and sexual roles. Men in the novel are preoccupied by female flesh. The boys at the college swarm around Temple and the other girls like drones around plastic flowers, indicating not just the impenetrable aspect of women, but also the sexual impotency of males. Virgil and Fonzo Snopes, as boarders in Miss Reba's whorehouse, see fleeting shapes of barely clothed figures, smell perfume, and hear the movements of lingerie, but comically sneak off to meet with whores so that Miss Reba might not know of their sexual needs. Faulkner even includes a crass, sexual joke between two college boys on the train to Memphis to illustrate this obsession with female flesh: "Do you like liver? 'I can't reach that far.' 'Eeeeeyow'" (166). Like Horace's natural signs for women, these sardonic representations reveal men's concentration upon female flesh as a part rather than a whole, further indicating the experience of women as relegated to the sensual. Even though Horace's complex mis-representations of women exceed those of adolescent boys, still woman has been so metonymically displaced as to become fetishistic. These metaphors quite literally cut women into accessible parts, enabling men to refer to them with the false security afforded by such partial designation.

This form of fetishistic desire results in a form of castration. Freud reminds us that fetishism itself is far more than object-
worship, and can include object-castration, particularly when a subject mutilates and then reveres the object. The entire novel works through series after series of symbolic castrations: Temple's rape, Narcissa's domination and frequent emasculations of Horace, Temple's verbal and physical rapes against Popeye, Red's murder, the sacrificial death of Lee Goodwin, and Popeye's almost suicidal death. Each incident occurs because of an external threat imposed by the Other, upon whom a person or the entire town of Jefferson concentrates its fixation. These castrations, the taking away of signs of power and the removal of objects of desire, also parallel the psychosis of rape. Castration, especially symbolic castration, reveals the power of the object being removed, as Thomas A. Hanzo observes:

Castration is the moment of desire's emergence—not of need (that unexpressible movement), nor of demand (the articulation of want) but of the signification by

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19 Cf. Freud, "Fetishism," Sexuality and the Psychology of Love, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Collier Books, 1970), p. 219: "Sometimes a double attitude shows itself in what the fetishist--either actually or in phantasy--does with the fetish. It is not the whole story to say that he worships it; very often he treats it in a way which is plainly equivalent to castrating it. . . . The action contains within it two incompatible propositions: the woman has still got a penis and the father has castrated the woman. Another variety of this, which might be regarded as a race-psychological parallel to fetishism, is the Chinese custom of first mutilating a woman's foot and then revering it. The Chinese man seems to want to thank the woman for having submitted to castration." Oddly, this Chinese example explicitly shows the violence inherent within object-desire.
which the object chosen refers to the chain of signifiers that links it to the history of the subject's desires. Desire in Lacanian terms is systematic and signifying, and what is spoken in language must be interpreted; who speaks here is of equal interest to and to be identified with the subject of the enunciation: the other of the unconscious. Castration is related to desire as the moment at which this language is spoken, the atemporal occasion continually repeated in the speech of desire.²⁰

The history of Horace's desires consists of a linking together of female murmurings, voiced signs which require involvement, interpretation, and eradication. Interpretation, whether individual or communal, isolates and removes symbolically these signs of an Other's power. Horace's imaginary castrations do not differ from Jefferson's or Temple's or Popeye's attacks upon their victims. The distinctions between assailant and victim fade as do Horace's and Little Belle's images in the mirror.

Dual or mirrored systems play against one another and yet are synonymous with one another. They decipher and translate each

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²⁰ Hanzo, "Paternity and the Subject in Bleak House," The Fictional Father: Lacanian Readings of the Text, ed. Robert Con Davis (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), pp. 34-35. Even though Hanzo discusses father/son relationships primarily, the model of the symbolic father can also be pressed into service for any object of desire which emits power to the subject and causes a castratic need to overcome it. The particular issue of language also fits into the modes of sexual relationships brought out in Sanctuary, whereby: "Langauge not only calls up absences, it re-creates through the absence of the original object of satisfaction the fantasy of that satisfaction and disposes the subject in relation to an object in the linguistic structure itself" (36).
other. Patriarchal authority rules over women, while at the same time being undermined by them. Culture plays out its futile game of dominance over the Other only to be dominated by it in turn; the repressed object continually invades the social psyche. The signifier for this power struggle repeatedly emerges as rape, which is symbolic, linguistic, social and actual. Faulkner's thematics of rape also ensnare his reader's interpretations, placing the reader within a complex web of false assumptions, fixated views, and object fetishism. Each time the reader believes he has uncovered a plausible cause that will explicate a particular behavior, the character in question all too often embraces still another code, another form of discourse. Again, Freud's metaphors for uncovering meaning are apt. While trying to designate the sexual incident which produced an hysterical symptom, Freud recreates anew the sexual incident--he transforms his own subject. More literally, he siezes his subject, violates that consciousness with his interpretation, dominates it by means of that analysis--in short, he rapes. He can divine meaning, but only through a relational scheme whereby he possesses power and his subject none. But his act is impotent. As Derrida has noticed, the process of excising from the text a specific cause, illustration, or example can be likened to a form of castration: "In citing the object of study or in offering examples as illustrations,
the critic is in the position of castrator."^{21} As Felman suggests, the act of quoting from a text shifts emphasis toward still other meanings: "...that in the body of the text the quotation remains a foreign body; that it functions not as meaning (which "knows itself") but as a signifier which is always displaced, always imported from another text, another scene...is incorporated into the text only though the unarticulated gap of its own displacement."^{22} The reader, in order to produce some semblance of meaning from the purposeful disorder Faulkner creates, must assume a role nearly mimicking Horace's fixation with Little Belle. Castration and quotation effect an isolation of a supposed enigmatic object, which, once rendered in isolation, can no longer disturb order. Faulkner, again, has complicated the reader's function in relationship to the text by

^{21} Gregory L. Ulmer, "The Object of Post-Criticism," The Anti-Aesthetic, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983), p. 89. Ulmer cites Derrida's use of castration in both Positions ("the most general title of the problem treated in those texts would be: castration and mimesis," 84) and Dissemination ("Such a decision is a castration, at least acted out or feigned, or a circumcision. This is as it always is, and the knife that with obsessive frequency slashes the tree of Numbers hones itself as a phallic threat. ...The 'operation of reading/writing goes by the way of 'the blade of a red knife,'" 301). Faulkner's characters are obsessed with castration; Horace, especially, performs a ritualized castration upon Little Belle and Temple.

^{22} Felman, Writing and Madness(Literature/Philosophy/Psycho-analysis) (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 133. Here, Felman is commenting upon Lacan's stylistics, although I doubt her rather hurried assumption that Lacan's "mode of articulation is to convey, put into play, and say the maximum possible inarticulation" (134).
forcing this type of fixation and castration. Horace's fears of castration lead him to castrate, to emasculate the women around him. This castration is, of course, a form of self-castration—the same self-fragmentation of Horace's mirrored self—which brings us back again to the opening scene in which Horace views, reads, his own image.

Part of Horace's problem with sexual identity stems from his own confused relations with the women in his family. He is neither father, husband, nor brother in isolation, but plays interchangeable roles with each woman. Faulkner emphasizes this complication of roles through his use of the Narcissus myth. In the opening scene Faulkner alludes to the Greek myth of Narcissus and Echo, but he inverts the myth's characters. In Ovid, the myth itself contains narrative elements resembling basic plot or thematic poles of Sanctuary: rape/impotency, reflection/recognition, self-

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24 See John Brenkman, "Narcissus in the text," The Georgia Review, 20 (1976): 296-97: "A beautiful nymph named Liriope gave birth to Narcissus after she had been raped by the river-god Cephisus while wading in his waters. Tiresias, the blind seer who had lived both as a man and a woman, was asked by Liriope if her son would live to old age and answered, 'If he never recognizes himself.' At age sixteen Narcissus is an attractive youth desired by both youths and nymphs, but he possesses such 'hard pride' that he
love/death, self/self as other, and desire in discourse/echoes of desire. One could even cast characters into the roles above, with Horace as Narcissus, Narcissa and all women as Echo. However, this schematization inexactly portrays the novel's thematics of coalescing rather than segregating signs of social difference, which continually undercuts such definitive designations.

never returns their love. Echo is a nymph whose speech has been restricted to repeating others' words, a punishment imposed by Juno. When Echo first sees Narcissus, he has become separated from his hunting companions. Following him through the woods and answering his cries with full or partial echoes, she emerges and tries to embrace him. Her intention is openly sexual: she cries 'coeamus' (let us meet, let us come together, let us copulate), tries to throw her arms around Narcissus's neck, and as he flees replies to his rebuke with the words 'sit tibi copia nostri!' (let my abundance be yours). Abandoned and ashamed she lurks in the woods, neither her love nor her grief diminishing: 'sed tamen haeret amor crescitque dolore' (but still, though spurned, her love adheres and grows on grief). Finally she wastes away until only her voice 'lives in her'—which is to say that her (sexual) body dies—and her remains turn to stone. Then Narcissus, again alone in the woods, comes upon a clear pool where he falls in love with his reflected image. Seeing the whole of the body that the others have seen and desired, he too desires: 'cunctaque miratur, quibus est mirabilis ipse' (he admires all together that for which he is himself admired). . . . When Narcissus recognizes that it is his own image he loves, his desire and anguish intensify to the point of death. In place of his body his mourners find a yellow and white flower." See also Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Mary M. Innes (London: Penguin Books, 1955), pp. 83-87, which includes these details: Narcissus falls prey to his own reflection, falling madly in love, but vainly cannot touch the object he desires; ultimately, he realizes that the boy he loves is himself and his self-tortment consumes his life; in the underworld, Narcissus still gazes at his reflection in the river Styx.
Like Faulkner, Freud craftily inverted myths for his own narrative needs. For the structure of his narrative on the self, Freud introduced narcissism as the libidinal complement to egoism--for egoism, a specific advantage and for narcissism, libidinal satisfaction, an object-cathexis. Yet, Freud cannot really keep separate these distinctions, for the role of the object gains powerful command over the self: "As a rule the sexual object attracts a portion of the ego's narcissism to itself, and this becomes noticeable as what is known as the 'sexual overvaluation' of the object. . . . the object becomes supremely powerful; it has, as it were, absorbed the ego."25 René Girard foresees a paradoxical unity in narcissism and he discredits Freud for ignoring the "conjunction of self-centeredness and other-centeredness."26 Narcissus and Echo seemingly designate two poles, but they tend to envelop one another by means of object-desire standing in for the self. Horace's reflections continually suggest this sort of intervention upon the self by a controlling other, an other which, at times, becomes the self.

John Brenkman's fine analysis of this myth focuses upon verbal and visual displacements as played out in Narcissus' drama of the self and Echo's of the Other. The problem of the self is doubled through voice, body, and image: "On the scene of Narcissus's encounter, the voice as well as the self is put into relation with its other. The *imago* is not simply the other of the body, it is the other of the voice of the self. As the repetition of that voice, it is also the same, the same reproduced as the non-identical" (312). Clearly, Horace's reflections point to this visual otherness, as do the female murmurings which echo back to him his own relationship to the world. Image and voice define sexual relations for Horace, but always in terms of his own lack. We can extend this separation of image and voice to Lacan's distinctions between metaphor and metonymy: Horace's reflections are metaphoric condensations of "the structure of the superimposition of the signifiers" he creates to designate sexual difference, whereas, murmurings are metonymical displacements of the feminine, obscure and nearly censored.

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27 Brenkman, p. 311: "Now, what most strikingly separates Narcissus's drama of the self from Echo's is the nature of the other. The other from whose domination Echo is freed when it is presented as the agent of her own speech, and to whom she may then speak, is another like herself. The narrative thereby provides a model of intersubjectivity as the process of exchange, through language, between autonomous consciousnesses. Narcissus, in his encounter with Echo, withdraws from that exchange and at the same time withholds the desire that would respond to Echo's."
suggesting a "veering off of signification." Both the visual and vocal fill gaps in Horace's sexual identity; however, we need to be careful when constructing such paradigms. If sexual difference is denoted by the signifier, specifically the phallus (the male, the patriarchal), then Horace's culling meaning from his narcissistic reflections delimits our understanding of feminine sounds, because the metaphorical subverts the metonymical. Faulkner constructed the Narcissus/Echo myth in just this manner, but also allowed for a slippage to occur between the poles of opposition presented by male and female. This slippage affords neither a traditional nor a feminist interpretation of the novel, but a collapsing of both. As Jane Gallop warns, what interpretation, in actuality, presents is the pathology of interpretation: "A metonymic [feminine] reading construes metonymy as phallic whereas a metaphoric interpretation attributes the phallus to metaphor. Either sort of reading inevitably locates the

phallus in its own narcissistic reflection in the text."29 The play of identification or rivalry, of male or female, provides quite an ineffectual reading, for it privileges one code of power over another, and, to my mind, dismisses and even distorts the fundamental themes of Faulkner's novel.

So, Horace's predicament is also analogous to what occurs to the critic confronting the text. As Brenkman contends, speech and writing become issues within this myth too:

The narrative fixes the relation between Echo and Narcissus by linking Echo to the voice and Narcissus to the image and then distributing the chain of elements belonging to each side of the opposition voice/image across the two characters: Echo (the integral self, meaning, dialogue, life) / Narcissus (the other, illusion, nondialogue, death). What anchors these two chains, holding them apart, is the constant reference to the body, corpus, on either side of which fall the vox of Echo and the imago of Narcissus. The articulation of self-recognition, "iste ego sum," occurring only as Narcissus brings together...

