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ON THEIR HIND LEGS CASTING SHADOWS  
A PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO CHARACTER IN FAULKNER

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## ABSTRACT

### ON THEIR HIND LEGS CASTING SHADOWS A PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO CHARACTER IN FAULKNER

By

Marjorie Burton Haselswerdt

The mimetic aspect of Faulkner's work was very important to him. He often spoke of his desire to create a character that could "stand up on its hind legs and cast a shadow," and his frequent references to his characters as independently living and breathing outside of the works for which they were created indicate that he knew himself to have succeeded in the effort. The ambiguity of at least some of his major novels, reflected in the abundance of critical disagreement about their significance, hints that he may have done so only too well. So complex and life-like are the major characters of these novels, so rich with the nuance that is typical of life itself, that it is difficult to fit them into thematic categories. This study uses Third Force psychology, a branch of modern psychology based on the writings of Abraham Maslow and Karen Horney, as a means of understanding and appreciating these carefully drawn characters outside of their thematic roles, and as a way of treating the ambiguity that results from their complexity and

independence. It also employs the theories of Horney and Maslow in psychological analyses of the "guiding consciousnesses," or "implied authors" of the works in question.

The implied authors of The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, and Light in August see their worlds in terms of what Horney calls the self-effacing "solution," one of the three methods she describes for combating basic anxiety. With their subtle rhetoric, they ask the reader's identification with characters who are victims, or whose sensitivity and self-sacrifice go largely unappreciated by a world seen as unjust: Quentin Compson, Dilsey, Darl and Addie Bundren, the young Joe Christmas. As a result, these novels present a picture of the human condition as frustrating and bleak. Existing alongside this dominantly self-effacing approach, however, is a disguised attraction to aggressive trends, revealed in the tendency of the implied authors of these novels to use subtle rhetorical devices to outline their own identification with aggressive tendencies in their characters, and to ask their readers to share it. It is this trend (hardly the only important aspect of Faulkner's work, but perhaps the one that has been least explored) that provides the primary subject of the chapters on Jason Compson, Anse Bundren, and Joe Christmas, and their roles in the novels they inhabit. Jason Compson is allowed to undercut our concern with the rest of the Compsons. Anse Bundren is used by his creator in an aggressive way, as a kind of weapon against the other characters and themes of





As I Lay Dying. In Light in August these trends receive their fullest indulgence. The portrayal of the aggressive Joe Christmas dominates the novel. Joe's way of seeing the world becomes the implied author's way of seeing it, and through the novel's rhetoric the reader is asked to join in this view. In the final study (on V. K. Ratliff and The Hamlet), however, the primary concern is with the robust mental health of Ratliff, and its strong impact on the novel and its rhetoric.

This particular psychological approach, then, seeks to bring us new insight into the achievements of Faulkner's most creative period: the highly effective realistic characterizations, the rhetorical power that transcends the objective mode and allows the reader to participate in some complex and fascinating perspectives, the creation of varied and vivid worlds for our delighted observation. The study attempts to use modern psychological theory in a positive and illuminating way, as a means of dealing with the often neglected human element of the novelistic experience.

To my parents, Hattie and Ed Burton  
whose belief in me made it impossible to quit.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .	111
 Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION. . . . .	1
A. The Psychological Approach Justified . .	1
B. The Psychological Approach Described . .	10
C. The Psychological Approach Applied . . .	21
II. THE APPEAL OF THE GOOD OLD BOY: A HORNEYAN ANALYSIS OF JASON COMPSON AND <u>THE SOUND</u> <u>AND THE FURY</u> . . . . .	36
III. 'IT NEVER BOTHERED ANSE MUCH:' A HORNEYAN ANALYSIS OF ANSE BUNDREN AND <u>AS I LAY</u> <u>DYING</u> . . . . .	76
IV. 'KEEP YOUR MUCK:' A HORNEYAN ANALYSIS OF JOE CHRISTMAS AND <u>LIGHT IN AUGUST</u> . . . . .	111
V. 'HE'S DONE MORE THINGS THAN ANY MAN I KNOW:' A MASLOVIAN ANALYSIS OF V. K. RATLIFF AND <u>THE HAMLET</u> . . . . .	152
VI. CONCLUSION . . . . .	193
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	203

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. The Psychological Approach Justified

Most critical work on William Faulkner's novels has focused on his stylistic and technical innovations or on his thematic concerns. Beginning with Conrad Aiken's essay on Faulkner's style in 1939,<sup>1</sup> there has been much interest in Faulkner's ability to depart from traditional stylistic and novelistic technique in his attempts to match matter with manner. And beginning with George Marion O'Donnell's essay on Faulkner's mythology, also published in 1939,<sup>2</sup> there has been a critical tendency to think of Faulkner primarily as a purveyor of truth, a moralist, whose imaginary worlds are constructed mostly in order to comment on the human condition.<sup>3</sup> Faulkner himself seems to have joined in this trend after he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1950, and began to speak about his desire to convey "eternal verities" in his work.

But for Faulkner, and for many of his most smitten readers, the particular pleasure to be found in his work is related not to its technical expertise or its moral profundity, but to its ability to establish the illusion of reality, to imitate life.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the mimetic

impulse and its appreciation takes precedence, for them, over the aesthetic (or formal) and thematic impulse. The intention of the present study is to recognize this aspect of Faulkner's talent by departing from the critical mainstream (which often seems to consider his work more as poetry than as traditional fiction) and treating him as primarily a realistic novelist. Although he was certainly touched by the Hawthornian wand of "romance," and charged with the desire to "make it new,"<sup>5</sup> and the need to define the human condition in the twentieth century, Faulkner seems most happily and most successfully occupied when he is engaged with the task of creating plausible people and worlds for our delighted observation.

Henry James writes, "The main object of the novel is to represent life . . . the success of a work of art, to my mind, may be measured by the degree to which it produces a certain illusion; that illusion makes it appear to us for the time that we have lived another life . . ."<sup>6</sup> And when Richard Chase seeks to define the novel in order to place it in the context of American fiction, his emphasis is similar:

. . . the novel renders reality closely and in comprehensive detail. It takes a group of people and sets them going about the business of life. We come to see these people in their real complexity of temperment and motive. They are in explicable relation to nature, to each other, to their social class, to their own past. Character is more important than action and plot and . . . the tragic or comic actions of the narrative will have the primary purpose of enhancing our knowledge of and feeling for an important character, a group of characters, or a way of life.<sup>7</sup>

A realistic novel, then, is a work of art primarily concerned with the imitation of life, a value it places above all others. It pleases us by conveying the illusion of reality, particularly by convincing us to take its characters as real people in whose lives we can, in effect, participate. This does not mean that it is the stepchild of sociological research; mimesis is an artistic effect, an illusion created by artistic technique. But it does mean that it is intimately connected with living, breathing humanity, that it depends for its success on its convincing treatment of human motivation and behavior.

Faulkner himself certainly saw his fictional achievement in this light. Time and again, when asked about the germination or intent of his work, he insisted that he was "interested primarily in people . . ." rather than in "ideas" or "style," that the important thing to him was to create a character that could "stand up on its hind legs and cast a shadow."<sup>8</sup> Though he detested interviews, and was generally loathe to discuss his creative processes, he often seemed to perk up when given the chance to discuss his success in creating the illusion of reality spoken of by James. For him his characters had lives of their own that never ceased to fascinate and please him. They taught him things; they surprised him; they got into "devilment: behind his back; they walked out of his books "still in motion, still talking, and still acting."<sup>9</sup> It even seemed to him that the creative process itself was fueled and controlled by



these imitations of life: "Once these people come to life," he often said, "they take off and so the writer is going at a dead run behind them trying to put down what they say and do in time . . . they have taken charge of the story."<sup>10</sup> For him his characters do not exist at the mercy of technique or for the sole purpose of conveying thematic truths. These are characters that seem exuberantly alive on their own terms, and their very aliveness is the central reason for the existence of the works they inhabit.

Many critics mention Faulkner's affinity with the realistic tradition described by James and Chase, though their own criticism may choose to focus on things other than his mimetic achievement. It is common, for example, for critics to emphasize Faulkner's role as "sole owner and proprietor" of the vividly realized imaginary world of Yoknapatawpha County. Critics like Cleanth Brooks and Warren Beck,<sup>11</sup> who make much of this aspect of Faulkner, see him as having a close connection to the great realistic tradition of Balzac and Dickens. Other critics follow Faulkner's own lead by dwelling on the centrality and integrity of characterization in his work. For Olga Vickery, character is Faulkner's "figure in the carpet," the very wellspring of his creativity. His concern, she says, is not with "manipulating his characters nor with documenting the stages in their development," but with "exploring and revealing their complexity."<sup>12</sup> And Irving Howe's description of the vividness of Faulkner's portrayals is typical of the appreciation

often given this aspect of his work.

. . . his characters seldom fail us. They have a marvelous way of seeming to break out of their fictional bonds and of achieving the illusion of independent existence, so that in reading Faulkner's books one does not accept very easily the doctrine of modern criticism that characters 'live' only between the first and last page . . . One retains not only the impression of their distinctive moral traits, but one also remembers their inflections of speech, their mannerisms, their idiosyncracies of dress, the way they walk and stoop and crouch . . .<sup>13</sup>

These tributes to Faulkner's ability to create the illusion of reality, made by some of his most prominent critics, indicate that it is justifiable to consider his mimetic achievement a central source of the impact and importance of his fiction. And yet Faulkner criticism has little to tell us about how or why his characters and situations "live" so vividly, or in what sense his characters assert their independence of the fictional bonds of form and theme. Perhaps any alert and appreciative reader could isolate the moments and details in Faulkner's works that seem to exist solely to delight both us and their creator with their lifelikeness, but such insights do not lend themselves to critical exegesis. Rosa Coldfield's little feet do not touch the floor when she sits on a chair. Mr. and Mrs. Hines spend a grimly hilarious night on the town at the mercy of the train schedule. Jason Compson uses camphor-soaked rags to combat his headaches because he is sure that aspirin is made of flour and water. Samson repeatedly interrupts a fairly purposeful narrative to complain that he cannot remember a name that is totally irrelevant to the significance

of his story. We can name the moments that have this sort of impact on us as readers, but where can we go from there? Can we generalize or theorize about this impact? Can we, in short, write criticism about it? James says,

The characters, the situations, which strike one as real will be those that touch and interest one most, but the measure of reality is very difficult to fix . . . Humanity is immense, and reality has a myriad forms; the most one can affirm is that some of the flowers of fiction have the odor of it, and others have not . . .<sup>14</sup>

If the appreciation of mimetic achievement involves merely the detecting or not detecting of a particular "odor," then the mimetic impulse and the audience's enjoyment of it will not be appropriate subjects for deep critical analysis. But much has been learned about the nature of "humanity" since Henry James's time, or, more properly, much has been done since then to make sense of human thought processes and behavior. From the work of modern psychological thinkers and clinicians who have studied interpsychic and intrapsychic phenomena come theories about how certain kinds of people are likely to think and behave in certain situations. Properly used, these theories can provide us with a systematic way of analyzing the lifelikeness of literary characters and situations so that we may heighten our capacities for the understanding and appreciation of a given mimetic achievement. Since the aim of the realistic novelist, as James and Faulkner and others tell us, is to convey the illusion that literary characters are living, breathing, shadow-casting people, and since much of the reader's

pleasure in realistic fiction comes from his participation in this illusion, it is logical for the critic to deal with the products of mimesis as if they were indeed real, using the methods and standards of those whose business it is to analyze and evaluate real human beings.

This is not to ignore the obvious truth that a literary character is in fact the artificial creation of a human consciousness which has complete control over the character's nature and his fate, which shapes him according to its own artistic goals and psychological imperatives rather than to the demands of existence in the real world. Insofar as a character is not a real human being, he is the product of a recognizably human creating consciousness whose nature can also be explored through psychological methods. Indeed, our study will concern itself extensively with this guiding consciousness and with its place in the experience of fiction, though we shall do nothing so ill-advised as to "analyze" the psyche of William Faulkner himself merely on the basis of his literary output.

According to Wayne C. Booth,<sup>15</sup> the guiding consciousness of a fictional work is not exactly the author-as-historical-personage himself, but a version of himself that he creates for the purpose of presenting a particular fictional world. Thus it is not William Faulkner of Oxford, Miss., horse lover, whiskey drinker, recluse, whose intentions the critic must plumb in order to grasp the nature of one of his novels, but the fictional "Faulkner" who is

revealed by the loves and hates and idiosyncracies of the novel itself. This consciousness is responsible for the "core of norms and choices," the "emotions and judgments" that compose "the very stuff out of which great fiction is made."<sup>16</sup> It is the implied author who controls the universe of the novel, who presents and evaluates the characters, who makes the thematic judgments and the choices regarding form.

The measure of a writer's success, as E. M. Forster tells us, is his ability to "bounce the reader into accepting what he says . . ."<sup>17</sup> This "bouncing" takes place in Booth's scheme by means of the implied author's "rhetoric," the various means that he uses to bring the reader to share his perspective on the characters and events of the novel. As Booth describes the relationship between author and reader:

It is . . . as I read that I become the self whose belief must coincide with the author's. Regardless of my real beliefs and practices, I must subordinate my mind and heart to the book if I am to enjoy it to the full. The author creates, in short, an image of himself, the implied author, and another image of his reader; he makes his reader, as he makes his second self, and the most successful reading is the one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement.<sup>18</sup>

No matter how "modern" or "objective" a piece of fiction, according to Booth, the implied author will attempt to guide the reader's response, to persuade him to participate in his view of the world. If the demands of his form require that he eschew direct comment, he will find other ways to "bounce" us.

With commentary ruled out, hundreds of devices remain for revealing judgment and molding responses. Patterns of imagery and symbol are as effective in modern fiction as they have always been in poetry in controlling our evaluation of details. Decisions about what parts of a story to dramatize and about the sequence and proportion of episodes can be as effective in The Hamlet as they are in Hamlet as decisive in Ulysses as they are in The Odyssey. In fact all of the old fashioned dramatic devices of pace and timing can be refurbished for the purposes of a dramatic impersonal narration. And manipulation of dramatized points of view can, as hundreds of studies following upon Percy Lubbock's Craft of Fiction have shown, convey the author's judgment with great precision.<sup>19</sup>

In Faulkner's work direct interpretation of characters and events through commentary or obviously reliable narration is rare indeed. Nevertheless, each work implies an idiosyncratic, clearly drawn creating consciousness, a fictional human being who judges his characters and their world, and who asks our agreement with those judgments through various rhetorical devices. The rhetoric of each novel requires the reader to enter into a triangular human relationship with the implied author and his characters. Since this relationship is human; since it is based on human "emotions and judgments," motivated by human desires and needs, it is an appropriate subject for psychological study.

The following study uses modern psychology to study the nature of four characters from four major Faulkner novels, The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, Light in August, and The Hamlet, and to analyze the dynamics of the implied author-character-reader relationship in the novels they inhabit.

## B. The Psychological Approach Described

While literary works that are largely symbolic or metaphorical, that resemble, in other words, the product of the deepest levels of the unconscious, such as dreams, are well suited to Freudian or Jungian critical technique, the realistic novel, with its emphasis on the details of the everyday that are the matter of conscious human existence calls for a different psycho-critical approach. Interesting psychological studies have been done of the symbolism and deep structures of Faulkner's work using Freudian theory,<sup>20</sup> but traditional psychoanalysis cannot tell us why Anse Bundren's eulogy for his wife ("God's will be done. Now I can get them teeth")<sup>21</sup> is such an effective stroke of the realist's brush; nor can it explain the nature of the essential health and goodness of a character like the V. K. Ratliff of The Hamlet. For such exploration and explanation the theories of Third Force psychology, theories which deal with the nature of the human psyche particularly as it is manifested in one's daily behavior and one's relationships with others, and with the innately human drive towards self-fulfillment (the "third force") are far better suited. In A Psychological Approach to Fiction, Bernard J. Paris explains that he chooses to use the theories of Karen Horney (a Third Force clinician and theoretician) in his critical studies of realistic novels because, ". . . though her psychology (like any other) is far from providing a complete picture of human nature, Karen Horney deals

astutely with the same patterns of intra-psychic and interpersonal behavior that form the matter (and often the structure) of a good many novels and plays."<sup>22</sup> With her detailed descriptions of the thought patterns and behavior of her patients, her acquaintances, and even of herself and of literary characters, she provides much useful material for the analyst of realistic fiction. She was primarily a clinician, however, and most concerned with the defensive strategies of those whose relationship to the world is in some way impaired. We must look to Abraham Maslow for detailed theories about the process of the fulfillment of human potential that is essential to our understanding of Third Force psychology as a whole, and to our analysis of a "healthy" character like Ratliff.