29 Gallop, Reading Lacan (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 131. She continues her caveat against polarized readings, stating: "I have suggested links between what Jakobson calls traditional 'amputated, unipolar schema' and phallogocentrism. Celebrating a new, feminine metonymic reading (which, as opposed to the metaphoric, I have not called interpretation), I have sought to go beyond that phallocentric interpretive tradition. But my metonymic reading has led me to the notion of the latent phallus, and I have come to see that, in its own way, metonymic interpretation can be phallocentric too... Any polar opposition between metaphor and metonymy (vertical versus horizontal, masculine versus feminine) is trapped in the imaginary order, subject to the play of identification and rivalry" (132).
the image he sees and the voice he hears, elides that references to corpus; in doing so, it joins the disjunctive terms vox and imago, speech and "writing," self and other, time and space. (320-21)

Brenkman extends his analysis of voice/image/body to the notion of a text, in which narrator/narrative/reader fall into the predicament already established by the myth. The narrator who, like Narcissus, cannot hear or understand the activity of the text, becomes an "effect of the text not its master" (324); the narrative is displaced by the signs it generates, so that a new text emerges in reinscription and contradiction; and the reader cannot attain meaning through critical mastery of the text, because the "Narcissus episode ruptures the self-enclosure of the narrative system...which then becomes, not the formal unity that masters all the significations of the text, but the limit perpetually trangressed by them. And any attempt to reabsorb the drama of Narcissus into a homogeneous pattern of meaning would entail denying it force within the movement of the text." (326). Ultimately, the text is a dialogue of repetitions, transpositions, and echoed referentiality: like the dialogue between Narcissus and Echo, the narrator and reader share in a perpetual game of unfulfilled desires, whereby reading is self-reflection and meaning is transcription without end. Confusing critical roles alludes to Faulkner's twisting of sexual ones--desires in both instances become part of his overall thematic structure for the novel.
Confusing of male and female roles is precisely Faulkner's point, because this confusion pervades all of society. Horace is an Echo figure in that he echoes the logos of civilization, and yet he also represents, by the very means of that "law, justice, and civilization" (127), a condition of self-love. Narcissa's domination of Horace makes her wife and mother, as well as sister and lover. She becomes the object of Horace's own incestuous yearnings, as Aunt Jenny harps upon when comically alluding to Gowan Stevens' courting of Narcissa: ''Narcissa, will you send up to the chest in the attic and get the duelling pistols?'' She turned to the boy. 'And you go on ahead and tell them to strike up the music, and to have two roses ready'" (26). Horace's reaction to this suitor mirrors his earlier conflict with Little Belle; what is mirrored is his own desire. Faulkner has not merely translated mythic elements directly into his text, but inverted, subverted, and even perverted them so that Narcissa and Horace share common details of both Echo and Narcissus. Again, dual or mirror signifiers collapse in upon one another. To say that Narcissa is Echo and Horace Narcissus oversimplifies the novel and tells us more about the reader who chooses these distinctions than the novel itself. Part of Faulkner's theme rests upon his intermixing of these elements and compelling the reader to produce a determinant meaning, even as the text continually denies one.

Of course, Horace also views Narcissa in ways not restricted to this myth. At her home, he perceives her as work of art. Here, she is
not vase or urn, but statue, echoing the Pygmalion myth: "She had almost crossed the parlor door and vanished when she paused and looked full at him, without outward surprise, with that serene and stupid impregnability of heroic statuary; she was in white" (102). "Stupid impregnability" describes all women for Horace, senseless and unattainable. But at times Narcissa, like Little Belle, seems to him to be related to the natural world: "She had never been given to talking, living a life of serene vegetation like perpetual corn or wheat in a sheltered garden instead of a field, and during those two days she came and went about the house with an air of tranquil and faintly ludicrous tragic disapproval" (103). Oddly, Horace refuses to associate his own metaphors, and even denies the relationship between Belle and Narcissa, which, because of the ambiguity of the statement, could imply Narcissa and Little Belle: "I hadn't intended to stay here, anyway. It wasn't Narcissa I was running to. I haven't quit one woman to run to the skirts of another" (103). Even Horace's memory of Narcissa's innocence is expressed by sexual imagery:

The street was narrow, quiet. It was paved now, though he could remember when, after a rain, it had been a canal of blackish substance half earth, half water, with murmuring gutters in which he and Narcissa paddled and splashed with tucked-up garments and muddy bottoms, after the crudest of whittled boats, or made loblollies by treading and treading in one spot with the intense oblivion of alchemists. He could remember when, innocent of concrete, the street was bordered on either side by
paths of red brick tediously and unevenly laid and worn in rich, random maroon mosaic into the black earth which the noon sun never reached; at that moment, pressed into the concrete near the entrance of the drive, were the prints of his and his sister's naked feet in the artificial stone. (118)

The earth and water are again images of sexuality and are particularly feminine, especially the "murmuring gutters"; the two naked feet are inscriptions in silent stone, not unlike Freud's metaphor, which speak only to Horace, who sees them in a scene of innocence with a preponderence of his own sexual longings. Horace's coupling of himself with his other, the masculine with the feminine, is not unlike the opening of the novel. At this point in the novel, the reader understands Horace's disgust and fixation with women, as well as his own fascination with tabooed women, sister and stepdaughter. The passage emphasizes the association of female and voice, the murmurings of memories. "Muddy bottoms" also echoes Caddy's defiled image in The Sound and the Fury, contaminating the relationship between the two innocents with suggestions of incest. Admixing earth and water in a "mosaic" repeats Horace's redoublings in mirrored surfaces--the male with the female. When Ruby tells Horace for the first time about Temple's being at the Old Frenchman's Place, his parapraxis gives away his inability to speak a definitive term for woman--"'A----'" (131)--which could be either woman or young girl from Ruby's "'There was a woman there,' she said. 'A young girl" (131). Horace's frequent confusing girl, woman, sister,
daughter, wife and lover demonstrates the anxieties that attend male culture's attempts to signify woman. His symbology indicates a patriarchal catachresis, by which male designations for women as static or natural images become interwoven, both as metaphors of themselves and metonymies for one another.

The rape of Temple produces a traumatic awareness of self, often hysterical in its manifestations. In fact, she does not just experience her own rape, but, by her own account, seems exterior to the event, as though she were witnessing a sexual act for the first time. Temple's rape, thus, carries with it the force of a primal scene. Her symptoms exaggerate the trauma of the rape's violence. Yet, her reactions to the rape, her imprisonment within the Memphis brothel, her relegation to role of gun moll and sexual plaything, and her escape—all can be diagnosed as symptomatic of hysterical trauma. Her actions fulfill classic hysterical fantasies of women being relegated to a subjugated, if not humiliated role.30

30 Maria Ramas, "Freud's Dora, Dora's Hysteria," In Dora's Case: Freud-Hysteria-Feminism, eds. Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985) depicts the primal scene as follows: "The fantasy, quite simply, expresses erotically the
frightened, she scurries around Miss Reba's house, hiding under the bed like the madame's two dogs, Miss Reba and Mister Binford. Her newly defiled world is experienced in a clock's face, which reflects the absolute nothingness of her own plight:

She watched the final light condense into the clock face, and the dial change from a round orifice in the darkness to a disc suspended in nothingness, the original chaos, and change in turn to a crystal ball holding in its still and cryptic depths the ordered chaos of the intricate and shadowy world upon whose scarred flanks the old wounds whirl onward at dizzy speed into darkness lurking with new disasters. (146-147)

This passage can be read as a condensation of her nightmarish experiences among the corn shucks: the "round orifice" of the vagina becomes a "disc" or hymen, which is ruptured from any tangible connection with the world, and it, in turn, portends the augury of "new disasters" to further scar the flanks and wounds of her rape. And Faulkner leads his reader to assimilate this evidence as a

essential meaning of sexual difference in patriarchal culture. . . . The fantasy may be mild in content, or it may reach to the extreme other end of the continuum to express a sadomasochistic desire that seeks ultimate satisfaction in the total annhilation of the woman--the feminine" (157).

Freudian psychoanalyst might. Yet, the clock is also "mirror like" (146), echoing the opening scene with Horace, in which Temple does not recognize herself so much as she experiences the presence of absolute otherness, "nothingness," "original chaos," "ordered chaos."
The clock, then, projects her alienation of, fixation upon, and fascination with the self that develops out of this recognition of a lack of being. 32 Clearly, Temple's perception of nothingness reveals this lack, but so too does her imaginary transformation of that nihilistic vision into original and then ordered chaos. She views herself as a child in a mirror split to pieces, as fragments of alienated identity--a child's paradise now lost. The child Temple matures at a cost to her former innocence; she now recognizes herself in terms of shifting patterns of social signifiers, the ordered chaos of language.

But, it is important to recognize that the process of such analysis has imposed a temporality upon the events not readily apparent in the text. By identifying the images projected in the narrative of the clock's transformation, we have construed a corresponding temporal movement for Temple. From this point of

32 Lacan, "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience," Écrits, p. 5: "It [the mirror stage] is this moment that decisively tips the whole of human knowledge into mediatization through the desire of the other, constitutes its objects in an abstract equivalence by the co-operation of others, and turns the I into that apparatus for which every instinctual thrust constitutes a danger, even though it should correspond to a natural maturation. . . ."
view the primal scene would seem to resemble Ned Lukacher's definition more than Freud's or Lacan's:

...it [the primal scene] becomes an intertextual event that displaces the notion of the event from the ground of ontology. It calls the event's relation to the Real into question in an entirely new way. Rather than signifying the child's observation of sexual intercourse, the primal scene comes to signify an ontologically undecidable intertextual event that is situated in the differential space between historical memory and imaginative construction, between archival verification and interpretive free play.33

Lukacher's paradigm functions in terms of memory and forgetting, of the events in the past and its fictionalization in the present. Unlike the analyst, the critic does not have access to the voice, "at once readable and unreadable, at once a cipher of subjectivity and the

33 Lukacher, Primal Scenes: Literature, Philosophy, Psychoanalysis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p.24. Lukacher proffers several definitions for the primal scene, all of them interrelated to concepts set down by Freud and Heidegger, but also related to narrative: the primal scene is "an effort to answer the unanswerable call of the Real, a call that emerges from the undisclosed essence of language itself" (25); "the preexistent race underlying the possibility of the distinction between presence and absence, and between subject and object" (27); "that without which the symptoms could not have developed; for all that, it does not explain the causality of the symptoms" (33); "itself a kind of fairy tale in which the intending subject finds himself caught up in a fateful constellation" (36); "the sjuzet or narrative reconstruction" (37); "always the primal scene of words...the primal seme" (68); and "the double operation of deconstituting the subject's relation to language and reconstituting language's relation to the object" (338).
mark of the subject's erasure" (70), and so, like Echo, must reduplicate only what he hears in the text. Such is the problem of locating within the space of the text a grammar or syntax for formulating this lack of a lack—the re-creation of an event which is already lost to the (un)conscious. In this sense, the critic approaches the text not unlike the way Temple does the memory of her rape, remembering what has been forgotten in the text, attempting to construct out of the pieces and fragments of the past a coherent representation in the present, and reduplicating that former self in terms of the present self speaking, or better, narrating, the primal scene. In actuality, the primal scene is the scene of interpretation, in which the dual operations of revelation and concealment are masked by both the subject and the analyst.

Faulkner defers Temple's primal scene; he suspends the actual events of her rape for nearly two-thirds of the novel. Of course, the reader can surmise upon a first reading that Temple has been introduced to sex, for Faulkner describes her as "feeling her blood seeping slowly inside her loins" (133). This detail occurs in the text five chapters after Popeye's entry into the hay-loft of the barn. But the actual description of the sexual act which ruptured Temple's hymen is not given for another five chapters. The clues to Popeye's culpability are clearly given to the reader, but only in circumstantial form. True, he is the one Ruby sees driving away with Temple; he is in the barn with Tommy and Temple; he is the one Temple seems to
implicate in her retelling of the events at Miss Reba's whorehouse. However, the details of the rape are further suspended for another five chapters, and then, it is Eustace Graham, the District Attorney in the murder case against Lee Goodwin, who at last introduces the extraneous piece of evidence—the corn-cob. The effect of these suspensions is to cast the reader into a variety of observant roles: first, as one actually at the scene of the crime; secondly, on the same level with Horace listening to Temple's tale; and finally, as jurist evaluating the specious evidence. Of course, by the time of the trial, the reader already knows that Popeye not Goodwin committed the act, but the nature of the crime itself remains open to interpretation. And the reader shares Horace's concern as he listens to the young girl's tale, for it is through it that the primal scene is disclosed.

Horace goes to Miss Reba's brothel to uncover the truth about that girl's presence at the Old Frechman's Place. However, his seemingly heroic rescue is marred by Senator Clarence Snopes' insinuations at the entrance to the whorehouse: "Now, now Judge. I aint going to tell this at home. Git that idea clean out of your mind. If us boys started telling what we know, caint none of us git off a train at Jefferson again, hey?" (200-201). Interestingly, Horace is referred to as "Judge," now a signifier for all men protecting Temple, as well as those who have imprisoned her by a specific code of social conduct, be it virgin or whore. Horace cannot reach Temple without first passing Miss Reba's inspection. From Miss Reba Horace learns of
several significant events which he is unable to comprehend at first. For instance, Popeye has recently come to the whorehouse and, as Miss Reba's maid Minnie believes, he "spatters that big bastard all over the upstairs floor" (203). Popeye descends the stairs "going wump-wump-wump inside like one of these here big dray-horses" (203). The reader cannot surmise what has transpired any more than Horace, because it is not until after Red's comic funeral that we learn, again from Miss Reba, that Red has been servicing Temple: "Yes, sir, Minnie said the two of them would be nekkid as two snakes, and Popeye hanging over the foot of the bed without even his hat off, making a kind of whinnying sound" (251). Earlier, when Popeye returns to Miss Reba's to visit Temple on her first day in the place, he attacks her sexually and she struggles against him; all the while he makes "a high whinnying sound like a horse" (155). Obviously, Popeye's sexual perversion involves a voyeuristic, sadistic delight in observing Temple's submission to, or reveling in, sexual intercourse. Faulkner suspends the main action of these sexual encounters to subject his reader to a series of imaginative fantasies which must also occur to Horace.

The reader's confusion is doubly compounded when Temple refuses to say a word to Horace about what has transpired without first being given solemn assurances that nothing will happen to Popeye. Not only are the events of the rape displaced, but the very means of establishing a clear understanding have been removed. No
first reading of the novel will offer a precise representation of the events. Because of the way Faulkner has structured his plot, action, description, and characterization, he has deferred the primal scene to open up the question of interpretation.

When Temple finally re-presents the details of the rape, she offers several versions of the story that are colored by her own fantasies; she speaks with pride and vanity in "one of those bright, chatty monologues which women can carry on when they realise that they have the center of the stage" (208-209). She hears the corn shucks throughout the ordeal, almost breathing and laughing, and she exclaims that she has "'to make like I was a boy'" (209). Her transfigurations move from being a boy, to arming herself in a chastity belt with long spikes, to experiencing a state of sleep, to becoming a dead bride in a coffin, to being a school teacher who scolds "'a little black thing like a nigger boy'" (212), and finally to changing into "'an old man with a long white beard'" (213). All of these metamorphoses of the self imply male figures of authority. In a sense, Temple wants to invoke the power which is now threatening her--oddly, this is the same authority which she has appealed to in the name of the judge and to the "judge" now in her presence, Horace. The image of the boy would circumvent any possible sexual act in her mind. The chastity belt, "'that French thing" (210), is another matter. It will not only prevent penetration, but reverse roles, so that she will now be the assailant raping her victim: "'I was
thinking maybe it would have long sharp spikes on it and he wouldn't know it until too late and I'd jab it into him. I'd jab it all the way through him and I'd think about the blood running on me and how I'd say I guess that'll teach you'" (210-211). Seeing herself veiled in white, lying in the coffin as a dead bride, Temple explains that she was crying in this scene, not because she was dead, but "because they had put shucks in the coffin where I was dead, but all the time I could feel my nose going cold and hot and cold and hot, and I could see all the people sitting around the coffin, saying Dont she look sweet. Dont she look sweet" (212). She seems absorbed with superficial aspects of appearances and propriety here, rather than with the rape. But here too she transforms the death, her loss of innocence, into her manipulation of power. Again, sexual roles of dominance reverse themselves, as she imagines herself as a forty-five year old schoolteacher intimidating a small black boy:

"And I'd lie there with the shucks laughing at me and me jerking away in front of his hand and I'd think what I'd say to him, I'd talk to him like the teacher does in school, and then I was a teacher in school and it was a little black thing like a nigger boy, kind of, and I was the teacher. Because I'd say How old am I? and I'd say I'm forty-five years old. I had iron-gray hair and spectacles and I was all big up here like women get. I had on a gray tailored suit, and I never could wear gray." (212)

The casual reference to her apparel greatly undercuts her terror of the rape, especially since it reinforces Temple's more apparent
narcissistic qualities, such as her perpetual gazing into her compact's mirror.

As the sexual insertion of the corn-cob begins, she envisions herself as God symbolically castrating Popeye: "'So I was an old man, with a long white beard, and then the little black man got littler and littler and I was saying Now. You see now. I'm a man now'" (213). As the phallic power associated with Popeye diminishes, Temple's power grows. The moment that the rape occurs, Temple translates the bursting of her hymen into the growing of a phallus: "'It made a kind of plopping sound, like blowing a little rubber tube wrong-side outward'" (213). All of her transformations suggest forms of rape. Her desperate attempts to transform herself into a male figure indicate hysterical symptoms, transfiguration, auditory hallucinations, immediate repression, and images of paralysis and death. On the surface, her metaphors describe a transference to figures of authority, to males, which poses an intriguing possibility for her narrative. She sits before Horace, a representative to her mind of both security and punishment, of male social order, and constructs these phallic images as an act of transference. She narrates a scene in order to fulfill male fantasies and expectations; moreover, the anonymity she grants to her assailant seems to coax Horace into the scene she has created. As Meredith Anne Skura suggests, the strategies for patient transference, which Freud initially identified, reveal how the patient's perceptions about the analytic
process are conform more to fantasises than reality: "The patient tries to force or coax the analyst to play out a scene he has in mind, though the patient is not aware of either the coaxing or the scene as such. All he sees is that the analyst is hostile, indifferent, loving, or whatever the scene dictates." Temple, though, may well be more conscious of this coaxing and scene creating than Skura's definition asserts. Such an interpretation also falls into the realm of countertransference, which does in fact happen to Horace.

After leaving Temple and returning to Jefferson, Horace enters his house and holds a framed photograph of Little Belle. He becomes violently ill, rushing to the bathroom to vomit, all the while visualizing the rape again, only in disturbingly ambiguous terms:

Lying with her head lifted slightly, her chin depressed like figure lifted down from a crucifix, she watched something black and furious go roaring out of her pale body. She was bound naked on her back on a flat car moving at speed through a black tunnel, the blackness streaming in rigid threads overhead, a roar of iron wheels in her ears. The car shot bodily from the tunnel in a long upward slant, the darkness overhead now shredded with parallel attenuations of living fire, toward a crescendo like a held breath, an interval in which she would swing faintly and lazily in nothingness filled with pale, myriad points of light. Far beneath her she could hear the faint, furious uproar of the shucks. (216)

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Movement and sound describe both the rape and Horace's vomiting. The roar of the shucks relates to both Temple and Little Belle; again, naturalistic sounds depict female sexuality for Horace. Sounds and breaths create the rhythm and movement of sexual excitation and orgasm, while also suggesting the crescendo of his own vomiting, as though he were masturbating. His metaphors correspond to Temple's description of her rape, with an entry reversing itself into a phallic image of power. In a sense, Horace is performing the rape again on both Little Belle and Temple, as well as upon himself. Horace purges himself of the recognition of his own complicity within social systems of rape; however, while he may well be cognizant of his own perversity, still his phobic and fetishistic responses to the feminine come through. The female figure is likened to an icon "from a crucifix" and takes on characteristics of a defiled idol; moreover, woman appears as a sacrificial victim, observing "something black and furious" expell from her body. This black expulsion, aside from corresponding to the moment of Horace's vomiting, taints the very substance of the female body, as though it were the source of putrification and death. It also reminds us of Horace's Bovary metaphor for Popeye. The feminine is imagined as an unknown black substance, and it is physically bound to male images of Progress, the flat car and "a roar of iron wheels." Horace's own ejaculatory expulsion undermines any suggestion that he regrets his own incestuous longings for either Narcissa or Little Belle. His
metaphors reveal an ambivalent sexual identity, as well as a collapsing of sexual difference: the vaginal becomes phallic; the feminine, masculine. This moment is Horace's own primal scene, one in which remembrance of events slides into the creation of familiar signs of anxiety. Like Temple, his trauma is one of interpreting himself.

In a sense, Temple's disturbing performance before a chagrined Horace parallels the roles of a narrator and a reader. She transcribes herself as a multi-faceted text, whose symbols are always of that which is absent, for she is none of these images. She is reading back into the events and producing her own text, but one which is dissociated from her present self. Clearly, she is authoring her self, but as a distant narrator. Clearly, too, she is reading herself from a similar distance. Her prosopopoeia of her self is both a writing and a reading simultaneously. Temple's metaphors suggest her own half-mourning, her half-death, and her voiced experience.35 The reader, not unlike Horace, moves from the spectacle before him to an authoritative interpretation, becoming the analyst. Like a patient,

35 Lukacher describes the masking quality of prosopopoeia: "The Greek prosopon and the Latin persona signify an inseparable connection between taking on the voice of the other and mourning. In assuming the voice of the dead, the masked actor performs an act of half-mourning, reminding the audience not only that the voice that speaks is already dead but also that it lives on behind the mask. With each utterance the voice announces that it is neither properly dead nor alive but somewhere between the two" (90).
Temple is masking some aspects of the event through voicing them as explicitly as she does. Temple was not what she now is; she is defiled by the rape and defiles, even more precisely, defaces herself before the reader. Temple, the newly inscribed temple of Freud's hysterical patient, presents a face, a mask, which conceals as it restores the Temple involved in the event. Two Temples present themselves in the novel: each disfiguring the other within the rhetoric of the narrative; each depriving the reader of satisfactory authority; and each restoring Temple as the cause of her own narrative, her own raping and reading. At first, Temple seems to repress her initial trauma, translating and deciphering events in such a manner as to alter the horror of them; this translation of events can be viewed as cries for interpretation, as though she were a patient before an analyst, disclosing as she veils. Reading the Temple becomes the reader's primal scene of interpretation, his remembering and forgetting, his restortion and defacement.

Faulkner's primal scene operates from sexual difference at first, because he guides his reader toward the conclusion that Fathers play a significant role in Sanctuary. Temple's incantatory appeals to save her from her inevitable harm at the Old Frenchman's Place are appeals to authority: "My Father's a judge." This phrase resonates with several implications. It implies the patriarchal authority of this social order: the role of father as omniscient figure, nearly God-like, with an ability to pass judgment upon others; the father as law-
begetter and -giver; the father and judge as equivalent terms, as metaphors for one another; and, the father as one who reads a given set of conditions, passes judgment, and thereby encloses those conditions. The reader, not the author, fulfills a similar role in the text, casting a God-like glance over the conditions presented, reading out of these conditions certain implications, and passing judgment, assessing culpability for the crimes. One cannot overlook the fact that Temple's father is actually a judge, one who is directly involved with social crimes. When Temple cries out to the judgment of the Father, she invokes the judgment of the reader in the same instance. Theories which associate reading with the writing of the text are useful here. If the reader is to detect the meaning of the text, he must re-write the text in such a manner as to produce his conclusions. He can only do so from a position of assumed authority. Here, the text lends a generous hand. And so, the reader gets caught in a serious double bind, no longer detached from the text, but, as Felman suggests, actively participating in its crimes.

Certainly, Temple acquiesces to the phallus--the Law of the Father--a desire for what is absent. Temple, as we have been informed, has been subjugated to male domination all of her life. She arrives at the Old Frenchman's Place escorted by the drunken Gowan Stevens, whose name ironically suggests the knightly figure of Sir Gawain. He has already fouled his quest, to get Temple to Starkville for the baseball game, and when she suggests that he return her to
Oxford, to the safety of her dormitory, he shouts his phallogocentric disgust and intentions:

"Trying to come over me with your innocent ways. Don't think I spent last night with a couple of your barber-shop jellies for nothing. Don't think I fed them my liquor just because I'm big-hearted. You're pretty good, aren't you? Think you can play around all week with any badger-trimmed hick that owns a Ford, and fool me on Saturday, don't you? Don't think I didn't see your name where it's written on that lavatory wall. Don't you believe me?" (37)

That the townsboys screech "My father's a Judge" as the couple pulls away from the university reinforces the sardonic, threatening views males have toward Temple. Her name scrawled upon a bathroom wall hardly denotes poetic appraisals of her innocence. Gowan's ultimate insinuation is that Temple flirts, or worse, with townsboys during the week, but is unwilling to give in to his sexual interests. In short, Temple is perceived phallogocentrically, in terms of male domination, as one who uses words to acquire male protection and benefits--simply put, she is a prick-tease. She taunts the phallic system with her own phallic power.

When Gowan smashes his car into the tree lying in the road just outside Goodwin's place, Temple enters another world. Or does she? All the men at Goodwin's react to her no differently from the boys at school and in town. "'He aint laid no crop by yit, has he?'"(40) one of them says to Temple. Popeye refuses her teasing, seductive appeals to take her in his Packard back to town, telling
Gowan: "Make your whore lay off of me, Jack" (48). Temple's reply is both childish and somewhat teasing: "'You mean old thing!'" (49). When she meets Ruby, she recounts her family's social standing, perhaps to ensure safety and to appeal to the only woman on the premises:

"Where is your brother?" Temple said, peering around the door. "I've got four brothers. Two are lawyers and one's a newspaper man. The other's still in school. At Yale. My father's a judge. Judge Drake of Jackson." She thought of her father sitting on the veranda, in a linen suit, a palm leaf in his hand, watching the Negro mow the lawn. (52)

The secure image of the Southern ideal, of white male dominance, enables her to overcome that "little black man," Popeye, whom she fears. Her family fantasy, though, is shattered by her own admission; the loving and protective brothers would kill her, she says, if they ever caught her with a drunkard. But Temple enjoys her access to males. Ruby cannot tolerate her insipid displays and curses her for "playing at it"—playing at sexuality, at being a real woman. When Ruby tells Temple of her own encounter with male domination, Temple misses the point entirely. Ruby's father shot her lover to death with a shotgun, then ordered her to defile herself, "'Get down there and sup your dirt, you whore'" (56); hearing this, Temple responds, "'I have been called that'" (56).

Temple does not understand Ruby's term for whoring, "jazzing." She cannot find solace with any adult on the place and so she turns
her attentions to Ruby's infant child, comforting herself by comforting the infant: "'Nobody's going to hurt you'" (61). She even appeals to the phlegm-clot-eyed man for justice, offering her paternal refrain, but to no avail, because God, Judge, and reader cannot intercede on her behalf. Temple does not want any intervention. She has merely translated one world for another. Her incessantly running from the house and back to it describes not a frightened young girl in the clutches of over-bearing men, but the same tease who flirted with the inevitably of sexuality with her peers back in Oxford. To assuage her guilt for not leaving, she prepares herself for the sacrifice of her virginity. Within the "faint dry whisper of shucks" (68), she undresses herself, all the while being observed by the masturbating Tommy, whose rhythmic "Durn them fellers" (68) repeats itself in time with Temple's disrobing. She makes herself into a mock-effigy, lying upon her bed of corn shucks as though she were some virgin about to be sacrificed, awaiting the impending ordeal. Instead, she is brought "a customer" (70), her Southern knight, the now thoroughly drunken Gowan, whose sense of chivalry is more comic than tragic: "... girl. 'Ginia gem... gemman got proteck..." (71). Her running, disrobing, and child-like discourse are exhibitionistic appeals to the men; more literal than Ruby's accusation, Temple enjoys playing at sexuality. She focuses all sexual attention, especially that of the reader, upon her "playing at it." The reader, in the course of these first few chapters, has
moved from judge to voyeur. Temple's phallic power does not end with her sexual frivolity at the Old Frenchman's Place, nor does the reader's voyeurism. Her re-enactment of the rape causes a repulsion and attraction similar to the urination scene.

Her rapes continue throughout the novel. At the Grotto, she grabs for Popeye's dysfunctional penis, prefigured in the initial rape scene in the barn by his pistol hanging "behind him, against his flank, wisping thinly along his leg" (99), whispering, "'Give it to me. . . .Daddy. Daddy'" (229). Fully aware of Popeye's impotence, she verbally and physically demonstrates her sexual power over him. She rapes him. Her tormenting of Popeye produces a showdown between the two men now in her life--Red and Popeye. She writhes her loins against Red imploring him to leave, but also admitting to her murderous scheme: "'It's not my fault. Is it my fault? You dont need your hat and I dont either. He came here to kill you But I said I gave him his chance. It wasn't my fault. And now it'll just be us. Without him there watching'" (232). But the confrontation, almost an Oedipal rivalry between her "Daddy" and her lover, has been set in motion, and Temple is left with her complicity. Red's death is another re-enactment of Temple's, with the foreign object being a bullet and the result a literal, not figural death. At Lee Goodwin's trial, Temple lies on the witness stand, replacing all of Popeye's actions with Goodwin's. Memory and forgetting no longer entertain possibilities for interpretation in this instance, any more than they
do for her rapes of Popeye and Red. Temple is creating a primal scene, but one in which she now becomes perpetrator. Goodwin's body is set on fire by the mob of Jefferson citizens who follow Eustice Graham's implicit court instructions: "You have just heard the testimony of the chemist and the gynecologist—who is, as you gentlemen know, an authority on the most sacred affairs of that most sacred thing in life: womanhood—who says that this is no longer a matter for the hangman, but for a bonfire of gasoline" (276). More significantly, Goodwin is brutally raped: "Do to the lawyer what we did to him. What he did to her. Only we never used a cob. We made him wish we had used a cob" (289).