Maslow puts forth a scheme for analyzing human motivation that is essentially separate from Freudian instinct theory. Maslovian theory is based on the concept that human beings are governed by a hierarchy of biologically based needs. The hierarchy begins at the lowest level with the most basic requirements of the human animal for survival--food, shelter, and safety--and proceeds through the middle needs for love and belonging, to the highest needs, those for self esteem and self actualization. This is a hierarchy in the sense that the lower needs must be satisfied before the higher ones are felt. A man who does not have food, for example, does not feel a strong need for love, while a man whose physiological and safety needs are satisfied will feel a



strong desire for the warm regard of his fellow man. Likewise, a man who feels secure in his relationship with his fellows will feel a desire to raise himself in his own estimation, and a man who is able to think well of himself will desire to fulfill his potential as a human being, to "actualize" his self. Although the higher needs are not as strongly felt as the lower ones, all of them are "instinctoid" in that they are included in man's biological make-up. They are part of the biologically based "inner nature" of mankind, which is "in part unique to each person, and in part species wide."<sup>23</sup>

Maslow's work is primarily concerned with that part of human motivation and behavior based on the higher needs. In other words, he is interested in the process of self-actualization, in the movement that a healthy person makes toward the "actualization of his potentials, capacities and talents."<sup>24</sup> His findings indicate that a human being whose lower needs are satisfied will strive for what the existentialists refer to as authentic humanness, will actively seek a kind of mental health far more profound than our common notion of "normality" which, according to Maslow, is nothing more than a "psychopathology of the average."<sup>25</sup> The healthy person will be occupied with the cultivation of his unique human potential, defined by his own unique biological make-up. He will be open to himself, and this openness will make him more "transparent" and more spontaneous than those who have not reached his level of development.

In other words, he will know what he thinks and feels, and he will express his feelings and thoughts honestly in actions and words, and he will behave spontaneously according to his inner dictates. By observing such people, according to Maslow, we should be able to draw conclusions about man's essential nature, and thus about what it means to be a "good" or healthy human being. He says, ". . . we can discover (rather than create or invent) which values men tend toward, yearn for, struggle for, as they improve themselves, and which values they lose as they get sick."<sup>26</sup> This would provide us with a standard for judging human development and worth, something currently lacking in our culture.

Every age but ours has had its model, its ideal. All of these have been given up by our culture; the saint, the hero, the gentleman, the knight, the mystic. About all we have left is the well-adjusted man without problems, a very pale and doubtful substitute. Perhaps we shall soon be able to use as our guide and model the fully growing and self fulfilling human being, the one in whom all his potentialities are coming to full development, the one whose inner nature expresses itself freely, rather than being warped, suppressed, or denied.<sup>27</sup>

In his descriptions of such human beings, particularly in Motivation and Personality, Maslow offers us a means for evaluating the comparative health or "goodness" of a character whose creator asks us to see him as a model.

Horney's writings, on the other hand, are largely concerned with those who, because of the inferior conditions provided for their growth, do not function at the upper levels of Maslow's hierarchy. Her subjects are not able to

seek fulfillment because their lower needs were not met by those who surrounded them in their childhood, and they have become the victims of what she describes as "neurosis"<sup>28</sup> or the process of self-alienation. Life being what it is, most people are at least partially the victims of this process, and this is why Horney's theories have such a wide applicability. Maslow's self-actualizing man is the exception rather than the rule.

Neurosis, according to the Horneyan scheme, begins as a way of coping with the basic anxiety that results when a child is deprived of the sense of safety and love and belonging that are as essential to the growth of a fully human being as water is to the growth of a plant. Such a child comes to feel that he is "isolated and helpless in a world conceived of as basically hostile,"<sup>29</sup> and that it is not safe to respond to others spontaneously. He must instead develop a strategy for dealing with them that will allay his basic anxiety and allow him to function, albeit at the expense of his "real self," that which he could become if the conditions of his existence had permitted him to follow his spontaneous inner dictates. The process is best described by Horney herself.

The cramping pressure of his basic anxiety prevents the child from relating himself to others with the spontaneity of his real feelings, and forces him to find ways to cope with them. He must (unconsciously) deal with them in ways which do not arouse, or increase, but rather allay his basic anxiety. The particular attitudes resulting from such strategical necessities are determined both by the child's given temperament and by the

contingencies of the environment. Briefly, he may try to cling to the most powerful person around him; he may try to rebel and fight; he may try to shut others out of his inner life and withdraw emotionally from them. In principle, this means that he can move toward, against, or away from others.<sup>30</sup>

The healthy person moves toward, against, or away from others depending on the situation in which he finds himself. He can be flexible in his human relationships because he is secure in the world. But for the self-alienated person, these moves become rigid and compulsive. As Horney describes it,

Affection . . . becomes clinging; compliance becomes appeasement. Similarly, he is driven to rebel or to keep aloof without regard to his real feelings and regardless of the inappropriateness of his attitude in a particular situation. The degree of blindness and rigidity in his attitudes is in proportion to the intensity of the basic anxiety lurking within him.<sup>31</sup>

These various rigid "moves" in relation to others, designed to avoid conflict with the threatening outer world, contradict each other, and thus lead to a secondary inner conflict. In order to solve this conflict, the sufferer "chooses" one strategy as his dominant method of dealing with others. He becomes predominantly "self-effacing," or "aggressive," or "detached."

He who adopts the self-effacing solution to his inner conflicts defends himself against his basic anxiety by compulsively "moving towards" others. He is compliant, clinging, dependent, profoundly love-oriented, and determinedly "good." In return he expects that others will protect him from his anxieties by rewarding him with the love and

protection that he feels is his due. It is as if he has struck a bargain with fate: "I will give up all of my drives to assert or defend myself, and I will consistently sacrifice myself for others, if only you will make sure that others love me and take responsibility for me." The self-effacing type has a strong but misguided preoccupation with "justice." Because he has given up his capacity to defend himself, he must rely for his very survival on rewards for his "goodness," and if they do not appear he will become obsessed with the "injustice" of existence.

The detached, or resigned, personality, on the other hand, combats his basic anxiety by retreating from the field of human relationships. His preoccupation is not with justice, but with the freedom from tension that he hopes to find by avoiding entanglements with others altogether. This strategy of avoidance extends eventually to a shrinking from virtually all contact with life; the subject becomes an observer rather than a participant in his own existence. He may succeed to a large degree in avoiding tension, but it will be at the expense of his ability to enjoy life. As Horney describes it, ". . . the picture of resignation, when maintained consistently, is one of life at a constantly low ebb--of a life without pain or friction but also without zest."<sup>32</sup>

The aggressive or expansive type moves compulsively against his fellow man, eschewing all weakness, dependence, and desire for love in exchange for a feeling of mastery

over others, indeed over life itself, designed to compensate for his feelings of isolation and helplessness. For the aggressive personality the essence of life is the pursuit of triumph, and his continual effort is to deny any imperfections or shortcomings in himself in any way he can. Other people are, at best, obstacles that he must overcome. At worst, they are the enemy whom he resents bitterly for interfering with his pursuit of mastery.

Since all three of these "solutions" are designed to cope with the same psychic phenomenon, the anxiety that results from the denial of basic human needs, the relationships between them are close and complex. As we have seen, they first appear as alternate ways of dealing with the world; only later is the "choice" made that will "streamline" the person's method of reacting to others. So it is important to point out that these personality types are not "pure." Every self-effacing person, for example, has buried within him aggressive trends he must repress in order to make his solution work, and those trends may have a profound effect on his way of being. In fact, analysis of the behavior of any self-alienated person, as we shall see, must take into account the role of repressed trends.

It is important, also, to see these defensive strategies that govern interpersonal behavior in relation to the intrapsychic phenomena that allow them to flourish. Horney refers to these phenomena as the "pride system." When a person bargains with fate for a reduction of his basic

anxiety, the first thing that he must give up is his "real self," the self he would inevitably desire to become if the conditions for his growth and progress through the hierarchy of needs were good. He becomes self-alienated because he is not secure enough in the world to be guided by this self that would have him feel and behave and function spontaneously, according to his authentic needs and capabilities. Such alienation would leave a person entirely without direction or sense of identity, were it not replaced by another motivating force. Horney says

. . . the individual alienated from himself needs--it would be absurd to say a "substitute" for his real self because there is no such thing--something that will give him a hold, a feeling of identity. This could make him meaningful to himself and, despite all the weakness in his structure, give him a feeling of power and significance.<sup>33</sup>

This "substitute" is provided by the "idealized image," a product of the imagination that endows this basically insecure and anxiety ridden person with "unlimited powers and exalted faculties."<sup>34</sup> These powers and faculties may be glorified aspects of his dominant solution, or they may be related to his repressed trends. In his imagination the self-alienated person begins to identify with this fictional "ideal self." The self-effacing person becomes in his own mind a saint. The aggressive person becomes the heroic master over all. The detached person becomes the god-like embodiment of freedom. Gradually the idealized self assumes control of the self-alienated person's life. As Horney says, "The energies driving toward self-realization are shifted to

the aim of actualizing the ideal self."<sup>35</sup> The subject desires to become his idealized image, and he embarks on what Horney calls the "search for glory," an imaginary and unrealistic drive to actualize an imaginary and unrealistic self.

As compared to the authentic drive towards self-fulfillment, this search for glory is of necessity rigid, unresponsive to the demands of reality, and lacking in spontaneity. It brings its victim not the real self confidence that comes with the development of real assets, but "a glittering gift of most questionable value: neurotic pride."<sup>36</sup> The person embarked on a search for glory is proud, not of the person he actually is, but of the qualities he "arrogates to himself in his imagination,"<sup>37</sup> where he unconsciously transforms his needs into his assets. He needs to feel loved; therefore he is lovable. He needs to feel superior; therefore he is superior. Motivated by his need to see himself in ideal terms, and rewarded by the kind of (falsely) glorious satisfaction that comes with the achievement of perfection, he exists in a rarefied atmosphere far removed from mundane reality. Unfortunately, however, reality is bound to intrude; the neurotic pride is bound to be threatened. And, since this pride is at once very highly valued and very vulnerable, these threats must be defended against at the cost of further restrictions on spontaneity.

Were neurosis merely a matter of existing gloriously as the product of one's imagination, it would be a rather





pleasant state. But threats to neurotic pride are not the only drawbacks to the search for glory. Identification with the ideal self leads inevitably to contempt for the "actual self," that inglorious being inside whose skin even the most imaginative of us must exist. Whenever the self-alienated person is forced to come in contact with what and who he actually is, he is reminded of the gap between that and his idealized image, and is stricken with intense feelings of self hate. This hatred is experienced in the form of "relentless demands on self, merciless self accusation, self-contempt, self-tormenting, and self-destruction."<sup>38</sup> Self hate is a profoundly painful business, and the self-alienated person will attempt to avoid it at all costs. But this avoidance has its price. It also must be purchased at an expense, the lessening of the subject's grip on and appreciation of the reality that is associated with the dreaded actual self.

"Neurotic claims" are also part of the pride system that provides the structure of self-alienation. Since the self-alienated person has substituted in his mind his ideal for his actual self, he feels himself to be godlike, above the demands of reality that restrict others. He feels justified, in fact, in presenting claims to the outside world, in demanding that it conform to his wishes. In short, he believes that, "He is entitled to be treated by others, or by fate, in accord with his grandiose notions about himself. Everyone ought to cater to his illusions. Everything short

of this is unfair. He is entitled to a better deal."<sup>39</sup> When fate and his fellow man do not comply with these assumptions, the self alienated person's sense of injury is profound, and this adds further to the accumulation of discontent that marks neurosis.

The "tyranny of the should" is Horney's way of referring to the rigid inner dictates developed by her subjects in their efforts to become their idealized selves. In his efforts to become godlike, the self alienated person makes excessive and irrational demands on himself, demands that vary in nature according to his solution, but are always inconsistent with the realities of human nature. Perhaps he feels that he "should" always feel loving, or "should" never feel fear--rigid and unfair demands that exist in opposition to human realities. The penalty for not living up to one's shoulds is self hate, that dreaded symptom of confrontation with the despised self. The stakes are high. The shoulds become a "regime of terror,"<sup>40</sup> imposing further restrictions and inhibitions on the neurotic's dealing with the outer world.

### C. The Psychological Approach Applied

#### i. Third Force Psychology and Literature

Horney's description of the pride system and the defensive strategies that she calls "solutions" to our inner conflicts are well suited to describing the natures of literary characters and the human interactions of many implied author-character-reader triangles as well. Novels,

after all, are created by and about and for human beings with the same potential for self alienation as the rest of mankind.<sup>41</sup> Most of us are the victims of at least some basic anxiety, and our psychic make-up and behavior is affected by our need to defend ourselves against it.

As an imitation of life, a "round" character created by a great mimetic artist like Faulkner often exhibits the symptoms of self alienation described by Horney. His patterns of motivation and behavior, his ways of thinking about and acting in his fictional world can be analyzed in terms of his general "solution" to the problem of basic anxiety and his grapplings with the demands of his pride system. As a critical technique, this type of analysis has two advantages. To begin with, it allows us to deal with the abundant life of these characters, the wealth of detail that makes them seem to move and talk and act independently of their creator, to have their own integrity as human beings. As we sift through this detail, observing the patterns into which it falls, we come to appreciate the sheer reality of such a portrait more than we can when we view it from a thematic or formal point of view. The other primary advantage of the technique has to do with the evaluation rather than appreciation. Horneyan theory allows us a way of judging the nature of a character that is independent of the author's rhetoric. This means that we can determine how well his human nature, his mimetic aspect, suits his aesthetic purpose. But before we can understand the basis

for this kind of evaluation, we must examine the relationship between self-alienation and the process of literary creation itself.<sup>42</sup>

A literary work, to begin with, is the product of the imagination, that same imagination that inflicts on the self-alienated personality the ideal self, the rigidity of the pride system, the all-encompassing strategy of the neurotic solution. If the creator of a literary work is suffering from any degree of self-alienation, and the chances are very good that he is, then the product that emanates from his imagination will be somehow related to his drive to combat his basic anxiety. The literary work, in fact, will become itself a defensive strategy, a method of relieving tension, a means of projecting the ideal self, a way to convey the world view that is the product of the general defensive solution.

A novel that concerns itself with the matter of everyday existence (a realistic novel) will "imply" an "author" with a particular psychological identity, a particular combination of defensive strategies. When we are able, with the aid of Horneyan theory, to describe this identity, we can come to understand a good deal about the novel's dynamics. The rhetoric of a given novel, be it ever so subtle, will reveal a guiding consciousness with particular intrapsychic and interpsychic patterns of being that have a profound effect on the nature of the characters and world created. An implied author may, for example, "identify" with a

character who shares his dominant solution, and in this case he will manipulate his rhetoric so as to indicate his approval of that character. Or he may resent excessively a character who represents one of his repressed trends, and this too will be revealed in his rhetoric.

An author's rhetoric, as we have seen, is designed to "create" his "ideal reader," the reader who will share his perspective on his fictional world. In the context of our psychological analysis, this means that the reader will be asked to adopt temporarily the implied author's dominant solution. On a very simple and general level, for example, if the guiding consciousness of a work is predominantly detached, the reader will be asked to accept freedom as the highest value, and to identify with the character who tries to divest himself of all entanglements. As simple as it may sound, however, this relationship between implied author and reader is fraught with uncertainty and complexity. This is because the success of the rhetoric is not automatic. For example, a character may "escape" an author's rhetoric. As E. M. Forster has described them, "round," life-like characters are likely to assume an independent existence. They "arrive when evoked, but full of the spirit of mutiny,"<sup>43</sup> and, to shift to Faulkner's equally fanciful description, the author who runs along behind them with pencil in hand may not be able to present them in exactly the light that his defensive strategies would dictate. In this case the novel may be plagued by a lack of unity. The rhetoric will



claim things for and about the character that are not borne out by the way he speaks or thinks or behaves. When this occurs, Horneyan analysis allows us to explore the nature of the character as he really is, and thus makes it possible to measure the gap between representation and interpretation. Another obstacle to rhetorical effectiveness is a lack of rhetorical clarity brought about by the implied author's ambivalence toward a given character. If a character represents an implied author's barely repressed trends, for example, he may simultaneously despise him and wish to glorify him. In these cases, as we shall see, Horneyan theory can be of assistance in understanding the ambivalence of rhetoric and audience response regarding the character in question. Yet another obstacle may be created by the reader's own defensive strategies. A predominantly aggressive reader, for example, may feel that a self-effacing character is too dependent on others, too much the self-pitying complainer, and may reject him as a result, even though the implied author's rhetoric clearly asks him to sympathize with the victim's plight. In this case, Horney's theories will help us to understand the unsuccessful relationship of author and reader.

This last obstacle is of special interest to the critic. He must, after all, predicate his discussion of reader reaction on his own response, which may be as defensive or idiosyncratic as the next person's. It is necessary for him to strive to analyze the author's rhetoric in



objective detail, and to consider the responses of other critics, in order to avoid revealing more about himself (not necessarily a subject of widespread interest among those who will read his criticism) than about the work in question. Nevertheless, a critical endeavor that is not, to use Frederick Crew's descriptive term, "anesthetic," that does not neglect the human nature of a literary work,<sup>44</sup> is likely to involve some self-revelation on the part of the critic. Malcolm Cowley says in commenting on "deep" psychological criticism of Faulkner's work, ". . . I begin to be dubious about that 'depth' now that so many critics have plumbed it at no inconvenience to themselves."<sup>45</sup> The critic who uses the method outlined above becomes part of the psychological phenomenon to be studied. He occupies the reader's place in the implied author-character-reader triangle, and he must "inconvenience" himself by analyzing and considering his own reactions.