Faulkner concludes Sanctuary with a chapter that invites psychoanalytic interpretation. It concerns Popeye and Temple. The reader learns about Popeye's deprived and depraved childhood: his lineage included alcoholics, pyromaniacs, and sexually licentious parents; as a syphilitic baby, he did not learn to walk or talk until the age of four; he cut up two lovebirds with a pair of scissors and cut up a half-grown kitten, for which he was sent to a home for incorrigible children; and he presumably entered the underworld quite early in life. Faulkner also provides details of Popeye's ironic arrest for a murder he did not commit, and his subsequent hanging, which has the implications of a suicidal act. The information on Popeye reads like pages out of clinical records, but they tell us nothing about Popeye's psychological make-up or actions. Faulkner again entices
the reader to produce an interpretation to explain the inexplicable behavior of his characters, especially Temple. The final section of the novel has Temple next to her father in the Luxembourg Gardens, yawning as she stares vapidly into her compact, ignoring the milieu of stagnation and death about her: "She closed the compact and from beneath her smart new hat she seemed to follow with her eyes the waves of music, to dissolve into the dying brasses, across the pool and the opposite semicircle of trees where at sombre intervals the dead tranquil queens in stained marble mused, and on into the sky lying prone and vanquished in the embrace of the season of rain and death" (309). Like the stained feminine figures, Temple seems impervious to the season of death she has caused.

Any attempt on the reader's behalf to ascribe a certain psychological motivation to Temple's sexual flirtations, her acceptance of Popeye's world, her lying in court, or her rapes reduces the reader to the role of (the)rapist. In a movement to control the meaning of events, the desire for dominance, for interpretation, takes over. The primal scene of Sanctuary is the reader's interpretation, his imagistic and linguistic constructs for designating a meaning. Like Freud before his patient, the reader faces an hysterical text, which reminds him of his own fixation and hysteria toward it. The reader is obsessed with meaning, with cause and effect, and succumbs to Faulkner's narrative thematics by desiring to impose order on chaos. Essentially, the reader is caught up in what
Friederich Nietzsche called the most fundamental form of fetishism, the projection of the vanity of the ego into language:

Language belongs in its origin to the age of the most rudimentary form of psychology: we find ourselves in the midst of a rude fetishism when we call to mind the basic presuppositions of the metaphysics of language—which is to say, of reason. It is this which sees everywhere deed and doer; this which believes in will as cause in general; this which believes in the 'ego', in the ego as being, in the ego as substance, and which projects its beliefs in the ego-substance on to all things—only thus does it create the concept 'thing'.

While rape is Faulkner's master trope for the process of interpretation in *Sanctuary*, reading goes beyond merely this sense of mastery. It derives from a desire for the Other. If psychoanalytical criticism provides one truth, it may well be the inevitability of this desire to recur so long as we need to fulfill the lack which all reading produces, so long as we desire to master what we define as knowable. Within this process of desire, mastery, and knowledge we construct and control our illusory sanctuaries.

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37 Gallop, *Reading Lacan*, p.185: "The desire to know what the Other knows, so as to know what one desires so as to satisfy that desire, is the drive behind all quests for knowledge. Outside the knot, there is no desire for knowledge and thus no impetus to know. We read because we desire to know, and so reading must lie within the knot where the subject's desire is intricated with the Other's."
But he also wonders at himself, that he cannot learn to forget but clings relentlessly to the past: however far and fast he may run, this chain runs with him. And it is a matter for wonder: a moment, now here and then gone, nothing before it came, again nothing after it has gone, nonetheless returns a ghost and disturbs the peace of a later moment. A leaf flutters from the scroll of time, floats away—and suddenly floats back again and falls into man's lap. Then the man says "I remember"... That is why it affects him like a vision of a lost paradise to see the herds grazing or, in closer proximity to him, a child which, having as yet nothing of the past to shake off, plays in blissful blindness between the hedges of past and future. Yet its play must be disturbed; all too soon it will be called out of its state of forgetfulness. Then it will learn to understand the phrase 'it was': that password which gives conflict, suffering and satiety access to man so as to remind him what his existence fundamentally is—an imperfect tense that can never become a perfect one. If death at last brings the desired forgetting, by that act it at the same time extinguishes the present and all being and therewith sets the seal on the knowledge that being is only an uninterrupted has-been, a thing that lives by negating, consuming and contradicting itself.

--Nietzsche¹

Ghosts haunt the pages of *Absalom, Absalom!* In fact, ghosts far outnumber the living in the novel. Indeed, characters often refer to themselves and others as ghosts. Quentin perceives himself as "a barracks filled with stubborn back-looking ghosts"; Mr. Compson refers to Southern women as ghosts, in particular Rosa Coldfield, whose very name conjures up graves and sepulchers; Ellen Coldfield "had immolated outrageous husband and incomprehensible children into shades" (69); Rosa views Sutpen as an ogre or djinn and Charles Bon as a shadow. Allusions to shades and spectres transform the living into the walking dead and, conversely, grant the dead life. Morover, several narrators—General and Mr. Compson, Quentin, and Rosa—inhabit parts of the narrative as disembodied voices, spectres within the text. The text's omniscient narrator fades in and out of the narrations as though he too were an apparition. The very title of the novel recalls David's lament for his deceased son, Absalome, his cry almost an invocation to the past which can only return as haunted memory, as language. *Absalom, Absalom!* is, thus, a book of the dead. And the dead do tell tales.

Spectres of the dead visit the living through memory and language, both of which contribute to the development of the imperfect tense, which is narrative. Reviving the dead through storytelling preoccupies each character. Each narrative demonstrates

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how the past thoroughly intrudes upon each narrator's consciousness. Memory enables the past to acquire a living presence by superimposing its phantoms from the dead past onto the world of present. Memory fabricates a continuum for history and integrates, although never exactly, past and present. As primary collocutor of the various accounts of Sutpen's legend, Quentin often senses the intrusion of voices from the past, as though memory were violating his existence. Shreve, his Harvard roommate, accuses Quentin of sounding like his father: "'Don't say it's just me that sounds like your old man'" (261). Not immediately responding to Shreve's charge, Quentin instead contemplates the process of memory. To him, memory never recalls the past, because the past is never a completed act, but seems to repeat itself unceasingly through memory. Quentin perceives this infinite progression of memory in terms of the physics of waves, which is also applicable to sound:

Maybe we are both Father. Maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished. Maybe happens is never once but like ripples maybe on water after the pebble sinks, the ripples moving on, spreading, the pool attached by a narrow umbilical water-cord to the next pool which the first pool feeds, has fed, did feed, let this second pool contain a different temperature of water, a different molecularity of having seen, felt, remembered, reflect in a different tone the infinite unchanging sky, it doesn't matter: that pebble's watery echo whose fall it did not even see moves across its surface too at the original ripple-space, to the old ineradicable rhythm. Yes, we are both Father.
Or maybe Father and I are both Shreve, maybe it took Father and me both to make Shreve or Shreve and me to make Father or maybe Thomas Sutpen to make all of us. (261-2)

To Quentin, both he and Shreve echo his father's voice, because he recognizes memory as "the old ineradicable rhythm" of time and life. It is not Shreve's insinuation that Quentin muses over, but the very subject of their conversation, Sutpen's design for establishing a genealogical line. For Quentin, genealogy extends beyond Sutpen's family to incorporate all who hear, tell, and remember Sutpen's story. Even though Quentin has a different "molecularity" of sensations and recollections from his father, the motion of time and memory still affects them equally. The umbilical cord suggests an interconnection between past and present; however, the imagery also implies a kind of birth, a creation of a new story, a new tense. The distinct, yet umbilically connected pools are moved by the same motion of the pebble, whose "watery echo," like the voice of a ghost from the past, recurs again and again. It is the echo, the

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3 See Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), p. 98: "Memory creates the chain of tradition which passes a happening on from generation to generation. It is the Muse-derived element of the epic art in a broader sense and encompasses its varieties. In the first place among these is the one practiced by the storyteller. It starts the web which all stories together form in the end. One ties on to the next, as the great storytellers, particularly the Oriental ones, have always readily shown. In each of them there is a Scheherazade who thinks of a fresh story whenever her tale comes to a stop. This is the epic remembrance and the Muse-inspired element of the narrative."
remembering and retelling of history, that indiscriminately moves Quentin, Shreve, Father, and Sutpen and that locates them all in the same time, within the time of narrative. Quentin reveals not just the physics of memory, but also its metaphysics, its inexhaustible creation of presence.

Language, too, signifies presence, as though giving voice to the dead resurrects them. Language also presents a plenitude of presence so much so that presence seems to overwhelm language. In the same manner, ghosts invade the language of the narrators with their presence. For example, Rosa's voice is haunted by Sutpen's ghost: "and the voice not ceasing but vanishing into and then out of the long intervals like a stream, a trickle running from patch to patch of dried sand, and the ghost mused with shadowy docility as if it were the voice which he haunted" (8). The movement of the stream recalls the watery motion across the surface of the pools. Both memory and language structure narratives so that, as Michel Foucault concludes, "the present rests upon profound intentions and immutable necessities" of the past.4

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4 Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History," Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: selected essays and interviews by Michel Foucault, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (1977; rpt. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 155. Foucault concludes, in his reading of Nietzsche's views of history, that the purpose of history "is not to discover the roots of our identity, but to commit itself to its dissipation. It does not seek to define our unique threshold of emergence, the homeland to which metaphysicians promise a return; it seeks to make visible all of those discontinuities that cross us" (162).
language are a means for writing and reading one's life as a narrative sequence of crucially integrated and significant events. But memory and language do not integrate historical accounts, as the novel's structure bears out, but instead shows discontinuities that exist between past and present. Memory and language are also associated with the concepts of repetition and displacement which are representation. Eugenio Donato directly associates memory to textuality, so that every story of a text, including the retelling of events and the critical analysis of those events, is bound to a process of displacement and repetition, of mimesis and transcription. Thus, memory and language constitute any history.

Absalom, Absalom!, however, problematizes narrative and history. The novel's narrative structure does not pattern itself chronologically, but radically shifts and repeats Sutpen's history, as well as the telling of his story. Fragmentary elements of this history

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5 Donato, "Topographies of Memory," Sub-stance 21 (1978): 37-48. Donato directly associates memory to textuality: "If a literary text is by necessity a representation, then all stories of literature, whether they postulate the function of literature to be the mimetic representation of a non-textual reality, or, within the broader context of intertextuality, the repetition, displacement, or reinscription of purely 'textual' entities, necessarily associate with each text a 'memory.' The representative function of the text is essentially bound to such a 'memory,' which the text is supposed to imitate, reproduce, or transcribe. Each theory of the text views the relationship of a text to its 'memory' differently, but what remains constant is the postulation of the necessary relationship of a text to a memory" (37).
emerge in the narratives, diverging and intersecting with other events. Several temporal movements overlap in the text: the record traces a linear time; repetitions and flashbacks formulate a circular time; events seeming to transcend historical reality suggest a mythical dimension; and metaphorical fusions of past and present impart both a sequentiality and atemporality to the novel. The story unfolds in chapter I with Rosa telling Quentin about Sutpen's early days in Jefferson and his marriage to her sister Ellen; chapter II continues that same evening with Mr. Compson's history of the same plot elements to Quentin; chapters III and IV continue the storytelling between father and son, with Mr. Compson providing details about Rosa and the relationship between Judith and Henry Sutpen and Charles Bon; chapter V is a flashback to Rosa explaining to Quentin what occurred on the eve of Bon's death, as well as Sutpen's proposal/insult to her; the final chapters are a series of

6 See Patricia Tobin, "The Time of Myth and History in Absalom, Absalom!" American Literature 45 (May, 1973): 252-270. Tobin, following a structuralist model, shows how synchrony of myth and the diachrony of history attest to the novel's sense of timelessness and temporality: "Within the flow of time there is something--model, metaphor, paradigm, myth--that survives outside the coherence of linearity, and is universally and atemporally applicable" (249-50). See also Gail L. Mortimer, "Significant Absences: Faulkner's Rhetoric of Loss," Novel 14 (Spring, 1981): 232-250. Mortimer discusses the immanence of the past reflected in the novel's many references to ghosts, the effect of which "maintains the dual nature of the past, seeing it simultaneously as fully contained and represented in the present moment and as separate, different, anachronistic, discontinuous, and importantly 'other'" (235).
speculations between Quentin and his Harvard roommate Shreve, intruded upon by the voices of Rosa, Grandfather and Mr. Compson, as well as another flashback to Quentin driving Rosa out to Sutpen's Hundred. Further complicating these dislodgments of time, Faulkner later appended to the novel a chronology and genealogy of the Sutpen drama. Obviously, the text does not end with Quentin's final words, but requires still more retellings. But Faulkner's additional "facts" further complicate the text's relationship to itself; for they place the text into the past, making it a memory, transforming it into a ghost of itself. Faulkner calls our attention to the text as a history. He also provides within the text a host of historical evidence for the reader to sort through—eyewitness accounts, anecdotes, testimonies, hearsay, paraphrase, archives of letters, and artifacts. The project for the reader is to gather these narrative threads of the text and to weave together what actually happened.

To accomplish this task, the reader re-narrates the Sutpen dynastic history. However, his sources are far from being reliable or factual. The text's narrators veil the truth of history, disclosing only those elements of Sutpen's biography that they see as relevant. Much of the time, they impart their idiosyncratic stories of the world. Thus, the storytellers invariably tell their own story, their own history, as Faulkner suggests: "...every time any character gets into a book, no matter how minor, he's actually telling his biography—that's all anyone ever does, he tells his own biography, talking about
himself, in a thousand different terms, but himself." Sutpen's legend, then, must be re-created by the reader, who, in turn, will tell his-story. The reader inhabits and haunts the pages of the novel as much as narrators and ghosts.