#### ii. Horney, Maslow, and Faulkner

Using the Horneyan method of psychological analysis, we find that there are similarities in the characterizations and in the the psychological interactions of the implied author-character-reader "triangles" in The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, and Light in August. These similarities revolve around the conflict between the predominantly self-effacing stance of the implied author of these works, and his fascination with and indulgence of aggressive characters. As we have seen, the stance of the predominantly

self-effacing type is that of the martyr who sacrifices his independence and his opportunities for personal fulfillment to others, but expects the "payment" of their love and attention in return. His value system is based on justice: sensitivity and self-sacrifice should be rewarded. When they are not, he feels cheated and resentful. We would expect such a person to abhor any evidence of the kind of aggressive behavior or attitudes that threaten the weak, and he very often does. But, since he has repressed aggressive trends himself, his response is not always so predictable. Horney describes it:

He does abhor aggressive, arrogant, or vindictive traits in others but also secretly or openly adores them, and does so indiscriminately--without distinction between genuine self confidence and hollow arrogance, between real strength and ego-centric brutality. We easily understand that, chafing under his enforced humility, he adores in others aggressive qualities which he lacks or which are unavailable to him. But gradually we realize that this is not the complete explanation. We see that a more deeply hidden set of values is also operating in him, and that he admires in an aggressive type the expansive drives which for the sake of his integration he must so deeply suppress in himself.<sup>46</sup>

It is this pattern of alternating abhorrence and adoration of aggressive trends on the part of the basically self-effacing, justice-oriented personality that we will be examining in our study of the first three of Faulkner's greatest novels.

To generalize, the implied authors of The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, and Light in August see their worlds in terms of the self-effacing solution. With their subtle

rhetoric, they ask the reader's identification with characters who are victims, or whose sensitivity and self-sacrifice go largely unappreciated by a world seen as unjust: Quentin Compson, Dilsey, Darl and Addie Bundren, the young Joe Christmas. As a result these novels present a picture of the human condition as frustrating and bleak, though man's ability to "prevail" over this frustration and grimness, exemplified by characters like Dilsey or Addie Bundren, has been the subject of much thematic criticism.

Existing alongside this dominantly self-effacing approach, however, is a disguised "adoration" of aggressive trends, revealed in the tendency of the implied authors of these novels to use subtle rhetorical devices to reveal their own identification with aggressive tendencies in their characters, and to ask their readers to share it. It is this trend (hardly the only important aspect of Faulkner's work, but perhaps the one that has been least explored) that provides the primary subject of the first three studies which follow. In our analyses of Jason Compson, Anse Bundren, and Joe Christmas and their roles in the novels they inhabit, we shall uncover an indulgence in aggressive fantasy on the part of their implied creators that is at odds with the dominant value systems of the works involved. As we shall see, Jason Compson, who is well described by Horney's theories about the arrogant-vindictive personality, a sub-category of the aggressive type, is allowed to undercut our identification and concern with the rest of the

Compsons. And Anse Bundren, who is profoundly self-alienated though he seems to be just too lazy to "choose" a dominant solution, is used by his creator in an aggressive way, as a kind of weapon against the other characters and themes of As I Lay Dying. It is in Light in August, however, that these aggressive trends receive their fullest indulgence. The portrayal of the predominantly arrogant-vindictive adult Joe Christmas comes to dominate the entire novel. Joe's way of seeing the world becomes the implied author's way of seeing it, and through the novel's subtle rhetoric, the reader is asked to join in this view. Ultimately the aggressive content of the novel becomes so overwhelming as to be disturbing to its creator, and he withdraws to the self effacing position and makes an abused martyr of his mastery-seeking creation.

Coming to The Hamlet after Light in August we notice a pronounced change in atmosphere which can be accounted for by Third Force theory. Here we find that the theories of Maslow regarding self-actualization are more relevant than the theories of Horney regarding self-alienation. Our analysis will demonstrate that this novel is controlled by a guiding consciousness at ease in the world, and thus able to approach it without the interference of defensive strategies. In the case of The Hamlet the act of creation appears to be part of the drive towards self fulfillment, rather than part of the search for glory. Here our primary concern is with Ratliff, whose robust mental health is allowed to

dominate the novel and its rhetoric.

The analysis outlined above will inevitably raise questions that it is not equipped to answer. How does the psychological analysis of the implied author of these various Faulkner works reflect on the psychological make-up of Faulkner himself? What happened to Faulkner between Light in August and The Hamlet to account for the dramatic contrast between these two novels? These are legitimate subjects for the psycho-biographer; after all, Faulkner-in-the-flesh<sup>47</sup> did create the "second selves" and the characters that are the subject of our analysis. But the present study carefully limits itself to the individual fictional worlds in question. Each of these worlds has its own separate boundaries, and all must, for our purposes, remain separate from the life of the man ultimately responsible for their creation.

I do not intend, then, to "analyze" Faulkner, the man, but to provide readers with a new way to appreciate his great mimetic achievements. The theories of Horney and Maslow offer us considerable insight into the complexity and abundant life of his human creations. By studying common interpsychic and intrapsychic strategies we become more aware of the nuances of human behavior, and the gesture or remark that might otherwise appear to be meaningless if enjoyable "business" now can be seen as part of a coherent psychological portrait of a human being. Critics have always appreciated Faulkner's characterizations, but through

our use of Horney and Maslow we are able to explain why they are so effective. The other major advantage of the approach, as we have seen, is that it allows us to analyze the dynamics of the implied author-character-reader triangle. The method and manner in which the implied author attempts to "bounce" the reader into accepting his "emotions and judgments" provide the basis for the fictional experience. By giving us a means of understanding these "emotions and judgments," their relationship to the creation and evaluation of character, and their interaction with the "emotions and judgments" of the reader, our psychological approach greatly increases the depth and quality of our insight into the novels concerned.

Of course it remains to be noted that, while we may find Horney and Maslow useful in understanding and describing characters, Faulkner did not need them to tell him how a man like Jason Compson or V. K. Ratliff would think or behave. The insight of the great mimetic artist into human motivation and behavior is at least as profound as that of the modern psychologist. Just as we go to Horney or Maslow for the tools that will allow us to understand Faulkner's work, the student of psychology might well go to Faulkner to increase the breadth and depth of his understanding of human nature.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Conrad Aiken, "William Faulkner: The Novel as Form," in Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga Vickery, eds. (East Lansing, 1960), pp. 135-42.

<sup>2</sup>George Marion O'Donnell, "Faulkner's Mythology," Three Decades, pp. 82-93.

<sup>3</sup>Most critics consider both meaning and technique, of course, but for the purpose of summary it is perhaps useful to separate those whose primary concerns are aesthetic from those whose primary concerns are thematic.

To mention a few prominent critics whose explorations of Faulkner's form and technique are especially useful: Warren Beck, "William Faulkner's Style," Three Decades, pp. 142-56, and Faulkner: Essays (Madison, 1976); Andre Bleikasten, The Most Splendid Failure: Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury (Bloomington and London, 1976), and Faulkner's As I Lay Dying (Bloomington and London, 1973); Joseph Reed, Faulkner's Narrative (New Haven and London, 1973); Walter J. Slatoff, Quest for Failure: A Study of William Faulkner (Westport, 1972); Linda Wagner, Hemingway and Faulkner: Inventors/Masters (Metuchen, N. J., 1975). Some recent studies have used psychological or linguistic theory to explore Faulkner's technical or formal achievement: John Irwin, Doubling and Incest, Repetition and Revenge: A Speculative Study of Faulkner (Baltimore, 1975); Judith Slater, "Quentin's Tunnel Vision: Modes of Perception and their Stylistic Realization in The Sound and the Fury," Literature and Psychology (1979); Stephen Ross, "Voice in Narrative Texts: The Example of As I Lay Dying," PMLA, 94, 2 (March 1979), 300-310.

Many of the best known Faulkner critics seem to be primarily interested in theme: Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven, 1963); John W. Hunt, William Faulkner: Art in Theological Tension (Syracuse, 1965); Michael Millgate, The Achievement of William Faulkner (New York, 1966); Olga Vickery, The Novels of William Faulkner (Louisiana, 1964); Joseph Gold, William Faulkner: A Study in Humanism from Metaphor to Discourse (Norman, OK, 1966). More recently, Myra Jehlen has used the theories of Marxism to examine what she sees as the motives behind Faulkner's themes in Class and Character in Faulkner's South (New York, 1976), and Albert J. Guerard has used psychoanalytic theory to examine the buried content of some of his most powerful work, The Triumph of the Novel: Dickens Dostoevsky, Faulkner (New York, 1976).

<sup>4</sup>As Wagner points out, the interest in "craft" or technique is closely related to the interest in realism. Part of the reason for Faulkner's success as a creator of realistic characters is flexibility of presentation.

Jason Compson, for example, would hardly seem so vivid had he been presented only by a traditional omniscient narrator. See Wagner, p. VII. But in order to make my topic more manageable, I will usually take Faulkner's technique rather for granted, focusing on effect rather than cause.

<sup>5</sup>The phrase is probably Pound's, and, as Wagner says, it "echoes throughout this period of experimentation in all the arts," p. VII.

<sup>6</sup>Henry James quoted in The Theory of Fiction: Henry James, James E. Miller Jr., ed. (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1972), p. 93.

<sup>7</sup>Richard Chase, The American Novel and Its Tradition (Garden City, New York, 1956), p. 12.

<sup>8</sup>Quoted in Faulkner in the University, Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph Blotner, eds. (Charlottesville, 1959), p. 118.

<sup>9</sup>University, p. 198.

<sup>10</sup>University, p. 120.

<sup>11</sup>See William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country, or Faulkner: Essays.

<sup>12</sup>Vickery, p. 296.

<sup>13</sup>Irving Howe, William Faulkner (New York, 1962), p. 4.

<sup>14</sup>James, p. 34.

<sup>15</sup>Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago and London, 1961).

<sup>16</sup>Booth, p. 86.

<sup>17</sup>E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (New York, 1954), p. 118.

<sup>18</sup>Booth, p. 138.

<sup>19</sup>Booth, p. 272.

<sup>20</sup>See Guerard, Irwin, or Slater.

<sup>21</sup>William Faulkner, As I Lay Dying (New York, 1930), p. 51.



<sup>22</sup>Bernard J. Paris, A Psychological Approach to Fiction (Bloomington and London, 1974), p. X.

<sup>23</sup>Abraham Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being (New York, 1968), p. 3.

<sup>24</sup>Maslow, p. 23.

<sup>25</sup>Maslow, p. 16.

<sup>26</sup>Maslow, p. 167.

<sup>27</sup>Maslow, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup>Horney consistently uses the terms "neurotic" and "neurosis" to describe her subjects and their way of dealing with the world. Since terms like these can prove rather off-putting in a non-clinical context, I will avoid them except when making direct reference to Horney.

<sup>29</sup>Karen Horney, Neurosis and Human Growth (New York, 1950), p. 18.

<sup>30</sup>Horney, p. 19.

<sup>31</sup>Horney, p. 19.

<sup>32</sup>Horney, p. 260.

<sup>33</sup>Horney, p. 21.

<sup>34</sup>Horney, p. 22.

<sup>35</sup>Horney, p. 24.

<sup>36</sup>Horney, p. 87.

<sup>37</sup>Horney, p. 99.

<sup>38</sup>Horney, p. 117.

<sup>39</sup>Horney, p. 41.

<sup>40</sup>Horney, p. 85.

<sup>41</sup>For a discussion of the issue of the relative "health" or wisdom of the novelist, see Paris, pp. 17-23, and pp. 278-81, where he claims that most novelists, like most other people, are self-alienated, and that we err in looking to them for superior interpretations of characters and events. It is their ability to represent that we must value most highly.

<sup>42</sup>I leave Maslow out of this part of the discussion, since, for my purposes, his theories apply only to The Hamlet. The discussion of the relationship of the drive toward self-realization and literary creation will be taken up specifically in connection with this novel.

<sup>43</sup>Forster, p. 102.

<sup>44</sup>Frederick Crews, Out Of My System (New York, 1975), pp. 77-78.

<sup>45</sup>Malcolm Cowley, And I Worked at the Writer's Trade (New York, 1978), p. 227.

<sup>46</sup>Horney, p. 220.

<sup>47</sup>The phrase is Cowley's. He describes the distinction between Faulkner and his "second self": "That need to dramatize everyone in his world, and himself along with the others, was among the fixed laws of Faulkner's imagination. He even spoke of himself in the third person--'Faulkner might have thought,' he was heard to say--as if Faulkner-who-wrote-the-novels was another dramatized character to be sharply distinguished from Faulkner-in-the-flesh."

## CHAPTER II

### THE APPEAL OF THE GOOD OLD BOY: A HORNEYAN ANALYSIS OF JASON COMPSON AND THE SOUND AND THE FURY

Critical studies of The Sound and the Fury tend to focus on the section "narrated" by Quentin, the failed romantic and suicide whose plight seems to have a special connection to the meaning of the novel as a whole. As Joseph Reed says, Quentin's section is "theme dominated";<sup>1</sup> by virtue of its style (much of it what Warren Beck calls Faulkner's "full style")<sup>2</sup> and content, it asks us to generalize from Quentin's emotions and experiences, to find in his tortured ramblings a message for and about modern man. In other words, it would seem that the implied author of The Sound and the Fury asks us to share his concern for and identification with Quentin, to see the world with Quentin's eyes, and most of the classic analyses of the novel do so. It is most often read as the story of the decline of a family brought about by the erosion of love and traditional values, and by an inability to deal with a present that is insensitive to human needs and dominated by what later comes to be known as Snopesism.<sup>3</sup> The fourth section of the novel, that part narrated by Faulkner himself, and containing most reference to Dilsey, usually considered Faulkner's most

morally admirable character, is also important to this standard interpretation of the novel. Dilsey's response to injustice, hardship, failure, and abuse is acceptance, endurance, and love, and this provides a hopeful counterpoint to Quentin's despair and capitulation.

In this context Jason Compson, the middle brother, is seen as representative of the world that destroys Quentin and makes of Dilsey's life an endless round of suffering. His section is a masterpiece of irony. The reader is in complicity with the implied author in seeing through Jason's self serving interpretations of people and events, and in rejecting out of hand his views about his family and about life in general.<sup>4</sup> But there is a body of criticism that offers some opposition to this view of the thematic consistency of The Sound and the Fury. Irving Howe offers a hint of it when he says that Quentin's section seems unable to bear the thematic weight that Faulkner intends it to carry.<sup>5</sup> Some critics<sup>6</sup> contend that a certain amount of this thematic weight is transferred to Jason's section by virtue of the appeal of his voice, or the practicality of his outlook, or the irresistibility of his humor. The assumption underlying interpretations such as these is that the implied author of The Sound and the Fury identifies in some way with the middle Compson brother, and promotes reader identification with him as well, thus disallowing the total thematic dominance of Quentin and Dilsey. This although almost no one disputes Jason's shortcomings as a

human being.<sup>7</sup> This study follows the lead of these critics, but uses Horneyan psychology to examine the nature of Jason's character and its effects on the dynamics of The Sound and the Fury.

In a controversial essay on Jason, Linda Wagner looks more closely at his personality than other critics have done, making use of the "surplus margin of life" that is part of his portrait, examining the origins of his behavior instead of merely describing his villainy. She emphasizes the lack of love and comfort given Jason in the scenes Faulkner shows of his childhood, and notes that his unappealing personality is the direct result of this neglect. At the same time, she contends that much of his behavior in sections three and four stems from his desire to preserve the family honor;<sup>8</sup> and, along with other critics, she makes the point that his practical sense allows him to function well in the world that defeats Quentin and stymies Dilsey.

Though Wagner's essay, particularly those sections that deal with Jason's childhood, allows us necessary insight into Jason's habits of mind and motivation, Horney's theories regarding the arrogant-vindictive type will allow us to explain the complexities of his character more thoroughly. The wounds of Jason's childhood go even deeper than Wagner imagines; his adult behavior is not that of a rational survivor, nor is it the result of common sense or enlightened self interest. Instead it is controlled by his compulsive needs for triumph and revenge.

The arrogant-vindictive person is perhaps the least sympathetic of all Horneyan types. Deprived of love and approval in his childhood, he can deal with others only by seeking to revenge himself on them for the wrongs done him in the past. His ideal self is master over all; his search for glory takes the form of a drive toward vindictive triumph. Injuries to his neurotic pride produce rage; self hate finds an outlet in sadism. Those who surround the arrogant-vindictive type thus inevitably become his victims, and we can clearly see this victimization of others taking place as we follow Jason. Even the reader begins to feel himself put in the position of the victim, as we can perhaps guess from the strong language used in critical analyses of his character. Naturally a person like this is bound to provoke the resentment of those around him. But it is not enough merely to hate and resent Jason. Horney emphasizes that however objectionable the arrogant-vindictive type may appear, he is a suffering and struggling human being (NHG, p. 209) whose unattractive personality is not a matter of choice, but of compulsive response to the very bad conditions for human growth provided him in his childhood. In spite of what John L. Longley, Jr. says, attention to the causes of Jason's behavior is not designed to excuse him, to make him appear "the innocent victim of bad sociology (sic)."<sup>9</sup> Rather it is designed to take into account the considerable detail on Jason that Faulkner provides, detail that makes it impossible to view Jason as a one dimensional

villain.

Horney describes the typical childhood of the arrogant-vindictive type:

Sheer brutality, humiliation, derision, neglect and flagrant hypocrisy, all these assailed a child of especially great sensitivity . . . He may make some pathetic and unsuccessful attempts to win interest, or affection, but finally chokes off all tender needs. He gradually 'decides' that genuine affection is not only unattainable for him but that it doesn't exist at all . . . so he is no longer anxious to please but can give free range, at least in his mind to his ample supply of bitter resentment (NHG, p. 202).

As Wagner's essay reveals in some detail, Jason's childhood was indeed a disaster, his obnoxiousness a response to the failure of everyone around him to treat him as if he were a lovable and worthwhile human being. His mother's hypocrisy, the neglect of the rest of the family, the derision of the black family retainers, all of these things contribute to Jason's "decision" to turn aggressor.

The Jason of the Benjy and Quentin sections is the fat little boy, the odd man left out of the golden aura surrounding Caddy in which Quentin and Benjy bask. Landing on the ground with his hands in his pockets like a "trussed fowl," chewing paper in the corner, he is the dull child that everyone tries to ignore. "It was always her and Quentin," whines his mother, whose support comes too late, "they were always conspiring against me. Against you too though you were too young to realize it."<sup>10</sup> For once we know she is right, except for the "realizing." When Quentin and Caddy splash each other in the branch, or when





Caddy talks the others into slipping out and climbing the tree to see Damuddy's death bed, Jason's role is not that of co-conspirator, but that of stool pigeon. "Jason will tell," says Caddy repeatedly. "I'm going to tell," says Jason, over and over, seeking in the role of tattler the time honored refuge of the rejected child.

Mr. Compson, whatever his other faults, appears in the first two sections as a man who loves and enjoys children. His general stance is one of amused tolerance and concern. He notices and approves when Quentin gets in a fight at school. He goes along with Caddy's authentically childlike demand that everyone "mind" her. He picks up Benjy, and is the only one who wants to pick Caddy up after her profoundly disastrous fall. But, as Wagner points out, when Jason lands in front of him "all trussed up," he does not move. "Where's Quentin," he says (SF, p. 27). Jason tries again, "Caddy and Quentin threw water on each other." "They did," Father says. The only hint we have of Mr. Compson as disciplinarian is that the cries of Jason can be heard from the other room after he has cut up (accidentally he says) Benjy's paper dolls. "We could hear Jason too, crying loud behind the wall" (SF, p. 80). From what we know of Mr. Compson, we can speculate that the rather average and unattractive middle son showing no particular intellectual aptitude would have less appeal for a man who "sat all day long with a decanter of whiskey and a litter of dogeared Horaces and Livys and Catulluses, composing (it was said)

caustic and satiric eulogies on both his dead and his living fellow townsmen" (SF, p. 410), than would his beautiful and doomed little daughter, or his intelligent and dreamy eyed first son. He will hold Jason on his lap if the latter does not snuffle too much, but there is little warmth between them.

There are four mother figures in Jason's childhood, but they too neglect and disappoint him. His grandmother, Damuddy, deserts him with her death, which occurs on the day that Faulkner picks up the story of the Compson family. She alone has loved the fat little Jason, letting him sleep with her, and "spoiling" him so badly, Mrs. Compson complains, that it takes two years to wean him of the habit of being loved. Wagner's essay makes the case that Jason's obnoxious behavior in the famous family scenes--the branch, the kitchen, the tree--reflects his fears about Damuddy's illness. Further exploration of Jason's childhood will convince us that he has a right to his grief. His relationship with Damuddy is virtually his only experience of "love and belonging."

In his portrayal of Mrs. Compson's relationship to Jason, Faulkner seems to have depicted the perfect conditions for the development of an arrogant-vindictive personality. From the already mentioned comment she makes to Caddy about the latter's treatment of Benjy, it is evident that during his very young years she showed no interest in him. "You humor him too much. You and your father both.

You don't realize that I am the one who has to pay for it. Damuddy spoiled Jason that way and it took him two years to outgrow it . . ." (SF, p. 77). Mrs. Compson is self-alienated herself, of course, and her claims--she should never be called on for any physical or emotional effort, everyone owes her recompense for the failure of reality to live up to her expectations, nothing should ever happen to disturb her peace, everyone should recognize her great strength and her martyrdom--make her the worst possible mother. To Quentin and Caddy she is no mother at all ("If only I had a mother," says Quentin, and at Mrs. Compson's insistence Caddy's name is not even spoken in the house) and to Jason she is worse. Because once he is past the stage of desiring to "move towards" others, once Damuddy has been dead a while and he has made the unconscious "decision" that affection is not only unattainable for him but non-existent, an illusion, she takes him up. She elevates him to the position of number one in what passes for her heart, glorifying him, reinforcing his compulsive notion that he must be master over all. Jason, she now says, is her only real baby, the "only one her heart went out to without dread" (SF, p. 126). "He has never given me one moment's sorrow since I first held him in my arms" (SF, p. 127). He pulls at her heart, this boy who is ". . . the only one of my children with any practical sense" (SF, p. 116). Later he becomes the head of her household. Having invested her considerable false pride in him, she names him lord over

all, and is at pains to nurture his sense that the world has injured him.

'I know you haven't had the chance the others had, that you've had to bury yourself in a little country store . . . I knew your father would never realize that you were the only one who had any business sense' (SF, p. 275).

What his mother gives Jason is not the warmth and affection that would have nurtured the growth of his real self, but the kind of support perfectly designed to confirm him in his self-alienated search for glory. She is a kind of grotesque and saturnine cheerleader who, having given up on her own life, all but does handstands to show her approval of Jason's compulsive drives for vindication and mastery.

That Caddy is a mother figure for both Benjy and Quentin has been mentioned by many critics. She carries Benjy around until he is at least five, and tries to compensate for everything his life must lack, "You're not a poor baby. Are you. You've got your Caddy. Haven't you got your Caddy" (SF, p. 8). And, according to John Irwin, Caddy is not only Quentin's double and the object of his incestuous desires, but also a mother substitute, his desire for her signifying both Oedipal drives and a need to return to the peace of the womb. Quentin and Benjy suffer immensely as a consequence of their involvement with Caddy, but as boys they move within her golden glow. Jason most emphatically does not. "Are you going to tell Jason," she asks in her first recorded words to him.

"Crybaby," she taunts when he cries for Damuddy. "I'd sit in Damuddy's chair," she announces, "she eats in bed" (SF, p. 27). "He's chewing paper again" (SF, p. 88). "You shut your mouth. You dirty little beast" (SF, p. 49). Faulkner's "heart's darling" unquestionably derides and neglects her middle brother, denying him out of who knows what natural antipathy or inbred disgust, her considerable maternal skills. "You never had a drop of warm blood in you" (SF, p. 259), she tells him later, and she seems to be right. But Faulkner has shown us that this lack of warmth has a source.

Dilsey takes up much of the maternal slack in the Compson household: lecturing, feeding, putting to bed, comforting, but we never see any of her notorious warmth extended in Jason's direction. Faulkner says in the appendix that she has been his "sworn enemy since birth" (SF, p. 420); and Mrs. Compson seems to be right when she tells Dilsey, "I know you never had any tenderness for Jason" (SF, p. 339). Of the group in the kitchen she is the only one who knows that Damuddy is not only sick but dead, but she does not undertake to comfort Jason. As any fat person would, he manages to eat his dinner despite his emotional state, but then he begins to cry. "Hush," she keeps telling him. Then finally, "You want to get whipped" (SF, pp. 89-90). Dilsey is ordinarily the essence of selfless, giving love, but by the time we see her with Jason the vicious circle is revolving. She cannot love Jason because he is not

lovable. He is not lovable because no one loves him.

Certainly the implied author does not intend the reader to fault Caddy or Dilsey for not serving as mother figures to Jason. Much of the novel encourages us to admire them and detest him. As soon mother a rat or a snake. But the creator of this novel understood human nature well enough to know that the Jason of sections three and four could not have sprung from a childhood in which his sister was associated in his mind with the light and warmth of fire, or in which an old black servant coddled and cuddled him. Jason's childhood has little to do with the over all design of The Sound and the Fury; but it is part of its abundant life, life that has often been passed over in favor of concern for technique or theme.

The adolescence of Caddy and Quentin is an explosive one, presented to us in a series of striking scenes--Caddy in the branch with the water flowing about her hips, Quentin with his nose to the ground to escape the odor of honeysuckle, the two of them in the hog wallow. In the background, providing an horrific chorus, is Benjy, bellowing at Caddy's new dress, bellowing at her perfume, bellowing at her fall from grace. But at this time of intense family romance Jason is hardly mentioned, except by his mother, who would like to have him accompany her on an unlikely journey of escape (too late she volunteers a role in the Oedipal drama). While Quentin's and Benjy's grief at Caddy's "unvirgin" status is at the very center of the

novel, Jason's lot is the derision and neglect due the comic book little brother. A rare exchange with Caddy: "He don't like that prissy dress. You think you're grown up don't you. You think your're better than anybody else, don't you. Prissy." "Shut your mouth you dirty little beast" (SF, p. 49). Again he lurks outside the family circle, developing a defense that will save him from suicide and castration, certainly, (by now the family circle is a dangerous place to be) but that will exclude him, as Horney says, ". . . from all that makes life worth living--from joy, happiness, love, creativeness, growth" (NHG, p. 211). His positive feelings are crushed; the seeds of his vindictiveness are planted. He has "chosen" his "solution."

As Horney describes it,

He is and will be infinitely better than 'they' are. He will become great and put them to shame. He will show them how they have misjudged and wronged him. He will become the great hero, the persecutor. Driven by an understandable need for vindication, revenge, and triumph, these are not idle fantasies. They determine the course of his life (NHG, p. 203).

Jason's adulthood as an aggressive type begins with a vindictive triumph. A vindictive triumph involves the achievement of revenge and mastery. It is motivated by . . . impulses to take revenge for humiliations suffered in childhood and momentarily establishes the ascendancy (at least in his own mind) of the compulsively vindictive person over those against whom it is perpetrated. For this reason it is extremely gratifying to his pride in his ideal self--producing feelings of exhilaration as he is released from

his self hate. At the moment of vindictive triumph he is his ideal self; his hated actual self disappears.

Jason's first and most important vindictive triumph occurs on the day his father is buried. Until now his attempts at vindictiveness have been childish and not very satisfying, but on this day he achieves a triumph of great significance, one that colors the rest of his life.

Things are going badly for Jason on this day. He has a new suit, but it is raining and no one seems to care that he is getting wet. Since his father came back with baby Quentin and news of Jason's lost chance for a bank job, Jason has been working in the hardware store and witnessing his father's ever more energetic attempts to drink himself to death. As he watches the men filling his father's grave ". . . throwing dirt into it, slapping it on anyway like they were making mortar or something" (SF, p. 250), he begins to feel "sort of funny." Later as he talks to Caddy this funny feeling turns to one we come to recognize as rage ("kind of mad or something") as he thinks about his lost job, about his hopeless position in a household with the clove-sucking Uncle Maury as its head, and, no doubt most importantly, about ". . . when we were little" (SF, p. 252). Reality is closing in. His hated actual self looms before him--the least favored child stuck in a dead end job in a small town, unloved and unrespected. He sees his chance for revenge, his chance to externalize his self hate, when Caddy offers him money if he will let her "see"



her daughter. The resulting maneuver with Mink and the carriage resembles nothing so much as a childish pun (Can I see your brother for a minute? Sure, take a look at him), but the sight of Caddy running after them and jerking with rage in the hardware store the next day is extremely satisfying to Jason. His pride is gratified because he has proved to Caddy, as he says years later, still savoring the victory, that he is ". . . a different breed of cat from father" (SF, p. 262), that he is a strong man to be feared and obeyed. "After she was gone," he says, "I felt better" (SF, p. 256). Better, Faulkner shows us, than he has since Damuddy died. In fact, he feels terrific, soaring on the wings of glory available only to those who have made the Faustian pact to leave their real selves and the real world behind. Actually Jason's defeat of Caddy is a silly, sordid little affair, but it vindicates Jason in his own eyes, and effectively transfers his feelings of inadequacy onto the trembling Caddy. The momentary release from self hate and simultaneous sensation that he is his idealized self is heady stuff. Now he is the masterful Jason, head of the family, who can keep the flour barrel full, command his meals on time, and refuse to take any lip from his women-folk. In the first flush of his triumph he even thinks he can control Dilsey. "I put the fear of God into Dilsey. As much as you can into a nigger that is" (SF, p. 257). Ultimately Jason's creator will see to it that he is crushed, "mocked by his own triumphing" (SF, p. 383), but for much of

his own section of the novel, what we see is an arrogant-vindictive type in full bloom: Hitler before Normandy, Heathcliff after Cathy's death, Nixon before Watergate.

Such gratifying opportunities as that which Caddy offers Jason do not come along every day, but the arrogant-vindictive type gets some of this feeling of mastery through his characteristic behavior towards others which, as Horney says, is "openly arrogant, often rude and offensive" (NHG, p. 199). The motivation for this day to day pattern of behavior is much the same as that which leads a man like Jason to pursue vindictive triumph. He is unconsciously seeking revenge for wrongs done him, a way to externalize his desire to punish himself for the gap between his ideal and actual selves, and a method of scaring others ". . . for the purpose of asserting his claims" (NHG, p. 208). Jason's hate for his actual self--a middle aged man with a grotesque excuse for a family and a menial job--is, we imagine from his behavior, intense. But he can get relief from these negative feelings by externalizing them onto the very people who remind him of his lowly status. At the same time his rudeness allows him to express his disgust with himself indirectly, without feeling it as such, and to scare others into treating him with special consideration.

And Jason is appallingly rude. When his newly widowed mother requests his company on a trip to the cemetery, indicating that his presence would make her feel safe, "Safe from what," he wants to know, "Father and Quentin can't

hurt you" (SF, p. 12). When she expresses concern for his health, "I thought maybe you were sick" (SF, p. 294), he is sardonic, "Better luck next time," he says. When she wishes he would take an aspirin, he suggests that she "keep on wishing it" (SF, p. 296). As narrator Jason records all instances of his rudeness with pride, much as a little boy might repeat his backtalk to the teacher. These quips are little triumphs for him. Not only is his mother paying for the wrongs she has done him and learning to fear him, but he is able briefly to forget his headache, or the sight of her sitting for all the town to see in a broken down old buggy along with a very conspicuous idiot, or whatever reminder of his actual self is threatening at the time.

Dilsey is a different matter. With her compliant attitude she stirs Jason's self hate by reminding him of his own strongly repressed desires to "move towards" others. In addition, she stands in the way of his "search for glory" because of her clear-eyed view of his actual self and her ability to foil him in small matters such as the serving of his dinner. Jason's rudeness to Dilsey is indicative of his desire to revenge himself on her for hating him, and it is an outlet for the negative feelings her very existence inspires in him (even when he quits paying her she will not leave), but he cannot help but reveal that it is not effective as a means of exercising his claims. Dilsey just absorbs Jason's rudeness as she would the spite of a small child. "You just tryin youself tonight" (SF, p. 320), just

as she says to Luster. And try himself he does whenever he comes in contact with her: slamming the door in her face, demanding his meals sarcastically, sending her upstairs and expressing annoyance at her arthritic slowness, referring to her in her presence as "an old half dead nigger" (SF, p. 230).

Jason's niece, Quentin, has no "identity or individuality" (SF, p. 382) for him, but as the symbol of his lost bank job she is the logical target of his desires for revenge. Not only that, but her sluttish behavior is a continual reminder of the gap between his ideal and actual selves. He is not Jason, master of all he surveys, but Jason, helpless observer of the final ugly stages of his family's deterioration. Thus his rude treatment of Quentin is inspired not only by his desires for revenge against Caddy, but by his need to find a release for his self hate. He would also like to achieve mastery over Quentin, to teach her that when he tells her to do something she has got to do it. In fact, Jason's treatment of Quentin is so nasty that even the sheriff accuses him of driving her out of the house. He torments her, insults her, and makes his contempt for her clear at every opportunity. The only father she has, he denies her even the appearance of the sympathy and affection that is her due. When, with a despair horrible in one so young, she wonders why she was ever born, he answers with a taunt about her illegitimacy: "And I know of at least one other person that dont understand all he knows about

that" (SF, p. 234).