*Absalom, Absalom!* makes us aware of the processes of telling and reading history. Each narrative emends and critiques the previous story, and each narrator exposes his/her own interests for telling Sutpen's history. Rosa Coldfield's hortatory rhetoric implores Quentin to become the historian of Sutpen's, and thus her own, life; in effect, she asks Quentin to ghost-write her autobiography:

"So maybe you will enter the literary profession as so many Southern gentlemen and gentlewomen too are doing now and maybe some day you will remember this and write about it. You will be married then I expect and perhaps your wife will want a new gown or a new chair for the house and you can write this and submit it to the magazines. Perhaps you will even remember kindly then the old woman who made you spend a whole afternoon sitting indoors and listening while she talked about people and event you were fortunate enough to escape. . . ." (9-10)

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7 Faulkner, *Faulkner in the University*, p. 275.
8 See Nietzsche, p. 87: "The most astonishing thing may come to pass—the host of the historically neutral is always there ready to supervise the author of it even while he is still far off. The echo is heard immediately: but always as a 'critique', though the moment before the critic did not so much as dream of the possibility of what has been done. The work never produces an effect but only another 'critique'; and the critique itself produces no effect either, but again only a further critique."
Mr. Compson's narratives acquaint Quentin with his Southern heritage and ancestry. He also interprets that past for his son in order to expose and to denounce its aberrations, cruelties, and obsessions. Quentin's rapprochment with Bon's struggles seem to move toward historical veracity, but in essence, he wants to comprehend the effects the past has on him. He also endeavors to answer the questions his Canadian roommate, Shreve McCannon, has about the South: "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" (174). Quentin's tale is a paradigm of Southern obsessions with family, genealogy, and race. All of the Jefferson narrators, although critical of the past, still revere it because they can neither forget nor nullify its effects upon their lives; even more so, they know all too well that they originate out of that past, acknowledging that they are as much of part of it as it is a part of them. Hence, their critical

9 See Nietzsche, pp. 75-76: "If he is to live, man must possess and from time to time employ the strength to break up and dissolve a part of the past: he does this by bringing it before the tribunal, scurpulously examining it and finally condemning it: every past, however, is worthy to be condemned--for that is the nature of human things. . .this same life that requires forgetting demands a temporary suspension of this forgetfulness; it wants to be clear as to how unjust the existence of anything--a privilege, a caste, a dynasty, for example, is, and how greatly this thing deserves to perish. Then its past is regarded critically, then one takes the knife to its roots, then one cruelly tramples over every kind of piety. It is always a dangerous process, especially so for life itself: and men and ages which serve life by judging and destroying a past are always dangerous and endangered men and ages. For since we are the
speculations always refer both to Yoknapatawpha's history and to themselves.

Shreve, though, like the reader, is not directly affected by the ancestral, monumental past of Southern history, but he still cannot escape its allure. Several times he abruptly stops Quentin from divulging the answer to his inquiries, because he wants the tale to continue: "'Wait, then,' Shreve said. 'For God's sake wait'" (216). Faulkner constructs his narrative to entrap the reader in this very predicament. Like Quentin, we listen to voices of authority informing us of the ghosts of the past. And like Shreve, we acquire our knowledge only through our own desire to "play a while now" (280). Shreve means play in two senses, one the game of creating the past, constructing a text, and the other the staging, emplotting, and directing of the past. For him, truth is not the issue; the play's the thing. Moreover, his sarcastic references to Sutpen as "this Fautus, this demon, this Beelzebub" (178) question the "truth" which has been presented to Quentin by the other storytellers.

Clearly, Absalom, Absalom! is filled with infinite discontinuities in the history of Sutpen and his dynasty. Like Quentin and Shreve, the reader must fabricate a history from the missing pieces in order
to fill in the gaps: "the two of them creating between them, out of the rag-tag and bob-ends of old tales and talking, people who perhaps had never existed at all anywhere, who, shadows, were shadows not of flesh and blood which had lived and died but shadows in turn of what were (to one of them at least, to Shreve) shades too, quiet as the visible murmur of their vaporizing breath" (303). "Rag-tag and bob-ends" suggest unjoined pieces of fabric, disconnected texts, which need to be woven together. Quentin and Shreve, who play with the stories, weave the final text from the loose threads of these fragmentary tales. Here, the imagery of the passage brings to mind other metaphors for storytelling--texts, fabricating, storyline, threads of the story--and reminds us of the tenuous and problematic nature of narration. From "old tales and talking" the past becomes

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10 See J. Hillis Miller, "Ariadne's Thread: Repetition and the Narrative Line," Interpretation of Narrative, eds. Mario J. Valdés and Owen J. Miller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981) who provides numerous associated terms which pertain to Absalom, Absalom! and the reader's play with its storylines, such as: "narrative line, life line, by-line, main line, drop me a line... genealogical line, genetic strain, affiliation, defile, thread of the story, ficelle... loose thread, marginal, trope, chiasmus, hyperbole, crisis... marriage tie, couple, coupling, copulation, plot, double plot, sub-plot, spin a yarn, get an angle on, the end of the line" (156). Miller's object is not to pun, but to demonstrate how narrative is organized along logocentric and monological "lines": "Narrative event follows narrative event in a purely metonymic line, but the series tends to organize itself or to be organized into a causal chain. The chase has a beast in view. The end of the story is the retrospective revelation of the law of the whole" (158).
enlivened in the present. However, what they create is not a tale of substance, but one of shadows which are themselves already shades. The reader, too, assembles these fragments, creating a text along with the narrators. These repetitions, emendations, and re-contextualizations of the narrative threads do not produce a document, but just another "rag-tag" of "bob-ends." The reader's narrative supplements the novel's reality by adding to it and subtracting from it,\textsuperscript{11} repeating again the shadow of a shade. Shreve also equates these shades with Quentin and him, "quiet as the visible murmur of their vaporizing breath," and reinforces that the tale he and Quentin fabricate is not really about "flesh and blood which had lived" but about themselves.

Just as this final narrative is pieced-together, the history of Sutpen's dynasty is a compilation of various storylines and narrative threads. Much of the investigative action taken by the narrators and

\textsuperscript{11} See Dominick LaCapra, \textit{Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983) who distinguishes between document and "worklike" texts: "The document situates the text in terms of factual or literal dimensions involving reference to empirical reality and conveying information about it. The 'worklike' supplements empirical reality by adding to and subtracting from it. It thereby involves dimensions of the text not reducible to the documentary, prominently including the roles of commitment, interpretation, and imagination. The worklike is critical and transformative, for it deconstructs and reconstructs the given, in a sense repeating it but also bringing into the world something that did not exist before in that significant variation, alternation, or transformation" (30).
by the reader is to uncover who Thomas Sutpen really was. The narrators of Thomas Sutpen's history have produced, in F. H. Bradley's terms, "diverse pictures of the same figure, which all profess to be copied from life." However, the reader is unable to know what is the original and what is the copy; moreover, the reader cannot discern what is imitation, substitution, or displacement, since the original remains incompletely or incorrectly rendered. The variety of historical portraits in the novel define a prosopography: "an elaborate network of particular people . . . like cells in a honeycomb, are often in contact on only a single edge." Determining that single edge is quite difficult because the characters

12 Bradley, The Presuppositions of Critical History, ed. Lionel Rubinoff (1874; rpt. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), p. 130: "If we wish to see with our eyes the material and the task of the historian, we must imagine a fresco representing in a continual progress the figures and the actions of generations. And this is not the work of a single artist. On the contrary the artists are many with the many generations, and at times there is more than one in a single division of the picture. But though they are many they are not all painters from the life; for some lived after the time when the figures they portrayed had perished. And of these latter some with their names have told us that they borrowed from copies now lost, and of others we do not know even this; while of some again we can see that they copied, and copied wrongly, from original drawings which we still have."

appear to talk more about themselves than they do about Sutpen's biographical enigmas. These narratives, which do not profess to have the speaker as their actual subject, are nevertheless autobiographical. The narrators are blind to their imaginative self-history, but so too is the reader, whose search for the truth in the text rests upon a blindness to the fictions being created around him.\textsuperscript{14} The juxtaposition of auto- and biographical features puts into question the storytellers' veracity. The novel's dominate trope, then, is prosopopoeia, which confers a mask or face by "giving and taking away of faces, with face and deface, \textit{figure}, figuration and disfiguration."\textsuperscript{15} Sutpen's identity is "transmorgified into a mask" (60), "like the mask in Greek tragedy, interchangeable not only from scene to scene, but from actor to actor" (62). The history occurring in the novel does not unveil Sutpen, but rather defaces his image; he is

\textsuperscript{14} Benedetto Croce, \textit{History as the story of Liberty} (New York: Meridian Books, 1955), p. 113: ". . . and one remembers the poor storyteller who went blind, but continued to hold the book in his hand as though he were reading out of it, but was deserted by his listeners once they discovered his infirmity and saw that he was not reading any more out of the 'book,' that book which was for them the guarantee of reality. The characters of novels inasmuch as they contribute to experience and to practical example, are at that moment believed in and thought of as men belonging to the reality of events. The information in anecdotes must refer or pretend to refer to things which have happened, for only this way can they satisfy the need they have described."

\textsuperscript{15} Paul de Man, "Autobiography as De-facement" \textit{MLN} 94 (1979): 926.
transformed and then discarded by the narrators in favor of their own story, their history.

The idea of copying fits into the pattern of genealogy and race at the center of the novel's theme. Sutpen's "design" becomes one of self-contained, self-controlled copying; in short, it is a self-mimicing process which resembles the act of writing, of narrative. Yet, Sutpen is unable to recreate himself in the manner he wishes, because, as James Guetti asserts, Sutpen's entire design "is not a physical or a literal act, but an imaginative and metaphorical achievement." The metaphoric design Sutpen desires is never linked to offspring exactly, so much as a re-creation of himself. He becomes obsessed with repeating himself in the form of a white male heir, but ironically can only achieve inauthentic likenesses of himself, seen clearly in his Negro children. Charles Bon's forthright presentation of self somewhat parallels Sutpen's creation of his self; both intrude upon a class and culture which their previous, unknown heritage,

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17 For a discussion of Sutpen's "design" as a tropic construct and as dissemination, see Ralph Flores, The Rhetoric of Doubtful Authority: Deconstructive Readings of Self-Questioning Narratives. St. Augustine to Faulkner (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 151: "If offspring bear a metonymic and metaphoric relation to their parents (contiguity, with birth, becomes resemblances), Sutpen wants only controlled or proper figures as his line--his progeny, name, story--and to that end tries vainly and unceasingly to substitute wives for wives, children for children."
had it been fully disclosed, would have disallowed and barred their entry into society. And both are seen by certain narrators as inauthentic copies, Sutpen by means of his wildness and monomania, Bon by his taint of "nigger" blood. Rosa's metaphors of djinn, ogre, and ghost suggest replications of Sutpen. Of course, all of the narrators engage in just this sort of metaphoric transference, which itself is a form of reduplication. Shadows and ghosts are not originals, but "like painted portraits hung in a vacuum, each taken at its forewarned peak and smoothed of all thought and experience, the originals of which had lived and died so long ago their joys and griefs must now be forgotten even by the very boards on which they strutted and postured and laughed and wept" (75). Copying also applies to the acts of narration and reading: the narrators copy, inscribe, Sutpen from legends and myths; the reader also copies Sutpen from likenesses culled from the various narrators. However much the narrator or reader believes he ascertains the real Sutpen, he remains powerless to reproduce that "elapsed, yet-elapsing" (22) entity, Sutpen or the text. And what remains is only a shadow, only a ghost of the man. This explains the impossibility of recovering the original from the various copies of any history.

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Along with copying from originals, the reader recognizes that the narrators tell tales whose plots follow generic storylines. Understanding the narrators' modes of emplotment, to use Hayden White's terms, reveals the way they view history and themselves. Of course, any reading of history is the recognition of story—romance, tragedy, comedy, satire, epic—which dispells the "original strangeness, mystery, or exocitism of the events" because they are now comprehensible "by being subsumed under the categories of plot structure in which they are encoded as a story of a particular kind" but also because "the data conform to an icon of a comprehensible finished process, a plot structure with which he is familiar." Rosa's narrative is a melodramatic tale of villainy and feminine foolishness and heroism; Mr. Compson's narratives describe a modern epic morbid self-attention to "vanity" and "pride" (51); Quentin's tales expresses a tragic significance about Sutpen's family; and Shreve intervenes into the retelling to expose how fundamentally ironic it is. By isolating these types of stories, the

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21 Most critics of this novel impose their own designs upon the narratives. See Lynn Gartrell Lewis, "The Four Narrative Perspectives in *Absalom, Absalom!*," *PMLA* 85 (January, 1970): 35-47. Lewis divides the work as follows: Rosa's Gothic mystery; Mr. Compson's Greek tragedy; Quentin's chivalric tale; and Shreve's Tall Tale. The designations seem almost arbitrary and this sort of
reader translates the text into a design he already knows.

The design of the narratives, therefore, corresponds to Sutpen's "design," that desire to create a likeness of one's self. Sutpen explained his design to Quentin's grandfather and "to fate itself, the logical steps by which he had arrived at a result absolutely and forever incredible, repeating the clear and simple synopsis of his history" (263). The logic and systematic story Sutpen tells General Compson parallels the architechtonics of narrative. Sutpen even admits that his education was acquired from books and that he patterned himself after their designs: "'I learned little save that most of the deeds, good and bad both, incurring opprobrium or plaudits or reward either, within the scope of man's abilities, had already been performed and were to be learned about only from books. . . . I was equipping myself better for what I should later design'" (242). Each narrator reconstructs the design through the architectonics of his telling, and the reader constructs his "hermeneutic scaffolding" onto the house and Sutpen's design as well. 22 Sutpen's design, of course, is epitomized by the house itself, "that dream of girm and castlelike magnificence at which Sutpen obviously aimed" (38). His design transforms the land by an act resembling the original author: "the Sutpen's Hundred, the *Be Sutpen's Hundred*, like the oldentime *Be

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imposed emplotment exposes more about Lewis than about Faulkner's novel.

"Light" (9). The house also coincides with Sutpen's genealogical design and exists as long as his line endures. To Quentin, the mansion appears "as if the wood of which it was built were flesh" (366). It comes into existence in conjunction with Sutpen's dynastic design and exists no more, being burned to the ground, when Henry dies and Jim Bon, "the scion, the last of his race" (376), runs off.23 As the fire consumes, the house bellows "in human speech" (375), as though it were still alive or its spirit were fighting not to perish. But, it was a tomb even the moment it was created: "and so created of Sutpen's very defeat the victory which, in conquering, Sutpen himself would have failed to gain" (39). It is a ghost house haunted, just as the narratives are, by Sutpen. It is depicted as a "shell" (39) and so is Sutpen, "The shell of him was there" (160).

Houses and rooms are often depicted as tombs in the novel. And there exists a correlation between storytelling and death. The rooms in which the past is recalled and retold are filled with ghosts and images of death. Rosa's house is permeated with the tenebrous atmosphere of a tomb: "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 slow heat-laden time which had

23 For a standard apocalyptic view of the novel, see James G. Watson, "If Was Existed: Faulkner's prophets and patterns of History," Modern Fiction Studies 21 (Autumn, 1975): 449-507. An apocalyptic reading of the text is merely the imposition of a mode of emplotment; it is a way to read the text's history.
recurred during the forty-five years . . ." (10-11). Rosa's stubbornly puritanical Methodist father responds to Civil War, to "the idea of waste: of wearing out and eating up and shooting away material in any cause whatever" (83), by ironically wasting away himself. He nails himself behind the attic door, symbolically his coffin, and dies, but not before recording his family's history in the big family Bible. Sutpen's house is more a mortuary than a home; death plagues its confines in every generation. Ellen Sutpen's idiopathic condition, contributed to by her abuliac loss of spirit, slowly wears her away; she is entombed in Sutpen's house in a manner almost resembling her father's entombment. Her tabescent body is described with the same metaphor for the house, as a "substanceless shell" (126). And Quentin and Shreve tell tales in a room "indeed tomblike: a quality stale and static and moribund" (345).