Jason's boss, Earl, is another target for his rudeness. Like Dilsey, Earl moves towards others; he is tolerant, considerate, kind. And, like her, he makes Jason uncomfortable because in order for his "solution" to work he must convince himself that these virtues simply do not exist. Earl's kindness must therefore be interpreted as attempts to control Jason, so that the appropriate response will be, not recognition and gratitude, but anger and rudeness. Thus Earl's offer to buy Jason lunch is met with "I can still manage to feed myself, I reckon" (SF, p. 268). And when Earl tells him that his long, unexplained absence is "all right," Jason replies, "And if it's not all right you know what you can do about it" (SF, p. 306).

If Jason's rudeness is enough to identify him as the villain of the piece without an omniscient narrator, it is his all pervasive sense of injury that adds flesh and bone to his characterization, that makes him a recognizable human being with a life outside his illustrative function. For the arrogant-vindictive type his sense of injury, of people and things plotting against him, is an extremely valuable commodity because it makes up "the bill he presents to the world" (NHG, p. 201). It is the force that justifies his claims and fuels his search for glory. Jason has a need to imagine that everything and everybody is conspiring to injure him in some way. It's Easter? Then the servants will go to church and he will have to eat a cold dinner.

The "damn Jews" in New York take his money; the pigeons mess up the town clock so that somebody who works for a living has to see his tax dollar spent getting it cleaned; the market closes too early; nobody fixes his tire; he gets headaches when it would only be an "even break" not to have them; and when he gets out of his car to walk it must be through the only plowed field (lazy farmers) he has seen since town. The roads are as bumpy as "corrugated iron roofing: (SF, p. 297); the sun positions itself so as to shine in his eyes, and naturally it will rain (it does not) on his trip to Mottstown since the roads are clay. After working all day he will no doubt have to run errands for his mother, and when he goes to forge a check for her benefit it is just his luck to be out of blanks. Every obstacle put in his way is a violation of his claims, a refusal to treat him in accordance with his grandiose notions about himself. When reality stubbornly refuses to cooperate with his demand that all be arranged according to his desires, he feels angry, injured. This anger and injury justifies any unhappiness or bad behavior on his part. We have already observed Jason's search for vindictive triumph and his superficially unpleasant behavior. Horney's description of this pattern of injury and revenge will allow us to discuss in more depth his way of conducting himself in relation to his family and the world.

The major injury done Jason in his eyes has been inflicted on him by his family. Both Caddy and Quentin have

"benifited" from the sale of Benjy's pasture, but Jason's bank job has gone the way of Caddy's virtue. From the moment that baby Quentin comes to live with the Compsons-- "Well, they brought my job home tonight" (SF, p. 246)-- Jason is condemned to do menial, poorly rewarded labor for the rest of his days. His sense that he has been treated unjustly is something that he must constantly keep alive, and throughout the last two sections we see him striving to do so. Faulkner makes much, in the appendix, of Jason's perseverance in supporting his family under these conditions,<sup>11</sup> and, as Wagner points out, Jason has indeed been injured. But Jason's sense of injury is something quite apart from the injury itself. It is an obsession, a source of perverse pleasure because it justifies his "choice" of solution; life is out to get him, so it is appropriate for him to strike back. Seventeen years after the fact, the injury is constantly on his mind. "I never had time to go to Harvard like Quentin or drink myself into the ground like Father. I had to work" (SF, p. 224). And of his father, "At least I never heard of him offering to sell anything to send me to Harvard" (SF, p. 245). "Well, Jason likes work," he tells us, "I says no I never had any university advantages . . ." (SF, p. 243).

Jason's major act of revenge for the injuries done him by his family is to extort money from Caddy, black mailing her for the illegitimacy of her daughter, devising an elaborate plan to deprive what is left of the Compsons

of their chance to live decently. Every month he is able to re-live the sweetness of his first vindictive triumph over Caddy, taking the money not from mere greediness (like Quentin the money has no "entity or individuality" for Jason, and he seems to have no plans for it), but in exchange for his carefully nurtured injuries. The disproportionate emphasis that he places on the contents of that black box (the loss of it becomes the central tragedy of his life) indicates that it represents not only his lost patrimony, but certainly also the affection and concern due him as a child but never given. When, in section four, the sheriff refuses to help Jason recover the money, Jason says, ". . . thinks he can sit with his hands folded and see me lose my job. I'll show him about jobs" (SF, p. 382). The job has been gone for seventeen years and was never assured. What Faulkner is showing us here is a man who has the past confused with the present, injuries inflicted by him confused with injuries done him, a man whose relationship to reality is disturbed. Quentin has not taken his job, but he has taken her chances for happiness. It is not the job that he probably should have gotten that is lost, but the money that he should not have gotten. But Jason's sense of reality is obscured by his sense of injury, and once we understand the dynamics of his personality we do not expect him to see clearly.

In the appendix Faulkner seems to praise Jason's successful assumption of "the entire burden of the rotting



family in the rotting house" (SF, p. 421). And in Wagner's view Jason's behavior is largely governed by the "demands of honor." She believes that he behaves as he does in order to preserve the Compson name. But Jason's behavior as head of the Compson household is governed by the pattern of injury and revenge that governs the rest of his behavior. What Faulkner shows us is not a man who is rigorous in order to preserve order and honor and promote survival, but a man who compulsively moves against those around him in an effort to revenge himself for injuries done. The result of his behavior is the destruction, not the preservation, of the Compsons. As David Aiken, using the language of Rev. Shegog's sermon, says, "His 'sojer face' will continue to be turned against others as he exploits and destroys the weaker members of his household. Like Satan he will lead his legions anywhere to justify his sense of injury."<sup>12</sup>

Jason chases Quentin not because he hopes to catch her and reform her, but because the sight of her with the man in the red tie reminds him of his lack of mastery over events, and propels him into a vindictive rage so powerful that he forgets about everything else, even his pounding head. Quentin refuses to recognize that she has injured him by depriving him of his job, and that he is therefore, in Horney's words, entitled to "hurt (her) with impunity" (NHG, p. 205). She violates his claims by rebelling against his bad treatment and thus provokes powerful desires for revenge. In the scene in the hardware store his behavior

is that of the neighborhood bully. Beating her knuckles on the desk, holding her money order just out of reach, taunting her with childish expressions, he is not the stern patriarch, but the spiteful little boy. Quentin should recognize his claim to any money her mother sends. He is entitled to feel injured that she does not, and to seek revenge.

With Luster and the tickets he follows a similar pattern. Again the desired object is held out of reach, again the triumph is savored as the tickets are thrown one by one into the stove. Jason is extraordinarily hateful in these scenes--as Horney says, the arrogant-vindictive type is "past master in frustrating others" (NHG, p. 199), a most unsympathetic skill. But his cosmic sense of injury should have prepared us. When even the sun and the road crews conspire against you, any aggressive action on your part is justified.

Benjy's castration was carried out under Jason's orders. A responsible, rational act? Necessary? Perhaps. But Jason's memories of it, his way of thinking about it, indicate that it also was an aggressive act, a triumph of a sort that he would like to repeat. He thinks about Ben and then Miss Quentin: "But like I say they never did enough of that. I says I know what you need, you need what they did to Ben then you'd behave" (SF, p. 315). "Well, like I say they never started soon enough with their cutting and they quit too soon" (SF, p. 329). The mind boggles at what Jason's

notion of the female counterpart of castration might be, but his fantasies about "cutting" are certainly part of his compulsive search for revenge and the "glory" of having total control over those around him.

Jason's solution seems to be working pretty well for him in his own section. Though he cannot catch Quentin and the man with the red tie, he is able to reduce her to impotent, biscuit crumbling rage at supper; and his every contact with others leaves him, at least in his own mind, the victor. But in the fourth section, to the delight of the reader, Jason is crushed, his solution reduced to tatters by Quentin's escape. The omniscient narrator of this section lingers over Jason's frustration, showing us how his sense of injury, deprived of any outlet, blossoms and becomes itself his only comfort. Jason is described in conversation with the sheriff: "Jason told him, his sense of injury and impotence feeding upon its own sound so that after a time he forgot his hate in the violent cumulation of his self-justification and his outrage" (SF, p. 278). And later, "He repeated his story, harshly recapitulant, seeming to get an actual pleasure out of his outrage and impotence" (SF, p. 378). His trip to Mottstown is undertaken with a perversely pleasurable certainty that everything will go wrong: "He looked at the sky, thinking about rain, about the slick clay roads, himself stalled somewhere miles from town. He thought about it with a sort of triumph, of the fact that he was going to miss dinner, that by starting now

and so serving his compulsion of haste, he would be at the greatest possible distance from both towns when noon came. It seemed to him that, in this circumstance was giving him a break . . ." (SF, p. 381). Our discussion of the dynamics of Jason's personality so far allows us to recognize this delight in a sense of injury--the more intensely Jason feels wronged, the more his solution is justified. Now this sense is so strong that, failing any targets for vindictiveness he lapses into exaggerated aggressive fantasies:

And he drove on out of the bells and out of town, thinking of himself slogging through the mud hunting a team. 'And every damn one of them will be at church.' He thought of how he'd find a church at last and take a team and of the owner coming out, shouting at him and of himself striking the man down. 'I'm Jason Compson. See if you can stop me. See if you can elect a man to office that can stop me, he said, thinking of himself entering the courthouse with a file of soldiers and dragging the sheriff out (SF, p. 381).

As his fantasies blossom he sees himself triumphing, not only over "the rear guards of circumstance," but also "the embattled legions of both heaven and hell through which he (tears) his way and put(s) his hands at last on his fleeing niece" (SF, p. 382). But it is not to be so. Instead we see him humiliated by an old man with a hatchet and felled by his own pounding head. He is, in the narrators words, "mocked by his own triumphing" (SF, p. 383); his solution has doubled back on him, his neglect of Quentin driving her to seek her own vindictive triumph. He is described as sitting in his car, his "invisible life ravelled about him like a wornout sock" (SF, p. 391). In Horneyan terms this

"invisible life" is his ideal self, the fantasy life that made him lord and master over all. The man we see waiting in his car in Mottstown for somebody to drive him home--grey-faced, ineffectual, zombie-like--is Jason's actual self. Though he appears once more and is able to establish his ascendancy over an idiot, a broken down old mare, and a fourteen year old boy, his creator has placed a great deal of emphasis on the breaking down of his solution. In spite of what the Faulkner of the appendix has to say about Jason holding his own with the Snopeses, it would seem that in the universe of The Sound and the Fury the Jasons are not destined to inherit the earth.

Thus analyzed, the portrait of Jason seems to be one of a man for whom we can have pity, if we are inclined that way, but no admiration. Much of the novel's rhetoric encourages us to hate him. As we sympathize with his victims (and sympathy for victims is usually automatic, especially if they are young like Miss Quentin, or old and arthritic and big hearted like Dilsey), we must see him as a monster. And since, as we have seen, much of the novel's thematic content encourages us to see things Quentin's way, to fault the world of The Sound and the Fury for its rejection of his attempts to move towards his fellow man, and to see Dilsey's perseverance in the offices of love as heroic, a man who despises and denies love must be a thematic as well as a mimetic villain.

And yet the vividness, the completeness, the complexity,

the felt life of Jason's portrait draws us to him, seems to tell us that his creator is attracted to his way of being, and is inviting us to see the world of the novel with his cynical eye. As Bleikasten asks, "Could it (Jason's character) be so compelling, so hallucinatingly 'real' if Jason were not somehow related to the deeper springs of Faulkner's creation?"<sup>13</sup> What Bleikasten seems to hint at, and what our further analysis will lead us to see as a distinct possibility, is that the creating consciousness of The Sound and the Fury found in his portrait of Jason an outlet for his own aggressive tendencies, and was led to invite the reader's complicity in these tendencies to the detriment of the unity of the novel.

The intense air of reality that surrounds Jason's portrait is one reason for his rather perverse appeal, to us, and probably to his creator as well. The trompe l'oeil effect of very successful mimesis tends to produce reader identification with literary characters. As Booth says, ". . . even characters whose behavior would be intolerable to us in real life can be made sympathetic with this paralogical proof that they are human beings like ourselves."<sup>14</sup> In Jason's case this "paralogical proof" is based on the complexity and completeness of his portrayal, which we have already observed, and on his "voice." It is his language, his presentation of himself that makes him live and breathe for us, and endows him with the rather peculiar charm that captures our imagination and that of his creator as well,

and thus allows us to identify with a way of looking at things that we might find dangerous and unsavory in real life.

Jason's voice is fun to listen to because it sounds real; there is something delightful about its authenticity, its profoundly rural American rhythms and expressions.<sup>15</sup> More than one critic has used the word "relief" to describe our encounter with its intensely real sound, following as it does the experimental, surreal "voices" of the Quentin and Benjy sections. This "relief" becomes a rhetorical device, parlaying Jason's accessibility and clarity into a recommendation. Even a reader with a high tolerance for innovative technique will be glad to hear something that sounds like a real human voice directing itself to other humans after hours of claustrophobic enclosure in the minds of Benjy and Quentin. Jason's creator does a good job of warming up the crowd for his entrance.

Once a bitch always a bitch, what I say. I says you're lucky if her playing out of school is all that worries you. I says she ought to be down there in that kitchen right now, instead of up there in her room, gobbing paint on her face and waiting for six niggers that cant even stand up out of a chair unless they've got a pan full of bread and meat to balance them to fix breakfast for her (SF, p. 223).

What we have here (in addition to some self-serving, rude, and arrogant judgments of others) is what we have been missing for some two hundred pages: humor, clarity, pithiness, and masculine directness.

It is not only the realism of Jason's voice that makes

it appealing: we are drawn as well to the content of his speech. As Joseph Reed describes it: "We want to see things Jason's way because he tells it the way it is. He is amusing, tough-minded, funny, ironic. There is a part of us . . . which likes his cynicism, is relieved by his pragmatism."<sup>16</sup> We "become" Jason, he says, before we know it.<sup>17</sup> And it is not a benign becoming; as we read his section we are monsters too. Jason's humor, his cynicism, his pragmatism, are directed against others, and as we enjoy them we set ourselves against the image of suffering humanity given us in the rest of The Sound and the Fury. In fact, Jason appeals to a rather unsavory quality harbored by many of us: we often feel aggressive towards our fellow man, especially towards those who most need and demand our sympathy and concern. By making Jason so appealing, the implied author of The Sound and the Fury invites us to indulge that feeling.

To begin with, what critics have referred to as Jason's common sense, practical approach has the effect of debunking various Compson family legends. The implication is that this has a rather salubrious effect, but actually it takes the form of aggressive attack rather than of sensible corrective. It is part of Jason's revenge on his family, and as we are persuaded into at least partial acceptance of it, we begin to participate in his wars. In Jason's view his father was a useless drunk; Quentin was a weak fool; Benjy is a potential sideshow freak; Miss Quentin is a nymphomaniac



and a whore like her mother; Dilsey is a useless old lady whose sole accomplishment has been the raising of four conspicuously unsuccessful Compsons. All of these assessments contain truth, but they also contain brutality. They are hardly balanced or rational because they are the product of a mind saturated with fantasies of revenge.

But Jason's most devastating contribution to our view of the Compson tragedy is to make us laugh at it. It is this which is perhaps most responsible for provoking the responses of relaxation and relief spoken of by readers of the novel, and it is this which makes it most clear that the implied author of The Sound and the Fury identifies in part with his lively if rather horrific creation.

Bleikasten is not the only one to notice that Jason is blessed with Faulkner's own satiric genius,<sup>18</sup> that his humorous assaults are so effective that the Compson family members become for us the burlesques he thinks they are as we join in his laughter.

Freud's theories about the tendentious joke are not precisely applicable here: that is to say that Jason does not really tell "jokes" about his family in the sense that Freud uses the term. But we can use Freud's theory to understand the function and result of the laughter that Jason's references to his family provoke. Hostile or obscene jokes, Freud explains, ". . . make possible the satisfaction of an instinct . . . in the face of an obstacle that stands in its way."<sup>19</sup> The obstacle is inhibition, and

inhibition is overcome by the "joke work," which transforms the hostile or sexual impulse, through word play, or whatever, into an "acceptable" form. The laughter which follows is fueled by the energy which ordinarily would serve to repress the impulse. At the same time the laughter itself serves to satisfy the impulse, rendering it benign. Our response is to feel pleasure, and, as Freud says, ". . . it is . . . plausible to suppose that this yield of pleasure corresponds to the psychical expenditure that is saved."<sup>20</sup> Although the hostile impulses that we talk about in connection with Jason are the learned hostility of Horneyan theory rather than the instinctive hostility of traditional psychoanalysis, Freud's theory can be applied to advantage to explain what happens with Jason, his creator, and the reader when Jason's aggressively funny references to his family provoke our laughter.

It takes considerable psychic energy to sympathize with Benjy, who cannot communicate properly, and Quentin, whose problems are complex and obscure, and Dilsey, whose age, race, and lot in life make her case a hopeless one. Jason's humor, made palatable to us by the effective irony which makes it clear that we are not really associating ourselves with him (this irony is equivalent to the "joke work" of Freud's explanation) obviates the need for this expenditure of energy. If Benjy is funny we need not agonize over his condition. The energy that would have been devoted to this is dissipated in laughter: the more

we have pitied, the harder we will laugh. And the harder we laugh, the less we will be able to pity. When he makes Jason a very lifelike character and endows him with his own considerable talent for satire, the implied author of The Sound and the Fury seems to invite us to join the two of them in a snicker at his own serious characters and themes, thus rendering the latter less effective. In Horneyan terms, this laughter constitutes an indulgence of his (and our) aggressive drives.

Benjy's loss, Benjy's very existence, inspire us with intense pity and fear. His is human agony in the face of the failure of love and communication at its most basic. But under Jason's spell we laugh at Benjy, and having once laughed at him we have divested ourselves at least temporarily of the need and the ability to care about him. The energy with which we would have sympathized with his case is expelled in the pleasurable explosions that follow Jason's pronouncements. Benjy's agonized bellows, according to Jason sound like the lowing of a cow (we suspected there was something bovine about his grief). Benjy might be employed on the night shift of the Quentin detail, or as a lucrative sideshow attraction. Perhaps he could even be a playmate for Jason (a most grotesquely amusing proposition) if only Luster could be taught to drive the car, allowing Jason to stay home all day. By keeping Benjy at home, the Compsons are "robbing the state asylum of its star freshman" (SF, p. 286), and in a reference to Benjy's size and

condition that is as funny as it is brutal, Jason calls him the "Great American Gelding" (SF, p. 328). Surely we hear echoes of the implied author's own intelligence in these horribly funny remarks. For the moment at least he has released himself and us from the burden of Benjy.

Quentin has also been a burden. We are placed in the difficult position of trying to understand and empathize with his complex obsession with his sister, and of needing to justify his rather obscurely motivated suicide. It is not easy to care for Quentin in the way the novel asks us to. Jason, of course, does not bother to try. Quentin to him is the favored older brother who wasted the patrimony of the pasture, and thus would be a target for revenge if he were not, inconveniently, dead. Jason himself, he says, might easily reach the "heights" of Quentin's achievement and drama. Were he sent to the state university he might learn to "stop (his) clock with a nose spray," a feat at least comparable to what Quentin learned at Harvard, which was "how to go for a swim at night without knowing how to swim" (SF, p. 243). With this comment we are for the moment relieved of the necessity of caring why Quentin did himself in; that energy is released in laughter. And, incredibly enough, Jason is even able to get a laugh out of Quentin's incestuous passion (until now the reader has been convinced that he must make a strong effort to take this seriously). Speaking of Miss Quentin, Mrs. Compson says, "Sometimes I think she is the judgment of Caddy and Quentin

upon me." "Good Lord," Jason says, "You've got a fine mind. No wonder you keep yourself sick all the time" (SF, p. 325). By pretending to think his mother believes that Quentin and Caddy actually had intercourse and produced a daughter, Jason lightens our view of their entire relationship, and relieves us of the necessity of identifying with Quentin's obscure passion. From Jason's satirical viewpoint, lent weight by the implied author's apparent complicity, Quentin is clearly a fool, and we may for the moment gratify our desire to "move against" him by laughing at him and his condition.

Even Dilsey is a target for Jason's humor, and in her case too the implied author loans Jason some powerful satirical ammunition. Laughing at Dilsey is rather akin to laughing at the crucified Christ, but we may well find ourselves doing it. Jason attacks her for her age, and her consequent awkwardness and ineffectuality. "She was so old she couldn't do any more than move hardly. But that's all right: we need somebody in the kitchen to eat up the grub the young ones cant tote off" (SF, p. 229). He imagines her bizarrely playing golf (Dilsey, who can barely walk from her cabin to the house) with "china door knobs and a walking stick" (SF, p. 232). When she makes reference to her own loyalty and endurance, he humorously points to her grotesque failure. Of baby Quentin she says, "Who else gwine raise her 'cep me? Aint I raised eve'y one of y'all?" "And a damh fine job you made of it" (SF,

p. 246), Jason says. We had not really thought of it until then, but one idiot, one suicide, one high priced prostitute, and one paranoid hardware salesman is not really a very admirable maternal record, and for the moment we are invited to laugh at it and her. Later he describes one of her endless journeys up the stairs: "I heard her climbing the stairs, dragging her feet and grunting and groaning like they were straight up and three feet apart" (SF, p. 320). Even this irreverent view of Dilsey's physical limitations is exaggerated for cruelly comic effect. If we laugh along with Jason we lose for a dangerous moment our desire and ability to identify with Dilsey's suffering humanity.

In an article on the comic structure of The Sound and the Fury Fred Chappell makes a relevant point. He says, "Faulkner likes to employ--I suspect that he enjoys--the cruel peasant joke that we find so plentiful in Cervantes, Rabelais, LeSage, and Smollett. The cruel peasant joke is what Faulkner sees as the world's rough and ready rebuff to false idealism."<sup>21</sup> I take Chappell's insight a step farther, and suspect the implied author of The Sound and the Fury of employing Jason's astute good old boy humor as a "rough and ready rebuff" to his own serious themes and sensitive characters. By making us laugh at them, he deprives us momentarily of the means and the desire to care for them. The Jason section, it seems to me, contains not only a brilliant mimetic portrait of a compulsively aggressive man, but an assault on the rest of the novel that is

in itself aggressive.

But Jason's section is followed by section four-- omnisciently narrated, clear, and thematically coherent-- a reward for the patience and tolerance for ambiguity that has brought us to this point. In section four, as we have seen, Jason's creator does a thorough job of crushing him. His ineptness, his stupidity, his compulsive cruelty, his symbolic headaches, even his absurd appearance, are presented for our disapproval. As he goes down in defeat, the values implicit in Dilsey's conduct and in Rev. Shegog's sermon emerge as dominant, and Benjy again becomes an effective symbol for the frustration of post-lapserian mankind. We are left with the powerful images of his bellowing objection to the destruction of his tenuous and limited order, and the peace that follows its restoration, and with Dilsey's poignant song of endurance, "I seed de beginnin, en now I sees de endin" (SF, p. 371). The final section of The Sound and the Fury does not invite us to take a cold heartedly practical view of the Compson tragedy; nor does it invite us to laugh at it. The implied author destroys Jason before our eyes, allowing us to see through his solution, and forbidding himself and us further identification with the monster he created. But Jason's voice is a hard one to still, and as long as we hear it we may be unable, as Walter J. Slatoff says, to resolve ". . . the question of the meaningfulness of the human efforts and suffering we have witnessed"<sup>22</sup> as observers of the Compson decline.

Slatoff speaks of a quality of Faulkner's "temperament" that compelled him, ". . . to leave things unresolved and indeterminate."<sup>23</sup> Our Horneyan analysis allows us to further this insight. We question the "meaningfulness" of the suffering in The Sound and the Fury because for part of the novel the implied author invites our complicity in his aggressive desire to mock and reject, to move against, the sufferers. The novel does not allow for certainty, because its creator does not settle on a perspective from which to view its contents. He does not consistently "decide" whether he wishes his novel to say that one should move towards his fellow man, like Quentin or Dilsey, or against them like Jason, or even whether one should detach oneself altogether, like that aspect of the creating consciousness that elects to absent himself from the novel by the use of a highly objective narrative technique. Are we to love Benjy, or laugh at him, or are we simply to observe him on his own terms and draw intellectual conclusions about his significance? From our observation of the novel as a whole, we have to conclude that Faulkner, our "official scribe," our companion, the consciousness that we meet on the battleground of his characterizations, isn't saying.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Joseph Reed, Faulkner's Narrative (New Haven and London, 1973), p. 78.

<sup>2</sup>Warren Beck, "William Faulkner's Style," in Faulkner: Four Decades of Criticism, Linda Welshimer Wagner, ed. (East Lansing, 1973), p. 148.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Penn Warren, "William Faulkner," in Four Decades, pp. 94-109, sees The Sound and the Fury as dealing with the Faulknerian concern of conflict between the "old order" and people like Jason, and presenting the option of "redemption through love," which fails for Quentin, but is depicted as the only proper response to the human condition through the portrayal of Dilsey. Olga Vickery, The Novels of William Faulkner (Louisiana, 1964), describes the way in which Dilsey represents the "ethical norm" of "the realizing and acting out of one's humanity" in contrast to Jason, who is excessively calculating and logical, and Quentin who lives by "moral abstraction." Irving Howe, William Faulkner (New York, 1962) points out that Quentin's scenes with his father ask us to see him as a "center of intelligence, an ethical agent," while the "clipped style" of the last two sections asks our distance from and revulsion at the new order. For a more recent essay placing Quentin and his concerns at the center of the novel, see Mark Spilka, "Quentin's Universal Grief," Contemporary Literature, XI (Autumn, 1970), 451-469.

<sup>4</sup>See for example Wayne Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago and London, 1961), pp. 306-308, where Booth uses Jason as an example of the unreliable narrator whose section is permeated with very successful irony.

<sup>5</sup>Howe, p. 167.

<sup>6</sup>See, for example, Reed, p. 80, who maintains that "part of us likes Jason," or Walter J. Slatoff, Quest for Failure: A Study of William Faulkner (Westport, 1972) in which Slatoff describes the thematic confusion brought about by Jason's humor, or Linda Welshimer Wagner, "Jason Compson: The Demands of Honor," Sewanee Review, 79, 554-75, in which Wagner makes the case that Jason is one of Faulkner's "sympathetic villains" or "limited heroes" who actually provides a positive standard for behavior in the novel," or Martin Green, Re-appraisals (London, 1963), who considers Jason as part of "that narrow range of human types whom Faulkner understands and can sympathize with," and thus sees him as dominating the novel.

<sup>7</sup>Warren in Four Decades refers to the "vile Jason," whose portrait is "one of the most terrifying in all of literature." For John L. Longley, Jr., The Tragic Mask: A Study of Faulkner's Heroes (North Carolina, 1963), Jason embodies "the instinctive, irrational love of self, the monstrous incestuous self concern that leaves no room for others, and for Myra Jehlen, Class and Character in Faulkner's South (New York, 1976) Jason is Faulkner's "most despicable character anywhere in the Yoknapatawpha saga."

<sup>8</sup>Andre Bleikasten, The Most Splendid Failure, Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury (Bloomington and London, 1976) also talks about parallels between Jason's concerns and Quentin's, maintaining that both are responding to "loss" and that there are similarities in their responses.

<sup>9</sup>Longley, p. 145.

<sup>10</sup>William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (New York, 1946), p. 326. Hereafter referred to in the text as SF.

<sup>11</sup>The Compson Appendix is printed in the Random House editions of the novel, but it is important to remember that it is not actually part of the novel, since it was written some sixteen years later, and since its judgments do not seem to be in line with what happens in the novel itself. Faulkner's description of Jason, for example (pp. 420-24) seems to take Jason at his face value, rather participating in his sense of injury, and referring to him as the only "sane" Compson. Bleikasten's theory that this should be taken as irony seems to me inadequate--it does not sound ironic. Perhaps it is best to say merely that Faulkner takes the role of critic in this appendix, and that he is not a particularly astute critic of his own work.

<sup>12</sup>David Aiken, "The 'Sojer Face' Defiance of Jason Compson," Thought, 52 (June 1977), p. 201.

<sup>13</sup>Bleikasten, p. 149.

<sup>14</sup>Booth, p. 278.

<sup>15</sup>See, for example, Stephen M. Ross, "Jason Compson and Sut Lovingood: Southwestern Humor as Stream of Consciousness," Studies in the Novel, 8 (1976) in which Ross describes the sources of Jason's voice in the tradition of southwestern humor typified by Harris's Sut Lovingood, and describes the delight we feel in listening to him, or John W. Hunt, William Faulkner: Art in Theological Tension (Syracuse, 1965) who speaks of the "curious delight the reader finds in his narration," p. 70.

<sup>16</sup>Reed, p. 81.

<sup>17</sup>Reed, p. 82.

<sup>18</sup>Bleikasten, p. 148.

<sup>19</sup>Sigmund Freud, Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious (New York, 1960).

<sup>20</sup>Freud, p. 118.

<sup>21</sup>Fred Chappell, "The Comic Structure of The Sound and the Fury," Mississippi Quarterly, XXXI (Summer 1979), p. 384.

<sup>22</sup>Slatoff, p. 176.

<sup>23</sup>Slatoff, p. 260.

### CHAPTER III

#### IT NEVER BOTHERED ANSE MUCH: A HORNEYAN ANALYSIS OF AS I LAY DYING

In my study of The Sound and the Fury, I examined the influence of Faulkner's creation and treatment of Jason Compson on the novel as a whole. By exploring the relationship of implied author, reader, and character in that novel, I was able to develop the theory that the implied author of The Sound and the Fury has a special relationship with Jason, and that he subtly encourages the reader to partially accept Jason's way of looking at the world, a way that corresponds to Horney's description of the compulsively aggressive person. My analysis of As I Lay Dying will reveal that these findings are not unique to The Sound and the Fury. Here I focus on the relationship of the implied author to Anse Bundren and to the reader, and my conclusions imply a pattern similar to that found in the earlier novel.

In As I Lay Dying we find, as we found in The Sound and the Fury, a division between those characters who seem to be designed to express or reveal theme, to speak for the author in his own "full style"<sup>1</sup> or to embody some abstract notion important to theme, and those characters who are

presented more in the mode of "colloquial realism," which is to say that they speak in their own voices, and exist at least partly in order to "cast a shadow,"<sup>2</sup> as Faulkner would say, to provoke the kind of pleasure that we get from successful mimesis. As I noted in my brief summary of the standard critical interpretation of The Sound and the Fury, critics who deal with the novel as a whole tend to focus on those characters involved in revelation of theme, having picked up on the implied author's subtle signals that in these characters the essence of the novel is to be found. We find a similar situation in connection with As I Lay Dying, where it is Addie and Darl, who speak in their creator's voice and are not fully realized mimetically, who provide most of the fuel for the critical fires, their concerns being most often seen as the concerns of the novel as a whole. In addition, there is implicit in the journey-completed plot of the novel a thematic question about the ability of mankind to surmount whatever obstacles face him and emerge triumphant that attracts some critics. A summary of the analyses of As I Lay Dying by three of the most prominent of Faulkner's critics will provide a background for my own study.

Olga Vickery's interpretation centers around the conflict between word and deed which is given voice in Addie's section.<sup>3</sup> In Vickery's view, Addie attempts to find her humanity in the "intensely felt act" of her sin with Whitfield, while despising the emptiness and futility of

words. Her children, dominated by her presence in their blood, act out their own conflicts between saying and doing in their participation in her death and funeral journey. The children are on a kind of continuum, with Darl representing pure consciousness, and Cash representing "action in search of a word," a man who must achieve a "more flexible, imaginative vision" (as he does in the end), before he can be fully human. Darl, on the other hand, never manages a connection with the external world which he is able to describe with such "startling vividness," and thus is exiled to another world and life. But it is Anse who provides the novel's negative standard, who stands in opposition to Addie's insights, who "lives by words alone," whose promise is carried out for him by others, and who is "the only one of the Bundrens completely unchanged by Addie's death or the funeral journey."<sup>4</sup> Thus, for Vickery, the novel's thematic content is revealed through the contrast in the natures of the characters with regard to this question of saying and doing. The novel as a whole she sees as successfully juxtaposing the internal view of the Bundren journey, which involves "horror and pain," and the external view, provided by the inhabitants of Mottstown and other bystanders, for whom the dominant response is a kind of hilarity.

In her view of the central importance of Addie's talk about words and deeds, and in her statement that the novel successfully combines the comic and tragic modes, Vickery

finds a good deal of support among other critics of the novel. Cleanth Brooks's interpretation of the novel as an odyssey which, though it admittedly contains elements of the grotesque, is fundamentally heroic, has also received a rather wide acceptance.<sup>5</sup> In Brooks's view, the novel's purpose is to explore "the nature of the heroic deed." It is a commentary on man's "incurable idealism." In this context it is important to realize that although the surface of the Bundrens' life is unimpressive, beneath the surface there are "depths of passion and poetry that are terrifying in their power."<sup>6</sup> By showing us the importance of the "claims of honor" under surprising conditions, Faulkner makes a case for the honorableness of mankind in general. Anse is the villain, the Flem Snopes who gets his own way by ruthless use of others, but he is not contemptible, since he "represents a force probably necessary to the survival of the human animal,"<sup>7</sup> probably a kind of ability to endure which is a necessary, though certainly not a sufficient, quality of the heroic.

Opposed to these widely accepted interpretations of the novel that see it as consistent in theme with Faulkner's work in general, which, these critics would say, does not shy away from the agonies of existence, but does hint of man's ability to overcome them, we find the work of a critic like Elizabeth Kerr, for whom the odyssey of the Bundrens is profoundly ironic rather than heroic.<sup>8</sup> Kerr's theory is that although the novel has all the elements of the mythos

of summer, its romance is inverted, its goals and dreams are ridiculous or trivial, its characters are perversions of the heroic mode. It depicts not the triumph of fertility, but the victory of death, sterility, and infidelity. Thus, in her view, As I Lay Dying, is not the story of man's ability to survive and prevail, nor is it a successful melding of comedy and tragedy. Rather, it is a mocking recounting of the triviality of our hopes and dreams and the futility of our existence.