The text itself is like a tomb that houses the dead. It is a memorial to death. When narrators inscribe their designs upon the past, they unconsciously acknowledge its control over them. They tell their stories as a way to reconcile the troubling control history has over them. But, they cannot escape their fascination for tales, myths, and legends of the dead. As a boy, Sutpen had heard "vague and cloudy tales of Tidewater splendor," but it was not until he was older that he "exhumed the tales" (222) from his memory and granted them significance. The narrators enact this same sort of exhumation of the past. As its title suggests, *Absalom, Absalom!* is
an epitaph. If narrative is a form of writing and reading, a way of creating a design to spawn one's self, then it is also a form of engraving. It is the purpose of history to capture, through memory and language, that which no longer is present. What can be presented, though, is the narrator's view of the world. But that view remains a paradoxical resignation to the influences of the past and a defiance of history's intrusion. If each narrator writes his own story when he narrates, then he also writes out his own epitaph.

Rosa's narrative reveals this fetishistic obsession with death and narrative. Her tomb-like house is filled with fetid odors of "coffin-smelling gloom" and the "rank smell of female old flesh" (8). Ghosts and a sense of absolute negation pervade her life. Rosa's voice seems to "just vanish" (10) in "the soundless Nothing" (8) of "nothusband" (7) and "notpeople, in notlanguage" (9). These negations exemplify Rosa's rhetoric, which reduces everyone, including herself, to absences. Moreover, Rosa occupies the self-appointed position of Yoknapatawpha's poetess laureate, who provides the newspaper with odes, eulogies, and epitaphs: "writing a
schoolgirl's poetry about the also-dead" (65). She is consumed by deaths of her own creation. Even her atropiac imagery of Sutpen hardly wards off his presence, but rather invokes his presence into her world of shades and ghosts. Rosa's repetitions of death and of her own existence indicate that she has an agenda, as Quentin remarks: "It's because she wants it told " (10).

Rosa desires both the telling and reliving of her role in Sutpen's demonic design; her protests that she does not plead for herself seem quite hollow: "And most of all, I do not plead myself: a young woman emerging from a holocaust which had taken parents security and all from her, who had seen all that living meant to her fall into ruins about the feet of a few figures with the shapes of men but with the names and statures of heroes" (19). Rosa sees herself as a heroine overcoming the curse of fate, but realizes she and the entire South were cursed and doomed: "Yes, fatality and curse on the South and on our family as though because of some ancestor of ours had elected to establish his descent in a land primed for fatality and already cursed with it, even if it had not rather been our family, our father's progenitor's, who had incurred the curse long years before and had been coerced by Heaven into establishing itself in the land and the time already cursed" (21). "As though" suggests that Rosa's etiology is a creation and not a reality; no father, no man, from her family's past was ever cursed. However, it is significant that her historical cause fits Sutpen exactly. Rosa's sense of displacement, of
dismal doom and absence, is blamed upon the monster from her past, Thomas Sutpen. Yet, she does not acquiesce to fate, but tells her tale as a way to undo the curse and to dispell the demon. Shreve correctly sums up Rosa's need to tell her story: "You dont even know about her. Except that she refused at the last to be a ghost" (362).

Rosa, though, constructs many ghost stories, especially about herself. Her entire history is punctuated by death and spectres. Rosa's birth made a ghost of her mother and she was born into a world already populated with the walking dead--Ellen and Goodhue Coldfield. When Wash Jones arrives at her home to announce Charles Bon's death to Rosa and to summon her out to Sutpen's Hundred, Rosa sees the world filled with signs of death: "...I went on up the drive, past Ellen's ruined and weed-choked flower beds and reached the house, the shell, the (so I thought) cocoon-casket marriage-bed of youth and grief and found that I had come, not too late as I had thought, but come too soon" (136). Rosa's visions of the world are always in terms of absences and death; the marriage bed is a casket, the house a shell, the garden ruined and the flowers exuding death and decay. Her world is constituted by lacks; she is herself a combination of absences--orphaned, sisterless, husbandless. Mr. Compson aptly describes her lack of presence: "In a grim mausoleum air of Puritan righteousness and outraged female vindictiveness Miss Rosa's childhood was passed, that aged and ancient and timeless absence of youth" (60). She admits that the world to her was never
alive, but permeated through and through with death: "...yet still a child, still living in that womb-like corridor where the world came not even as living echo but as dead incomprehensible shadow..." (162). That "womb-like corridor" of death echoes back to her birth and projects her sustained analogy of her existence, of forty some odd years as a ghost, one of the living dead.

Rosa's metaphors of absence stem from her failed courtships with Bon and Sutpen. She describes her movements as though she were in a dream, in a realm absent time:

--I, the dreamer clinging yet to the dream as the patient clings to the last thin unbearable ecstatic instant of agony in order to sharpen the savor of the pain's surcease, waking into reality, the more than reality, not to the unchanged and unaltered old time but into a time altered to fit the dream which, conjunctive with the dreamer, becomes immolated and apotheosized... (141)

Her dream coincides with her imaginative emplotting of her history: her poetic romance is one of love, ghosts, and djinn. Quentin recognizes the enchanting effect that Rosa's words have:

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, 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 and acceptance of elapsed
and yet-elapsing time as music or a printed tale. (22)

This "verisimilitude," is an active reading of the "printed tale" Rosa
offers him from the long, dead past to a present condition. History,
thus, re-enacts itself in the present, as a movement of music might; it
is a movement of absence, "of elapsed and yet-elapsing time." And
Rosa's dreamscape is constructed out of just such an enchanted time:
"that there is a might-have-been which is more than truth" (143).

So, Rosa tells stories, repeating the "Once there was" (143) not as a
sense of memory, but as her own controlling her time and her
reality: "there is no such thing as memory: and its resultant sum is
usually incorrect and false and worthy only of the name dream"
(143).

Rosa's romance with dreaming makes her a living ghost: "...I
displaced no air, gave off no betraying sound, from one closed
forbidden door to the next and so acquired all I knew of that light
and space in which people moved and breath as I (that same child)
might have gained conception of the sun from seeing it through a
piece of smoky glass--" (145). Rosa entombs herself behind the
doors of her imagination, much as her father actually entombed
himself to escape the realities of the Civil War. However, Rosa's
metaphoric death takes the form of unfulfilled desires. Her virginal
frustrations, "one anonymous climaxless epicene and unravished
nuptial" (145), she paradoxically accepts and rejects: "But it was no
summer of virgin's itching discontent; no summer caesarian
lack " (145). Rosa is infatuated with the idea of love, but not with its reality; thus, she lives in a dream where she can experience love only as an absence. This type of love, which Rosa feels for Charles Bon, enables her to desire without the perils of sexuality, to long without ever suffering the disappointments of obtaining the object of her desires. Hers is a curious fetishizing of her desires, because she recognizes the lack but never wants to fill it. Of course, Rosa is rewriting her sexual history in terms of the her sister's failures: "blind romantic fool, then later blind woman mother fool, when she no longer had either youth or experience to excuse her, when she lay dying in that house for which she had exchanged pride and peace. . ."(15).

However, Rosa's dreamworld safely secures her pride and peace. She, then, can become "all polymath love's androgynous advocate" (146). That androgyny she assumes perfectly fits her fetishistic attraction to, yet avoidance of real love, of real men. She glides through a world indifferent to sexuality, and she finds this lustless land extremely comforting. She loves Charles Bon without ever physically seeing him; she has only seen the image of his face; to her, he is a shadow of desires: "...I had seen nothing of his face but that photograph, that shadow. . . It would not even need a skull behind it; almost anonymous, it would only need vague influence of some walking flesh and blood desired by someone else even if only in some shadow-realm of make-believe " (147). In her world of
make believe, Rosa vicariously courts and weds her lover by means of words: "Charles Bon, Charles Good, Charles Husband-soon-to-be" (148). Rosa cherishes Bon's "invisible imprint" because she loves not the man, but the words she can imprint; she en-graves Charles into her fantasy world. To Charles the ghost, Rosa surrenders herself in order to escape from unbearable reality: ". . .of all the dreamy panoply of surrender which was my surrender, who had so little to surrender that it was all I had because there is that might-have-been which is the single rock we cling to above the maelstrom of unbearable reality--" (149-50).

Repeating the past in the form of a name allows it to exist once again, even though that existence is problematic, as Rosa's depiction of Charles Bon implies: "Yes, more than that: he was absent, and he was; he returned, and he was not; three women put something into the earth and covered it, and he had never been" (153). Presence and absence merge in her metaphors, but Rosa's language points to the problem of copying. Laying Bon within the grave is also a form of writing, of en-graving, him, because she marks the boundaries which, for her, are the essence of Bon--a word, a shape, a shadow. She produces a copy of Bon, not the original Bon in her utterances, and the reality of his existence is posited upon this uttering of words.24

Sutpen, too, haunts her imagination and language as a lack. Unlike Bon, though, this absence is bewildering and threatening to Rosa. Sutpen, although he is a "shell," exerts a presence which Rosa cannot comprehend. His paradoxically absent presence is predicated upon Rosa's re-reading of her own sexual history; Sutpen is not a man, but a spectre because he insults her romantically fetishized ideal of love. Sutpen suggests to her that they copulate first and worry about ceremonies later. His courtship is without sentiment, without passion; to Rosa, his proposal is the deathblow to her pride and peace, so she fetishizes his gesture into the image of an epitaph: "like a sentence. . .to read carved in the bland stone which pediments a forgotten and nameless effigy " (164) To combat his invasion upon her fantasies of love, Rosa perceives Sutpen as a thing that has no real presence, just the trace of one:

"Because he himself was not there, not in the house where we spent our days, had not stopped there. The shell of him was there, using the room which we had kept for him and eating the food which we produced and prepared as if it could neither feel the softness of the bed nor make distinction between

metaphorical instance of the book, one can say that the writer transcribes an outer book, into the book in what is called its "proper" meaning, what he has previously engraved upon his psychic shell. It is with respect to that primary engraving that it is necessary to divide the true and the false. The book, which copies, reproduces, imitates living discourse, is worth only as much as that discourse is worth."
the viands either as to quality or tastes. Yes. He wasn't there. Something ate with us; we talked to it and it answered questions, it . . . talked, not to us, the six ears, the three minds capable of listening, but to the air, the waiting grim decaying presence, spirit, of the house itself, talking that which sounded like the bombast of a madman who creates within his very coffin walls his fabulous immeasurable Camelots and Carcassonnes "(160).

Rosa's metaphoric scene resembles a séance, in which she conjures up Sutpen's "grim decaying presence " as she did once before for Quentin: "a summons, out of another world almost" (10). The novel operates through successive dialogues between narrators, who often "talk not to us" "but to the air," to the past. Present and past occupy the same space in the novel, sharing the same discourse, breathing together. Narrative voices echo invocations of the dead, but these voices fade in order to give the ghosts life: "Meanwhile, as though in inverse ratio to the vanishing voice, the invoked ghost . . . began to assume a quality almost of solidity, permanance. . ." (13). Voices and ghosts also become texts and produce their own texts. Just as Rosa does, the "spirit ," en-graves its own fable and history, its own fictional realm (Camelot) and its own reality (Carcassonnes). The metaphors are Rosa's, not Sutpen's. The vacillation between reality and fantasy are projections of Rosa's own views of the world. She has transformed Sutpen into a name, a metaphor. The metaphoric quality of Sutpen's history is suggested omniscient narrator's depiction of him as a name, as a trope: ". . .the stranger's
name went back and forth among the places of business and of idleness and among the residences in steady strophe and antistrophe: Sutpen. Sutpen. Sutpen. Sutpen. Sutpen " (32). His name moves through the text in a similar manner, with five distinct utterances from five major narrators--Rosa, Mr. Compson, Quentin, Shreve, and the narrator--each affirming and negating the previous sound of his name.

Mr. Compson, not unlike Rosa, persuades Quentin to comprehend the history of Sutpen's dynasty in terms of his particular agenda:

"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 loving 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 homocides and a thousand copulations and divorcements. (89)

Compson sentimentalizes the past as a simple, heroic time and cynically laments over modern man's imprisonment within history. Out of dead time rise heroic figures "distinct, uncomplex," who are somehow immune to the history they create. However, the "diffused and scattered" author and victim (the narrator and listener) are entrapped by history and alienated by, yet created out of myriad
deaths and regenerations. Compson articulates compelling associations between history and one's self; he recognizes time and history as endlessly relived by those occupying the present. Quentin's father tries to place Quentin in the context of the past, which is the goal of all narrators, of all historians, as R. G. Collingwood contends: "But it cannot repeat itself in vacuo, as the disembodied ghost of a past experience. However often it happens, it must always happen in some context, and the new context must be just as appropriate to it."\(^{25}\) Compson's rhetoric vividly recounts Sutpen's thoughts and sensations, his "alertness for measuring and weighing event against eventuality, circumstance against human nature, his own fallible judgment and mortal clay against not only human but natural forces, choosing and discarding, compromising with his dream and his ambition" (53). Imbuing him so vitally with life transforms Sutpen from cold, dead monument of cruelty into a symbolic figure of man's struggles against himself, nature, and time. To Compson he represents the perils of ambition and self-gratification; he is the mold cast from all of Southern history's debacles and failures. He tries to render the past for Quentin into a

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comprehensible whole, but ultimately realizes how futile that prospect is.26

Quentin's father places great significance upon the messages of two letters which frame his narrative: the unsigned letter Judith gave to Quentin's grandmother and the letter he sends to Quentin at Harvard announcing Rosa's death. The unsigned letter is attributed to Charles Bon, although that "fact" remains as much a myth as the legends of Sutpen's past. Bon's letter epitomizes for Compson the unflagging spirit of men in the face of death. Bon's letter, as Compson describes it, evokes the same passions as Sutpen's design, the necessity to leave a mark upon the world: "But keeping this one which must have reached her out of a clear sky after an interval of four years, considering this one worthy to give to a stranger to keep or not to keep, even to read or not to read as the stranger saw fit, to make that scratch, that undying mark on the blank face of the oblivion to which we are all doomed" (129). The letter written with

26 Collingwood, Essays in the Philosophy of History (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1966), p. 87: "So far as we can see history as a whole, that is how we see it; as a continuous development in which every phase consists of the solution of human problems set by the preceding phase. But that is only an ideal for the historian; that is what he knows history would look like if he could see it as a whole, which he never can. . . . For humanity studies its history somewhat as Tristram Shandy wrote his life; it takes two years to write the history of a day; but humanity can do what the individual writer cannot, and--subject to the maintenance of life on the planet--pursue the process ad infinitum."
New England stovepolish on seventy year old French notepaper is from one of the living dead of the Civil War, from the ranks of "homogeneous scarecrows" (129). The letter is also an epitaph to "the best of the South" who died in 1861 and it is a eulogy to "WAS" to "a past which never again will be 'IS'" (131). The writer, expressing the same sentiments as Compson holds toward the present moment, feels that he is "among those who are doomed to live" (132).