Though a part of this kind of direct disagreement about the novel (and we do not need to look far for it)<sup>9</sup> has its source in the fact that the novel combines various literary modes--heroic and ironic-, comic and tragic--there is also present in the novel an ambiguity about what the implied author means to ask of his readers that makes us unsure who his "ideal reader" is in this case. On the one hand we have the pessimism and existential anguish expressed in Addie's section and in the creation of Darl, which seem to ask for our identification and sympathy (an analysis like Vickery's is responsive to this aspect of the novel). The ideal reader in this case would have much in common with the introspective Addie and the sensitive and perceptive Darl, would be concerned about the gap between words and deeds, about the conditions of existence, and about man's survival in a universe fundamentally ill-suited to his needs and desires (cf. Brooks's reading). But the implied author of As I Lay Dying asks for another ideal reader. At least



some of the novel's subtle rhetoric asks for identification with the figure of Anse Bundren. Like Jason, Anse is sympathetic because he is so fully realized that he fairly demands that we see him as a human being like ourselves, and because he allows us the relief of laughter. In his fleshing out of Anse, and in his humorous treatment of his foibles, the implied author is using some of the rhetorical devices left even to the most determinedly "objective" creating consciousness to ask his readers to immerse themselves in Anse and to see the world through his eyes. The ideal reader who answers this siren's call will find himself rather indifferent to the suffering of his fellow man as it is embodied in the lives of the remaining Bundrens, and endowed with a my-survival-at-any-cost kind of attitude that precludes any notions about the admirable transcendence of humanity in general over the necessities of existence. It is this aspect of the novel which has generally gone unrecognized among critics, though some have found themselves oddly defending such things as Anse's treatment of Cash's leg, or his apparent willingness to sacrifice the well-being of his entire family for a set of over the counter false teeth; and Kerr's analysis is actually a sophisticated version of this willingness to belittle and deny the needs and desires of Anse's hapless clan. A Horneyan analysis will allow us to understand the source of these divergent readings, and will help us to see and appreciate this tendency of the novel for what it is.

Though Anse is not drawn as fully as Jason--indeed, in some ways he is a comic type, reminiscent of the Dickensian creations whose impact and significance resides wholly in their repetition of key phrases--he is not merely a formal creation. In Jason's case his childhood and his adult behavior towards others is presented in such detail that we were able to observe his pronounced similarity to that complex personality type that Horney labels arrogant-vindictive. Anse appears in broader outline, and it is not possible to identify his personality type exactly. Nevertheless, we know enough about him to be able to identify clearly some of the general symptoms of self-alienation in his make-up.

Though it is indeed ludicrous to imagine that a man who has not even been to town in twelve years is secretly involved in a "search for glory," Faulkner shows us in Anse a man who talks and behaves as if he were caught in the pattern of self-alienation described by Horney. As we have seen, the self-alienated person rejects his actual self and his potential real self in favor of his ideal self, a godlike product of his imagination, whose capabilities and rights are far beyond those of ordinary mortals. One adjunct of this ideal self is the well-spring of Faulkner's characterization of Anse Bundren: the "neurotic" claim. In keeping with his unconscious (or partly conscious) notion that he is a godlike being, the self-alienated person makes unconscious (or partly conscious)



claims that psychic, social, and even physical laws should not apply to him, that, in the words of one of Horney's patients, "The world should be at his service and he should not be bothered."<sup>10</sup> Such claims are irrational and sure to be frustrated. Their frustration causes resentment and righteous anger in the self-alienated person. The world owes him a better deal. A person harboring unconscious claims is likely to be discontent and angry a good deal of the time. He is also likely to suffer from a great "paralysis of psychic energies" resulting from his unconscious feeling that others should do for him and he should not have to bestir himself. His inertia may be powerful indeed. The function of claims is to move the responsibility for dealing with one's life from oneself to others. One places the responsibility for himself "on other people, on circumstances, or on fate";<sup>11</sup> but since these receptacles of one's expectations rarely take their responsibility seriously, the possessor of claims usually suffers from the strong sense that he is being injured.

Righteous anger, inertia, a sense of injury--these are all part of Faulkner's characterization of Anse Bundren. Thinking in terms of Horney's patterns, we will see that there is more to appreciate in the characterization of Anse than has met the eye of many critics. He is a joke, but he is not just a joke. He is a psychologically coherent imitation of a human being.

Though Anse's attitudes, his behavior, and even his



facial expressions indicate the existence of his hidden claims, we need not rely on indirect evidence alone. Anse's neighbors have felt the force of Anse's claims for years. When a man assumes and expects that he does not have to pick his own corn, and when he assumes it in such a way that you do it for him and keep on doing it, then he is, as Tull and the rest know very well, making the excessive and irrational claim that his neighbors must keep him afloat because he is somehow special. But, as Tull says, in one of the frequent refrains of the novel, "Like most folks around here, I done help him so much already I cant quit now."<sup>12</sup> And there is comfort to be taken in the fact that the Almighty himself seems to feel the force of Anse's irrational expectations.

'Well, it'll take the Lord to get her over that river now,' Peabody says. 'Anse cant do it.'

'And I reckon He will,' Quick says, "He took care of Anse a long time now.'

'It's a fact,' Littlejohn says.

'Too long to quit now,' Armstid says.

'I reckon He's like everybody else around here,' Uncle Billy says. 'He's done it so long now He can't quit' (AILD, p. 84).

This business about everybody including Uncle Billy and God (in Yoknapatawpha the two are about on a par) finding himself conceding to Anse's irrational claims provides a good deal of the humor of As I Lay Dying at the same time that it is a keen insight into human nature. As Horney points out, others are likely to feel the force of the self-alienated person's claims, no matter how inconvenient or irrational they are. Thus we have the marvelous if grotesque humor of people trying to tolerate the horrible

odor of the corpse of Anse's wife in order to put him up for the night, of his sons risking life and limb because he cannot quite believe that the bridge has had the effrontery to collapse, of Tull feeling guilty because he has not sent his mule out to drown too, and of a woman, however duck-shaped, willing to loan him two spades to dig his wife's grave and then marry him herself the next day.

Though it may seem to Anse's neighbors and to us that he gets his way an unreasonable percentage of the time, it most certainly does not seem that way to Anse. In his mind the failure of reality to fulfill his every claim indicates that he is "luckless." "Was there ere such a misfortunate man," he is often given to ask (cf. AILD, p. 150). He appears "misfortunate" to himself because he harbors the secret belief that others should donate their stock, their barns, their limbs, and the sweat of their brows to keep misfortune from his door, indeed that objective necessity itself will note that he is special and not bother him with things like death, or rain, or mental illness in the family. It is his belief that "Old Marster will care for me as for ere a sparrow that falls" (AILD, p. 37), and if Old Marster should take his eye off the ball for a moment, why then, "A man'll always help a fellow in a tight, if he's got ere a drop of Christian blood in him" (AILD, p. 176). In his darker moments, when God and man have failed him, he may be woeful--"you ought to let them taken your mule" (AILD, p. 130), he says sadly to Tull as he watches his own team

set out on the ill-fated river crossing--but he is more likely to feel angry or injured. In the face of most violations of his claims, his expression is one of "slack-faced and brooding outrage" (AILLD, p. 72), the outward and visible sign of an inward resentment so profound that it dominates his entire being.

As Addie lies dying, Anse muses on how the circumstances of her illness and death violate his claims that everything go his way. "Durn that road . . . durn them boys" (AILLD, p. 34). He recalls having to send for the doctor, "And now I got to pay for it, me without a tooth in my head hoping to get ahead so I could get my mouth fixed to where I could eat God's own victuals . . ." (AILLD, p. 36). Even his way of describing Addie's death (a wonderful example of Faulkner's ability to combine the vernacular with psychological realism) is expressive of his sense that it is he who is being injured. "She taken and left us" (AILLD, p. 49), he says. In these scenes Faulkner is showing us a man whose unconscious view it is that his wife should not get sick and cause him to have to get a doctor, and most certainly should not take and leave him while the boys are gone with the wagon and rain is approaching. The objective necessity of death cuts no ice with him, and he is far from understanding in what sense Addie's death actually is a chosen act. In the face of death, as in the face of everything that violates his grandiose claims, he is outraged and personally offended.



The troubles of the other members of his family are met with the same insistence that when anything goes wrong it is he who is injured, the implication being that he ought not to be bothered with anyone else's problems or needs. When Darl has one of his crazy fits of laughing, Anse wonders what people will say about his flesh and blood. When Cash breaks his leg, "It's a trial" to him just as "God knows it's a trial" on him when he decides to exile Darl to Jackson. And so earlier did Cash's first broken leg and Darl's peculiar ways threaten him with a shortage of hands. The ordeal undergone by Jewel to procure one of Quick's spotted horses, translated into Anse's idiom, becomes, "you went behind my back and bought a horse . . . Taken the work from your flesh and blood and bought a horse with it" (AILD, p. 129). When Dewey Dell tries to hang on to the abortion money that he wants for his new teeth, it is obvious to him that she, too, is conspiring in his misfortune. "It's just a loan. God knows, I hate for my blooden children to reproach me. But I give them what was mine without stint. Cheerful I give them, without stint. And now they deny me. Addie. It was lucky for you you died Addie . . . ." (AILD, p. 246). Students of human nature everywhere will recognize that unlovely combination of anger, self pity, and the desire to inflict guilt as a means of revenge.

Anse also encounters failures of cooperation outside his family circle. Like Jason he harbors resentment towards such things as the weather and the social institutions that



fail to protect and provide for him. The rain, for example, has perverse designs on him. "And now I can see same as second sight the rain shutting down betwixt us, a-coming up that road like a durn man, like it want ere a other house to rain on in all the living land" (AILD, p. 36). How outrageous of nature not to exempt him from an inconvenience like rain. And how inexcusable of the economy not to reward him suitably for the cotton he has neither planted nor harvested, his talk of sweat an ironic reminder that he is not about to do so himself: "Nowhere in this sinful world can a honest, hardworking man profit. It takes them that runs the stores in the towns, doing no sweating, living off of them that sweats. It aint the hardworking man, the farmer" (AILD, p. 104).

It is Samson who points out what we might already have known, that Anse takes an actual pleasure in seeing his claims violated so that he can feel injured. His sense that he is constantly being wronged is a weapon that he can use to get his own way. As the world's most "misfortunate" man he deserves recompense. Samson describes him on the first, abortive leg of the funeral journey,

And like he would be kind of proud of whatever come up to make the moving or the setting still look hard. He sat there on the wagon, hunched up, blinking, listening to us tell about how quick the bridge went and how high the water was and I be durn if he didn't act like he was proud of it, like he had made the river rise himself" (AILD, p. 108).

When Tull describes Anse's expression as he looks at the bridge that has collapsed as if intentionally to prevent

him from getting to town, he has a similar insight:

He was looking at it like he had believed all the time that folks had been lying to him about it being gone, but like he was hoping all the time it really was. Kind of pleased astonishment he looked, setting on the wagon in his Sunday pants mumbling his mouth. Looking like a uncurried horse dressed up: I dont know (AILD, p. 117).

Anse is pleased that the river is up and the bridges are down because it proves that he is "luckless," and therefore deserves special consideration. As a sufferer he deserves the particular attention of God and man. In fact, it seems to him that his suffering indicates that he has already been singled out for approval. He tells us directly that his misfortune labels him as one of God's favorites: "I am the chosen of the Lord, for who He loveth, so doeth He chastiseth" (AILD, p. 105). That combination of grandiose fantasy and self-pity is typical of Anse, and indeed of all people who make claims on the world around them. Olga Vickery says that Anse's neighbors are afraid not to help him because not to help him would be to justify his implication that he is "chosen,"<sup>13</sup> for persecution. Perhaps God, as Will Varner suggests, feels the same way. In any case, his sense of injury seems to be an effective tool in the exercising of his claims.

Anse needs all the help he can get. As we have seen, one of the characteristics of the claim ridden person is a powerful inertia, and Anse is about as inert as they come. In this portrayal of a Mississippi farmer who is convinced that he will die if he ever sweats again, Faulkner has hit

upon a wonderful means of caricaturing the reluctance to move or think or feel that characterizes one who unconsciously believes that the world should be at his service. Though this aspect of Anse's character works like the "humor" of traditional comedy, that is to say that the repetition of references to his laziness leads us to laugh at a common human foible, it is at the same time psychologically consistent with other qualities of his personality.

Anse approaches all tasks, mental or physical, with a profound lack of energy. Tull describes him putting on his shoes: "He puts his shoes on, stomping into them, like he does everything, like he is hoping all the time he really cant do it and can quit trying to" (AILD, p. 31). His problem is that whether it is his boots to put on or his crops to lay by, he "can't seem to get no heart into anything" (AILD, p. 37). He spends much of his life in a stupor resembling that of the steer after the maul hits it, ". . . and it no longer alive and don't yet know that it is dead" (AILD, p. 58), a stupor that prevents him equally from going to town, or working in his fields, or helping to carry his wife's casket. And though Anse claims to "mislike indecision as much as ere a man" (AILD, p. 16), mental activity is pretty much out of the question too. For the most part he rubs his knee or his thigh and holds out ("If the bridge was just up") until someone else, in desperation, decides what to do. Though some critics praise his energy and perseverance in getting Addie's remains to Jefferson,



Samson's evaluation of the case is more consistent with Faulkner's portrait of Anse:

I notice how it takes a lazy man, a man that hates moving, to get set on moving once he does get started off, the same as he was set on staying still, like it aint the moving he hates so much as the starting and the stopping (AILD, p. 108).

Once Anse has started on his journey (and I shall deal later with what gets him going), his powerful inertia helps to carry him along. Though we see him in motion throughout much of As I Lay Dying, it is the dogged, unselfpropelled motion of the poorly thrown bowling ball, not the purposeful movement of a man who has set himself to a difficult task.

This is the first time that Anse has been to town in twelve years, and he has long since thought of a way to rationalize his immobility. Horses and wagons, he says, are horizontal and meant to move; trees and men are vertical and meant to stay still. Like his "I'll-die-if-I-sweat" story, this serves to convince Anse and others that he ought not to have to make an effort, and it provides us with a symbol for Anse's immobility--the rooted tree. As Peabody says, "Too bad the Lord made the mistake of giving trees roots and giving the Anse Bundrens He makes feet and legs. If He'd just swapped them, there wouldn't ever be a worry about this country being deforested someday" (AILD, p. 41).

His "slack-faced outrage" at his misfortune and his

the first of these is the fact that the system is not a simple one, but a complex one, in which the various parts are interrelated and interdependent. The second is that the system is not a static one, but a dynamic one, in which the parts are constantly changing and evolving. The third is that the system is not a closed one, but an open one, in which the parts are constantly interacting with the environment. The fourth is that the system is not a linear one, but a non-linear one, in which the parts are constantly interacting with each other in a non-linear fashion. The fifth is that the system is not a deterministic one, but a probabilistic one, in which the parts are constantly interacting with each other in a probabilistic fashion. The sixth is that the system is not a simple one, but a complex one, in which the parts are interrelated and interdependent. The seventh is that the system is not a static one, but a dynamic one, in which the parts are constantly changing and evolving. The eighth is that the system is not a closed one, but an open one, in which the parts are constantly interacting with the environment. The ninth is that the system is not a linear one, but a non-linear one, in which the parts are constantly interacting with each other in a non-linear fashion. The tenth is that the system is not a deterministic one, but a probabilistic one, in which the parts are constantly interacting with each other in a probabilistic fashion.



legendary laziness account for a good deal of the flavor of Anse's character, but it is his gross insensitivity to others that is most important in relation to his role in the novel as a whole. Anse does not take the active pleasure Jason does in frustrating and harming others, but he is utterly obtuse with regard to their rights and feelings. He sees them only as aids or impediments to his search for glory; he is completely without the ability to care for them or to see through their eyes. In our evaluation of the novel as a whole we shall see that some of this quality seems to have rubbed off on the implied author who, apparently captivated by Anse, promotes a certain indifference towards his other creations.

Since Anse is what must pass for the patriarch of the Bundren clan, he has a certain amount of power over others, and his lack of sensitivity has disastrous results on their lives. Though we cannot really call him "aggressive," we can note that his negative effect on the well-being of others is pronounced. When Cash insists to Peabody that his broken leg "never bothered" him much, Peabody retorts, "You mean it never bothered Anse much" (AILD, p. 230), and that seems to be an accurate assessment of Anse's response to all the trouble and suffering of his family (unless, as we have seen, their problems cause him trouble). When his overworked wife falls ill, and indeed deteriorates to the point that her body is "no more than a bundle of rotten sticks" (AILD, p. 43), Anse fails to send for the doctor: "Hit was

jest one thing and then another . . . that ere corn me and the boys was aimin to git up with, and Dewey Dell a-takin good keer of her, and folks comin in, a-offering to help and sich, till I jest thought . . ." (AILD, p. 43). He is far too preoccupied with his own claims and sense of injury to spare a thought for Addie, and for all we know this causes her death. Peabody seems to think that he might have been able to do something if he had gotten there sooner. In fact, Addie's final illness surprises Anse rather than causing him emotional upset. Why does she remain in bed instead of getting up and about her regular duties?