The letter Quentin's father sends Quentin is also an epitaph, not for Rosa, but for the living. Compson writes the letter as though he were rewriting the unsigned letter. The same doom plaguing the living comes through in his discussion of death:

. . .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 than to any intelligence about that of a child or an idiot than a slow and gradual confronting with that which over a long period of bewilderment and dread it has been taught to regard as an irrevocable and unplumbable finality, I do not know it " (173-74).

Both letters, granted great significance in the text, essentially disclose no pertinent information; they are both exercises in rhetoric. Much more is hypothesized about their meaning than the actual documents disclose. Compson leads Quentin to believe that the letter Judith
saves of all the ones she had received bears out what happened between the lovers and the brother-murderer. Judith receives the letter and immediately makes a wedding gown. Bon supposedly showed Henry the letter. Bon's act of defiance is met from Henry with an ultimatum not to marry his sister: "the defiance and the ultimatum delivered beside a bivouac fire, the ultimatum discharged before the gate to which the two of them must have ridden side by side almost: the one calm and undeviating, perhaps unresisting even, the fatalist to the last; the other remorseless with implacable and unalterable grief and despair" (132). Compson admires Charles Bon, not Charles the Good of Rosa's dream, but Charles the Fatalist of his own dream.

In his narrative, Compson contrives several dialogues between Bon and Henry as a way to explain Bon's dismissal of social rituals, especially marriages without love. In all the dialogues, Bon acts as Henry's surrogate father; however, "Henry the romantic" (123) never fully fathoms Bon, the sardonic fatalist. Nevertheless, Henry apes Bon's style of "clothing and walk and speech" (110); Quentin, too, mimics his father's rhetoric when he recounts the tale to Shreve. Bon's role is similar to Compson's own, who tries to enlighten Quentin about the futility and emptiness of social conventions. The sentiments, though, are never Bon's but Compson's reading of rituals.

Bon's treatment of Henry directly corresponds to Compson's education of his son: "So I can imagine him, the way he did it: the
way in which he took the innocent and negative plate of Henry's provincial soul and intellect and exposed it by slow degrees to this esoteric milieu, building gradually toward the picture which he desired it to retain, accept" (110). Compson's photographic metaphor equates the process of narrative with representation, with creating a likeness of one's self. The picture Bon creates is likened to a photographic negative, on which black is white and white black; this photographic metaphor stands for the paradox of the novel's racial tensions and genealogical mixture of races in the Sutpen house. Those tensions are at the heart of Compson's cynicism for the South. Compson's repetitions of "I can imagine" mirror Rosa's "I saw," and in both cases, the stories they tell are not about the others, but about themselves. Rosa constructs a dreamworld filled with phantoms of her desire for love, and Compson creates a cynical world of intellect, whose tragic hero is the fatalistic thinker. The reason Compson can imagine Bon constructing his story, can see Bon as "the mentor" and "the corrupter" is because that is the role Compson desires for himself. Compson, like Bon, is "the voice--the mentor, the guide standing aside now to watch the grave provincial face--casually and pleasantly anecdotal" (113). But he also is "spokesman, interpreter of an originary speech itself shielded from interpretation." 27 And Compson hopes Quentin will understand his interpretation of this doomed history.

27 Derrida, Of Grammatology, p.8.
The fact the photographic image conjures up allusions to black and white relationships is an ironic reading indeed. Bon's black blood is unknown to Mr. Compson. Bon, in Mr. Compson's concocted dialogue, warns Henry not to use the word "whore" in reference to the octoroon, because such a word offends the thousand white men, like him, who saved these women:

Not whores. And not whores because of us, the thousand. We--the thousand, the white men--made them, created and produced them; we even made the laws which declare that one eighth of a specified kind of blood shall outweigh seven eighths of another kind. I admit that. But that same white race would have made slaves too, laborers, cooks, maybe even field hands, if it were not for this thousand, these few men like myself without principles or honor either, perhaps you will say. (115)

In Bon's words we can hear Compson's rejection of Southern racism. Bon embodies that divorcement from Southern customs and rituals of enslavement and suffering which Compson completely embraces. Bon's discourse concerning the octoroon's salvation through his sexual intercession appalls the puritanical Henry, and perhaps Quentin as well. The marriage which Bon now refers to as "the casual business with a hired prostitute consists of the same suzerainty" (118), does not fully convince Henry that the ceremony was meaningless. Henry does not listen to Bon's self-aggrandisement of his role with his wife/mistress, because, as Mr. Compson contends, he is not worried about the effect the ceremony on Bon, but rather its
effect on his sister, Judith: "In fact, as time passed and Henry became accustomed to the idea of that ceremony which was still no marriage, that may have been the trouble with Henry--not the two ceremonies but the two women; not the fact that Bon's intention was to commit bigamy but that it was apparently to make his (Henry's) sister a sort of junior partner in a harem" (119). In Compson's reading of the history, Henry is obsessed with the potential threat of bigamy which might ensnare his sister.

Compson's disillusionment with the South appropriately focuses the Sutpen history not on Sutpen or the family members, but on the outsider, on the who does not fit into the social order--Charles Bon. Bon champions all the doomed and unrelenting fatalism Compson holds as his worldview. It is, therefore, altogether fitting that Compson tells a tale of grand fatality and fatalism. His is a tale of heroic words, postures, and speeches. His is a tale of the struggle to overcome the irrational world with words. That's why Charles Bon speaks so eloquently. Bon is resurrected out of the passion play of the Sutpen dynasty to announce the doom that is inevitable for man. The knowledge Bon imparts is not of good and evil, right and wrong, but of the absence of both. The worlds in which Bon and Compson reside are ones of irresolvable questions. That's why Compson sums up the tale before he even begins telling it; it is a tale without closure cast in a world without the promise of answers:
Or perhaps that's it: they don't explain and we are not supposed to know. We have a few old mouth-to-mouth tales; we exhume from old trunks and boxes and drawers letters without salutation or signature, in which men and women who once lived and breathed are now merely initials or nicknames out of some now incomprenhensible affection which sounds to us like Sanskrit or Chocktaw; we see dimly people, the people in whose living blood and seed we ourselves lay dormant and waiting, in this shadowy attenuation of time possessing now heroic proportions, performing their acts of simple passion and simple violence, impervious to time and inexplicable—Yes, Judith, Bon, Henry, Sutpen: all of them. They are there, yet something is missing; they are like a chemical formula exhumed along with the letter from that forgotten chest, carefully, the paper old and faded and falling to pieces, the writing faded, almost indecipherable, yet meaningful, familiar in shape and sense, the name and presence of volatile and sentient forces; you bring them together in the proportions called for, but nothing happens; you re-read, tedious and intent, poring, making sure that you have forgotten nothing, made no miscalculation; you bring them together again and again nothing happens: just the words, the symbols, the shapes themselves, slowly inscrutable and serene, against that turgid background of a horrible and bloody mishancing of human affairs. (101)

Compson aptly describes the process and movement of history in this passage. Just as one must weave together "rag-tag and bob ends of old tales," one must "re-read" "old mouth-to-mouth tales" to insure "you have forgotten nothing; made no miscalculation." The past, like a grave containing a corpse whose identity is unknown,
must be exhumed and inspected. Recalling the past through narrative is equated to assembling the components of a chemical formula written on "paper old and faded and falling to pieces"; one can put the elements together, "but nothing happens." The people who inhabit the past are ghosts of themselves; history and narrative can reinscribe them, give them names, but their presence is "incomprehensible," "inexplicable," and "almost indecipherable." Their existence is incompletely determined by language, for they are "just the words, the symbols." Narrative is a "shadowy attenuation of time" in which those who lived have become traces, their names now "merely initials." What we have left of them are merely engravings of them. Compson's view of history echoes Bon's view of marriage: "A formula, a shibboleth meaningless as a child's game" (117). Still, Compson does not perceive history as completely devoid of meaning. For him, the telling of it reaffirms his sense of the "horrible and bloody mischancing of human affairs."

Rosa's solipsistic melodrama and Compson's cynical epic are, of course, extensions of their views of the world. But Quentin and Shreve concoct a tale almost for the sheer fun of it. They take Compson's bigamy solution and protract it into incest. Quentin remembers his father and him quail hunting around the old Sutpen

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28 For an intriguing and expansive reading of the Quentin and Shreve sections and the issue of incest, see Donald A. Kartiganer, "Toward a Supreme Fiction: Absalom, Absalom!," Faulkner (New Perspectives), pp. 153-173.
place and coming upon the Sutpen graveyard. They discover five headstones "like drops of not-quite-congealed meltlings from cold candles on the marble: the two flat heavy vaulted slabs, the other three headstones leaning a little awry, with here and there a carved letter or even an entire word momentary and legible..." (188) The "momentary and legible" word aptly depicts the way in which ghosts from the past inhabit the worlds of narrative and history. Upon Sutpen's gravestone they read an enigma concerning his birth as though Sutpen, "who even dead did not divulge where and when he had been born" (188), who even in his grave, refuses to be captured in words. At the gravesite Quentin's father divulges the history of the gravestones which befits Sutpen's monomaniacal design: it seems Sutpen had ordered two gravestones of Italian marble, but could not bring them back to Jefferson, so he hauled them around with him throughout his campaigns, including one at Gettysburg. Quentin also learns that Judith, Charles Bon, and Charles Etienne Saint-Valery Bon, supposedly Bon's son, are buried in the family plot. Judith's involvement with Bon's extended family--the burial of Bon in Sutpen's graveyard, the invitation to the octroon wife/mistress to attend to Bon's grave, the rearing of his son and his burial as well--fascinates Shreve. And he suspects that there was a Sutpen in the woodpile. What confirms his erroneous, though intriguing assumption of incest is Judith's request that Charles Etienne call her
Aunt Judith. But, the scene which causes Shreve to leap to this speculation does not sanction such a hypothesis:

'No, Miss Sutpen': and she again, still without moving, not stirring so much as a muscle, as if she stood outside of the thicket into which he had cajoled the animal which she knew was watching her though she could not see it, not quite cringing, not in any terror or even alarm but in that restive light incorrigibility of the free which would leave not even a print on the earth which lightly bore it and she not daring to put out the hand with which she could have actually touched it but instead just speaking to it, her voice soft and swooning, filled with that seduction, the celestial promise which is the female's weapon: 'Call me Aunt Judith, Charles' (208)

The evidence provided by this passage is inconclusive; it hardly confirms that Charles Bon actually was Thomas Sutpen's son. Shreve himself refers to Rosa Coldfield as "Aunt Rosa," which Quentin immediately corrects to make sure no familial association is construed.

The "Chronology" and "Genealogy" appended to the novel does not clarify the issue. Both accounts of the Sutpen lineage are rife with omissions. For example, the chronology does not make clear whether or not Bon is Sutpen's son:
1827  Sutpen married first wife in Haiti.

1828  Goodhue Coldfield moved to Yoknapatawpha County (Jefferson) Mississippi: mother, sister, wife and daughter Ellen.

1829  Charles Bon born, Haiti.

1831  Sutpen learns his wife has negro blood, repudiates her and child.

To assume incest is to read the chronology as according to a plot already in mind. However, the "Genealogy" does specify that Charles Bon was "Son of Thomas and Eulalia Bon Sutpen. Only child." Too often critics resort to these "facts" as a way to discover the real history within the novel. But they fail to see Faulkner's point. The "Chronology" and the "Genealogy" correspond to the two narrative divisions in the novel: the "Chronology" develops a temporal sequence which can be culled from Rosa's and Compson's narratives; the "Genealogy" with its implicit record of potential incest corresponds to the tale Quentin and Shreve tell. Neither one of these documents can be read, any more than the narratives, as the whole truth and nothing but the truth. So, if no evidence exists for incest, why do the boys read the story in this manner?

Quentin and Shreve share a close narrative relationship with Henry and Charles Bon. Critics have often subscribed to the theory that this pairing, along with Bon's lengthy and detailed accounts of his former marriage and Henry's almost irrational devotion to his sister, is a not so veiled reference to Quentin's incestuous desires for
his sister Caddy in *The Sound and The Fury*. The figure of Caddy haunts these analyses as the ghosts haunt *Absalom, Absalom!*. John T. Irwin, who provides the best reading of the two Quentins, extends the Oedipal rivalry of one book into the next:

This interchangeability of the persons with whom they identify springs from the interchangeability of the roles of brother seducer and brother avenger, for in Quentin's case they are, of course, simply two aspects of a single personality. Since the relationship between the brother avenger and the brother seducer is a substitute for the father-son relationship in the Oedipal triangle, it is not surprising that when Quentin and Shreve identify with Henry and Bon, the narration turns into a father-son dialogue.29

However, in *Absalom, Absalom!* Quentin is associated directly with Henry and Shreve with Bon; what sort of rivalry exists between them, then? The triangular configuration really does not apply here, because the central issues are both incest and miscegenation. Irwin, while reading a dynastic tragedy for both *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!*, recognizes the "basic interchangeability of the roles of father and son" which is at the center of this novel, though it operates in a different way than the Oedipal rivalry or incest fantasy that is clearly evident in the first Compson history. By constructing a historical connection between two novels, critics have demonstrated their own need to construct meaning for the Compson

saga. What these critics do not make clear is the how the rivalry between Quentin and Shreve functions. There is no parallel set of circumstances which directly correspond to *The Sound and the Fury*. Shreve is definitely not a sexual rival to Quentin, not because he wants to marry Caddy, as Charles does Judith, but because he does not even know Caddy.

The only possible type of rivalry stems from Shreve's interruptions in Quentin's history; the struggle is not over incestuous desires, but over who will tell the story. Shreve's questions and corrections challenge Quentin's narrative authority. Shreve occasionally assumes the role of the pragmatic historian and corrects Quentin on historical inaccuracies. For example, he reminds Quentin that Sutpen could not have been born in West Virginia, because if Sutpen were actually born in 1808, then 'West Virginia did not exist. And he thoroughly loves to play this role, as evidenced by his sarcastic account of Sutpen's insulting words to Rosa: "he approached her and suggested they breed a couple of dogs together" (180). Obviously, Shreve is an active participant in the unfolding of this tale. Quentin, though, is a passive participant when he listens to Rosa and his father. Perhaps that's why Quentin is associated to Henry, who remains passive during Bon's lengthy diatribes. But that's a very weak thread by which to connect Quentin to Henry.

Quentin and Shreve, as the omniscient narrator states, take on the roles of Henry and Bon: "So that now it was not two but four of
them riding the two horses through the dark over the frozen
December ruts of that Christmas Eve: four of them and then just
two--Charles-Shreve and Quentin-Henry" (334). Henry and Bon
share the bond of stories they unearth about the past. Quentin and
Shreve, too, share a bond, a narrative communion of storytelling with
one another: "the cold room where there was now not two of them but
both more or less than twins, the heart and blood of youth" (294).
Shreve's interruptions cease as he and Quentin begin to write out the
history of their ghost twins from the past. No rivalry for authorship
exists between them as their tale unravels. They can alternate in the
telling without faltering, "in stride without comma or colon or
paragraph" (280).

Their story immerses them thoroughly in the past, which lives,
breathes, and shares the same tomblike room with them. Quentin
and Shreve take an imaginative boat ride down the Mississippi along
with Henry and Bon: "the two of them in the dark and the cold,
standing at the guard rail above the dark water and still not talking
since there was nothing to say, the two of them (the four of them)
held in that probation, that suspension, by Henry who knew but still
did not believe, who was going deliberately to look upon and prove
to himself, that which, so Shreve and Quentin believed, would be like
death for him to learn" (335). Henry meets Sutpen's first wife,
"whom Shreve and Quentin had likewise invented and which was
likewise probably true enough" (335) and who does not tell Henry
that Bon is his half-brother, but laughs "harshly and steadily at Henry" (335). It is an incident of great significance, because for Henry the true horror of Bon is not that he may be his brother, but that he may be part black. And the imaginary scene between Thomas and Henry Sutpen sets out the reason why "He cannot marry her " (354), because his woman was indeed black: "His mother's father told me that her mother had been a Spanish woman. I believed him; it was not until after he was born that I found out that his mother was part negro " (355). But, theirs is a tale made out of whole cloth.

Unlike Rosa's world of might-have-been and Compson's doomed time, Quentin and Shreve occupy a realm of possibility, of "may have, probably did" (336). That sense of possibility fulfills their design, their emplotting of the legend of the Judith, Henry, Bon triangle. However, the triangle does not confirm incestuous fantasies nor does it correspond to a Freudian model of the Oedipal complex. The figure who represents the son in an Oedipal triangle of desires is not Henry, but Judith. She is the one outside the real bond that Quentin and Shreve focus upon, which is not between brother and sister or sister and lover, but between the two young men. The story Quentin and Shreve tell is not one of hatred, but one of love and friendship:

'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. . . . That is why it did not matter to either of them which one did the talking, since it was not the talking alone which did it, performed 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. . . .--in order to overpass to love, where there might be paradox and inconsistency but nothing fault nor false. (316)

Love is depicted here as not sexual or incestuous, but as mutual forgiving and forgetting. Ironically, the tale Quentin and Shreve spin lacks the promise of forgiveness. Moreover, Bon and Henry are forced not to forget. Yet, the college roommates share a "happy marriage of speaking and hearing," as though storytelling transcends the problems of the real world. Quentin and Shreve construct the drama that is a romance of "maiden meditative" dreams in a "fabulous land" with a "tragic Lancelot" as the protagonist (320).

The boys fabricate all accounts of the struggles between Bon and Henry. Shreve invents the lawyer who tells Bon about his past, about his mother and his real father. Apparently, Bon and Henry meet by chance and not by design; Bon did not know Sutpen was his father; therefore, he must have expressed genuine friendship to Henry and must have really loved Judith. In fact, Bon's knowledge of his past, according to the boys, is a fall from the innocence of comradery and affection:

"And Jesus, think of him, Bon, who had wanted to know, who had had the most reason to know, who as far as he
knew had never had any father but had been created somehow between that woman who wouldn't let him play with other children, and that lawyer who even told the woman whether or not each time she bought a piece of meat or a loaf of bread--two people neither of whom had taken pleasure or found passion in getting him or suffered pain and travail in borning him--who perhaps if one of the two had only told him the truth, not of what happened would ever have come pass to pass." (340)

Bon's mother is the one who propels him toward the knowledge his heritage, just as Sutpen moves Henry toward the knowledge of his self. Both Henry and Bon, then, are tragic heroes in a play not of their own design, but orchestrated by their parents. Perhaps this antagonism toward parental figures explains the incest motif. Incest is the ultimate sin against patriarchy; its is absolute rebellion against the Father. Here, the metaphor of incest can now be adopted into an Oedipal configuration. In the novel fathers are obsessed with the past, with authoring it and with telling it. To disrupt their narrative is to threaten the object of desire fathers hold so dear. Shreve's desire to play with storytelling also has a sexual connotation. Thus, the son who invents the past displaces the father. Critics, the fathers of the truth about this novel, have correctly identified Quentin's, and Shreve's, incestuous desires; however, they have just told the wrong story.

At one point in their discussion of the Sutpen drama, Quentin pauses and reflects: "Just 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... (181). For Quentin, "mad impotent old man" does not directly refer to his father, but rather to Thomas Sutpen. However, the close juxtaposition of the two phrases does make one question Quentin's feelings for his father. He often comments that Shreve sound like his father and that he, too, sometimes mimics his father's rhetoric. When Quentin makes these references to his father, we cannot gauge his tone because he expresses them in short declarative phrases without commentary. However, Quentin does feel the intrusion of the past upon him, and that invasion of memories stems directly from his father's stories. In his narrative, parental figures seem to bring about the destruction and ruin of Henry and Bon; the damage inflicted is not by past actions so much as by words. Quentin and Shreve begin designing a tale which is about bonds between men without fathers, without the words from the past. The tragedy occurs when parental authority retells the "truth" of the past. When Shreve asks Quentin why he hates the South, Quentin immediately protests: "I don't. I don't! I don't hate it! I don't hate it!"

(378). Quentin's words ring false. Perhaps he does not refer to the South, but rather to the symbol of the South in the novel--Father.

Ultimately, the novel's closure depends upon the reader's solution to the Sutpen story. Faulkner provides a solution for defining both the narrators' and reader's roles in the history of Sutpen. Ironically, Quentin's father offers it as Bon's explanation for
why Thomas and Henry Sutpen reject his marriage proposal to Judith. Bon perceives Sutpen's and Henry's fixations with his past as a "fetish-ridden moral blundering" (93). "Fetish-ridden" also suggests other icons and fixations in the novel: Sutpen's "design," Bon's nigger-history, Henry's obsession with Judith, and the narrators' fixations with telling and re-creating. These fetishes are posited upon "a false quality 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" (96). This preoccupation with the truth of history, because it is always in danger of becoming an absence, describes the characteristics of the narrators' fetishes. Both the fetishes of the characters of Sutpen's history and those of the narrators are predicated upon a privileged, self-contained blundering.

In constructing again the Sutpen history, the reader fixes upon certain tropic and plot elements that betray his own blundering. No matter which character the reader elects as the true historian, or if he chooses no one, he has relegated himself, almost unwittingly, to the predicament of all the narrators. The reader's search for truth structures a history of the Sutpens, Compsons, and the text itself, but never provides the truth. While Peter Brooks's contends that Absalom, Absalom! is "the story of the haunting force of absences, including formal absences, in the wake of the whose passage the
novel constructs itself,\textsuperscript{30} those absences, as well as the presences in the novel, occur not just because of narration itself, but because of the reader's own desire for meaning. Since no reading can weave together all the "bob-ends" of this novel, the reader faces impasse. Since he cannot rely upon the text to establish the truth of this history, he might as well play.

\textsuperscript{30} Brooks, Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), pp. 286-87. Brooks does provide insightful discussions of the relationship of the narrative to interpretation: "To the literary analyst, this may imply that the reader, like Quentin and Shreve, will always take over the text, both reading and (re)writing it to his own design, finding in it "what will suffice" to his own hermeneutic need and desire. . . .This in turn might imply that the ultimate subject of any narrative is its narrating, that narrative inevitably reveals itself to be a Moebius strip where we unwittingly end up on the plane from which we began. Origin and endpoint--and, perforce, genealogy, and history--are merely as-if postulation ultimately subject to the arbitrary whims of the agency of narration, and of its model in readership. Narrative plots may be no more--but of course also no less--than a variety of syntax which allows the verbal game--the dialogue, really--to go on" (305).
Fetishism and Reading

I've never tried to set up what might be a pattern to measure irrational human behavior. To me, all human behavior is unpredictable and, considering man's frailty... in the ramshackle universe he functions in, it's all irrational. It couldn't be very rational because his universe is not a very rational one, it seems to me. I think that probably no writer would set himself up to judge... Also, I think the writer is not really interested in bettering man's condition. He's interested in all man's behavior with no judgment whatever. That it's motion, it's life, the only alternative is nothingness, death. And so to the writer, anything man does is fine because it's motion. If he were not doing that he would do nothing instead. Maybe the writer has no concept of morality at all, only an integrity to hold always to what he believes to be the facts and truths of human behavior, not moral standards at all. But that man in his books does what man will do, not what man should do but what he will do, maybe what he can't help but do.

--Faulkner, May 7, 1958.

Faulkner contends that he devised no structural system to account for man's irrational actions, but he admits that an author must depict "the facts and truths of human behavior." According to Faulkner, an author creates his characters without recourse to moral standards.

1 Faulkner, May 7, 1958, Faulkner in the University, p. 267.
judgments or standards. Any emotion, passion, or action man pursues will be incorporated into the text; writing, therefore, demonstrates "the universal patterns of man's behavior inside the human condition." In the process, an author records man's inherent need to deny death and to affirm life, even in his ramshackle universe. Literature, then, must be in accordance with man's comprehension of his life; it must imitate man's perceptions, emotions and obsessions. It confines itself to man's gestures and desires, so that the reader senses the life and vitality of the characters as Faulkner did himself: "But the characters themselves are walking out of that book still in motion, still talking, and still acting." What an author develops in a text, then, is "motion and motion is concerned with what makes man move--which are ambition, power, and pleasure." For Faulkner, literary texts are generated out of this compulsion for power and pleasure. In turn, literature presents not how man should act "but what he will do, maybe what he can't help but do."

How, then, does Faulkner construct his narratives to portray man performing those acts that he seems compelled to do? And further, how do we begin to analyze these compulsions? Faulkner implies that critical evaluation begins not with the author, but with

2 Faulkner, April 20, 1962, *Faulkner at West Point*, p. 84.
the text. Commenting upon his own reading habits, he maintains that "I have no favorite authors. I have favorite books."\(^5\) Faulkner also believes that language and style directly correspond to life's motions and to man's compulsions: "I think that any language must continue to be alive, that is, it must continue to change or be susceptible to change. . . . The style must change according to what the writer is trying to tell. What he is trying to tell in fact compells the style."\(^6\)

Power and pleasure create, structure, and compell Faulkner's narrative poetics. Therefore, an affinity exists between the type of fetish Faulkner discloses in his text and the narrative strategies he employs. Moreover, the correlation between text and fetishism resides at the level of style, which, for Faulkner, is generated not by his own conscious arrangement of plot and theme, but by the obsessions he portrays. And, as readers, we experience those forces, not just the power and pleasure his characters seek after, but the motion and movement of his style. Faulkner structures his narratives in such a way that the reader cannot help but experience the power and pleasures which his texts entice.

The phenomenology of fetishism corresponds to the phenemology of reading. Fetishism is an act of dislodging one's self. By acts of transference--idol worship, desiring objects or ideals--the

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\(^6\) Faulkner, May 12, 1958, *Faulkner in the University*, p. 279.
fetishist displaces himself. And Faulkner's narrative strategies rely upon such fetishistic responses in the reader. His scenes of violence and voyeurism fascinate us. We are irresistibly attracted to them. His language and style have a mesmerizing effect upon us; his narrators seduce us with the rhythms of their rhetoric. Faulkner admits that his couldn't resist the "desire to put all experience into one word."7 And we feel that same desire when we read. When we read our consciousnesses often seems to dissolve into the text's discourse as its metaphors and allusions become our own. Thus, we willingly participate in text's construction of itself. In the process we become dislodged from our subjectivity. We, in short, have projected ourselves onto the text. And, we feel compelled to read.

This study has focused upon acts of reading, not only the reading of texts but also the reading of one's self. The theories of fetishism I have worked out explain the effects of fetishism in terms of the process of reading. Faulkner's texts reflect dominate obsessions within man and the way those fixations are repeated through narrative. Faulkner's aesthetics of violence, obsession and compulsion are rendered in his textual allurements and entrapments for his reader. I have tried to demonstrate how his aesthetics of fetishism are not only exhibited in terms of his style, but also implicated in the experience of reading. For Faulkner, "the greatest

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7 Faulkner, May 12, 1958, *Faulkner in the University*, p. 279.
part of experience is in books." However, reading, according to Faulkner, is never innocent, because "when man learns to read, he learns of the tragedy and despair of his own kind which he himself may suffer. It is better for him not to know this since he may escape it; but once he reads it, it is part of his life—a part of his own experience." But a reader experiences much more than tragedy and despair; he experiences the very fetishes the novel portrays. And when one attempts a critical analysis of his texts, the fetishistic tendencies become even more pronounced.

I have tried to isolate those features of Faulkner's narrative poetics that readily display the complexities of fetishism. Through a close reading of his texts, I have sought to recast many of Faulkner's central aesthetic experiments in terms of current critical theories. By aligning Faulkner's poetics with the thought of Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Sartre, Lacan, and Derrida, I have intentionally called into question the nature of language, interpretation and reading.

Faulkner's works compell the reader to experience the particular fetish generated within the text as a part of his own reading. And I am not exempt from the fetishizing of the text. For example, my adoption of a particular aspect of fetishism—perception, icon-making, language, rape—betrays my particular privileging of

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certain textual features over others. By reducing Faulkner's works to what I perceive as their fetishistic qualities, I have betrayed my rudimentary urge for meaning. In doing so, I have described not just Faulkner's aesthetic, but my own aesthetic of reading. Where I have exposed Faulkner's entrapment schemes for his reader, those inescapable moments of reader participation with the text, I have laid bare my own fetishistic reading. Fundamentally, I have discussed Faulkner's aesthetics of fetishism by recounting the story of my own reading. Acts of reading, then, become acts of reading one's self. To Faulkner, fetishes and fetishizing are inescapable "facts and truths of human behavior." We are ruled by our desires, and they, in turn, define us.
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