He comes toward the door where she is, blinking his eyes, kind of looking ahead of hisself before he sees, like he is hoping to find her setting up, in a chair maybe or maybe sweeping, and looks in and finds her still in bed every time and Dewey Dell still a-fanning her with the fan" (AILD, p. 31).

Moments after Addie's death Anse urges the grief stricken Dewey Dell (well, she seems grief stricken at the time) to put supper on the table, and muses to himself, "God's will be done. Now I can get them teeth" (AILD, p. 49). Though, like Joseph Gold, I am inclined to like the second Mrs. Bundren more than the first, I must admit that this farewell does not do Addie justice. What it does do is to caricature the inability of the self-alienated, claim-ridden man to feel a real connection with his fellow human beings. In addition to being one of the funniest lines in American literature, this response is part of the coherent psychological portrait of Anse.

As Cash works on Addie's casket in a downpour, Anse appropriates the only spare raincoat. "I dont know what you'll do," he says to Cash, "Darl taken his coat with him" (AILD, p. 73). This is in line with the grotesque humor of his response to Cash's broken leg, which is first to say, "A fellow might call it lucky it was the same leg he broke when he fell offen that church" (AILD, p. 156), and then to pour raw cement over it, insuring that Cash will never walk right again. Like Addie, Cash undergoes physical suffering as a result of Anse's insensitivity. Though Anse does not torment his victims intentionally, as Jason torments Miss Quentin or Luster, the results are, if anything, rather more disastrous.

The grief of Jewel and Vardaman, and the anguish of Darl go unrecognized and unacknowledged by their obsessed father, as does the agitation of Dewey Dell. He manages to deprive Jewel of his beloved horse, and would deprive Dewey Dell of her Sunday clothes and Cash of his tools if he could. As usual he has words to cover himself. "It ain't respectful" (AILD, p. 95), he says, for Addie's children to have other things than burying her in mind as they set out on her funeral journey. Presumably "them teeth" are unique in this respect. And when Darl threatens his comfortable survival by burning down Gillespie's barn, Anse is perfectly willing to have him jumped on and handcuffed in a public street and led off to a living death in Jackson.

In the end Anse's indifference to the feelings of others

allows him to achieve a complete triumph. Trying to attach thematic value to this victory, Viscomi and Seltzer maintain that Anse's actions have served to stabilize and unify his family.<sup>14</sup> One shudders to contemplate their notion of desirable family life. Admittedly no one is going anywhere. Cash is crippled; Jewel is unhorsed (and thus, pretty clearly, unmanned), Darl is locked up; Vardaman shows signs of following him, and Dewey Dell's pregnancy, now sure to be uninterrupted, will restrict her movements considerably. Anse's triumph may be complete, but it is hardly one that we can admire.

As those (like Vickery) who find the "words and deeds" theme of paramount importance to the novel, have pointed out, Anse relies continually on platitudes, on the word that will easily prescribe or substitute for the deed. Action motivated by the needs of others or the demands of reality is out of the question for him, since his claims prevent him from really comprehending either one. In other words, he is unable to feel for others (and thus know how to behave towards them) or to cope with reality in any flexible way, so he clings to the well-tried response as a cover, as a means of getting by. As Addie lies dying he is preoccupied not with her agony, or with his own grief, but with the requirements of her "death bed wish" to be buried in Jefferson, the death bed wish being the kind of "platitude" upon which he depends. "She'll want to get started right off" (ALLD, p. 28), he says over and over. Such

words are a substitute for real feelings about Addie's death, as well as a statement of his intentions. Virtually devoid of any attachment to Addie, he must concentrate on doing what is "expected," and he will persist long after a man who really cared for his wife and was able to assess his position properly probably would.

Once Anse becomes a full fledged widower he is not without resources when it comes to knowing what to say and how to behave. Indeed, as critics have noticed,<sup>15</sup> he takes to the role with apparent alacrity. Not surprisingly so, for in this situation he is the center of attention, he has obviously sustained an injury that demands compensation, and there are plenty of platitudes to guide his behavior. He contorts his face into what he assumes is an expression of grief, but which Darl sees as a "monstrous burlesque of all bereavement" (AILD, p. 74), and, dressed in a clean white shirt, repeats the platitude of sad acceptance, "The Lord giveth" (AILD, p. 81).

We know from the Tulls and from Peabody that Anse has not treated Addie well. His adherence to her wish to be buried in Jefferson, and his acting out of the role of the grieving widower to the best of his very limited ability are not only the last refuge of a man who cannot behave spontaneously, they are a means of excusing himself and accusing her. If he goes to all this trouble to do what Addie wants, then he must be a good husband. That she has required this of him, on the other hand, indicates that she

is a terrible burden. "I don't begrudge her it" (AULD, p. 156), he says, so often that we know he does and expects others to see his point. By persisting with his unlikely journey, he provides himself with occasions to feel injured, and thus "chosen," instead of recognizing his fault.

The journey itself puts more of a strain on virtually everybody else than it does on Anse. His endless platitudinous refrain about not wishing to be "beholden" is designed to disguise his effective exercising of his claim on all and sundry. As Armstid puts it, he seems able to "conjure" people to do as he wishes, even as he fatuously maintains that he would not think of accepting their help. In this way he is able to maintain his sense of injury ("Was there ere such a misfortunate man" as he who cannot rely on his neighbors for aid) while allowing for the fulfillment of his grandiose claims that the world should be at his service. And at his service it most certainly is. As we have seen, the journey is continued at substantial sacrifice to his children, and others give without stint as well. Tull crosses a flood swollen river on a washed out bridge, much to his own amazement. The Samsons put the Bundrens up and feed them, though Addie's corpse already smells. The Armstids care for Cash, feed the family, and provide whiskey for Anse. The Gillespies donate their barn (rather more drastically than they had planned, certainly), and Peabody treats Cash for nothing, and then gives them the money to pay for their hotel room in Jefferson.

It seems that Anse's sole contribution to the journey is to trade Jewel's horse and Cash's "graphophone" money (his teeth money too, to be sure) for the new team, and then to sit in the wagon holding the reins for the rest of the trip while the others get out to walk the hills. The Bundrens' arrival in Jefferson may be a victory of sorts, but it has not been won through Anse's efforts, except as those efforts have to do with "conjuring."

Nevertheless, there is part of us that enjoys Anse's success--particularly his new teeth and his new wife--that feels inclined to participate in his view that no one in his world matters the way he does. In other words, the "ideal reader" that the implied author "creates" in this context takes on some of the symptoms of Anse's self-alienation. Although Faulkner's portrayal makes it clear that Anse is a fool and a hypocrite, a man paralyzed by his own shortcomings, and unable to make the simplest assessments of external reality, he comes to play a role in the novel as a whole that does not allow us to dismiss him as villain or buffoon. Because the implied author is never able to resist bringing him on screen for long, because he is so vividly drawn, and because he allows us the relief of laughter at the agonies and ambiguities of the rest of the novel, we are attracted to him, and this attraction seems to occur at the behest of the implied author. Other critics have noticed that Anse has this sort of appeal. In his de-bunking study of Faulkner, Martin Green claims that Anse is part of "that

narrow range of types whom Faulkner understands and can sympathize with," and he goes so far as to say that "Anse's point of view is a comic version of what Faulkner himself inclines to."<sup>16</sup> Viscomi and Seltzer seem totally taken in by Anse, and Joseph Gold finds that Anse becomes the dominant character because Faulkner ultimately gives way to laughter in the novel.<sup>17</sup> These readers have all felt the force of the author's rhetoric pulling them towards Anse, and thus away from the other characters of As I Lay Dying.

For perhaps the majority of critics, Addie's section provides some kind of center, a focus for the concerns of the novel, a statement of her suffering, and thus a description of the source of the suffering of her children. The section is one of great intensity, of piercing emotions in which we are asked to participate. We learn that as a young school teacher she needed a time every day when she could "be quiet and hate" her pupils, that her contact with the children made evident to her the truth of her father's statement that the reason to live is to get ready to stay dead. Only while whipping them, she remembers, was she able to invade their "secret and selfish" separate identities. Her anguish seems to be existential, based on the inevitable separation of humans from other humans. So she "takes" Anse, and, she says, in motherhood finds a solution to her problem. Apparently in her connection with Cash she finds a positive "violation" of her "aloneness." Oddly enough, however, motherhood is anathema to her when it comes





a second time, and again she returns to thoughts of death as a refuge from a life intensely hated, exacting from Anse the burial journey promise. She decides that Anse is already dead, a theory related to her insight into the difference between words and deeds and the insufficiency of the former. Presumably as a way of insuring herself against the kind of living death that results from a reliance on words (though why she should want to do so when life is so hateful to her is not clear), she commits the sin of adultery with Whitfield. In doing so she fulfills her duty to life, which she rather negatively refers to as "the terrible blood, the red bitter blood boiling through the land" (AILD, p. 166). Then the affair is over and she has Jewel, who seems for some reason to bring her peace, and then she presents Anse with two more children who are somehow owed to him who never loved a child in his life, by way of "cleaning house" before she allows herself a long sought death.

As this reading, which attempts to duplicate the experience of the reader who is receptive but has developed no careful interpretation of the section, reveals, Addie's description of her life presents problems and difficulties even for he who would be implied author's "ideal reader." It is, to be blunt, a confusing passage. Though we know that Addie, whom the implied author has invested with his own eloquence, has significant things to say, we are not always able to follow her train of thought. And, in the context of a novel full of powerful mimetic creations like

Anse, and Cora, and Tull, and Peabody, the characterization of Addie is abstract rather than realistic, fraught with philosophical concepts rather than human reality. We have no "objective correlative" for Addie's suffering, no notion of how she behaves or speaks in everyday situations, and thus no particular reason for feeling warm towards her, or sympathizing with her pain. And yet suffering is the key note of her section. We must believe that she suffers and care about it if we are to invest the themes she brings to light with the importance they are obviously meant to have. In other words, by presenting Addie's section as he does, the implied author threatens reader identification even as he asks for it.

Thus, it seems to me, Addie and her concerns are at once very important and very vulnerable. And a look at how Anse relates to them will reveal that his characterization does interfere with our response to her, partially negating the impact of her section. For example, Addie's expression of the existential truth that one must do in order to live, that words are merely the "gaps in people's lacks" (AULD, p. 166), is given ambiguous and abstract expression in her section, and is hardly embodied by her characterization in the rest of the novel. But in the characterization of Anse, the theme is brought vividly to life. As we have seen, his successful exercising of his claims makes it unnecessary for him to "do" for himself, and he continually substitutes the word for the deed in his mouthing of platitudes.

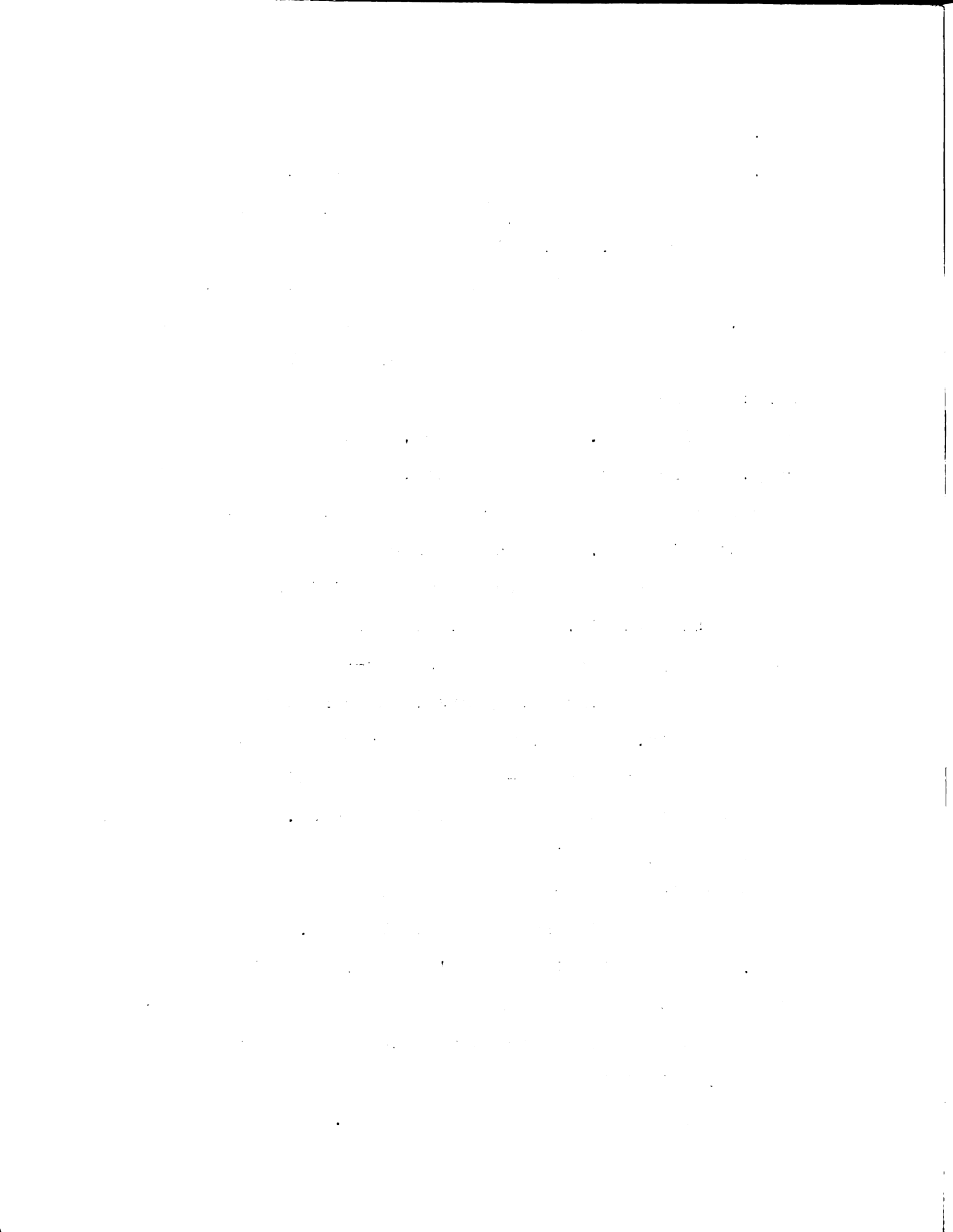
Analyzing our response to this aspect of Anse, a response urged by the stance of the implied author, we find a delight in the lifelikeness of these qualities, in the evidence they provide that Anse is a man like ourselves (coupled, of course, with a certain resentment at his victimization of others),<sup>18</sup> and laughter at his obtuseness and hypocrisy. Captured by the power of his mimetic portrayal and the effectiveness of the humor associated with him, we allow ourselves delight and laughter, dissipating the energy that we partly know ought to be applied to Addie and her intense grappling with the nature of life and death. As Anse tells us again and again that he would not be beholden, as he is depicted repeatedly in the stupor of he who will not or cannot do for himself, as he refuses responsibility for the deeds he does perform ("I just aimed to help him. It was Darl put it on" (AILD, p. 214), as he covers his tracks with preposterous stories about the dangers of sweating and the functions of vertical and horizontal objects, we are drawn away from Addie's world, where the gap between words and deeds is a cause for anguish, to a world where the very human tendency to let the word serve for the deed is amusing, where one gets by any way he can, and laughter precludes intensity.

In addition to its treatment of the words and deeds theme, Addie's section, as we have seen, presents some profoundly negative views about the quality of human life in general. For various reasons, it tells us, living is terrible, and we do it only in order to get ready to stay



dead. Obviously Addie feels that she has been injured by life, that it has primarily brought her pain, and that she is right to resent it, to wish for escape. Well, living is terrible for Anse, too. His stance in relation to the world is that everything ought to go his way. When, inevitably, it does not, he whines about it, and assumes his expression of "slack-mouthed outrage." "Flouted" by everything: by the road that someone had the nerve to build in front of his house, by the weather, by the son who goes crazy, by the wife who dies on him, he feels justified in entertaining a prodigious sense of injury. Of course we laugh at this, and, in doing so, how can we help losing some of our serious involvement with Addie's notion that life has been terrible for her? In her feeling that she has been "injured" by those around her--by the "secret and selfish" school children, by Anse, who cannot comprehend her complexity, by Darl, who invades her aloneness when she does not want it invaded--is she really so different from the Anse that we laugh at? And, in any case, having laughed, can we summon or retrieve that expended energy for the purpose of caring whether she is or not?

The problem with Darl is a similar one. Even more than Addie, he speaks in his creator's style,<sup>19</sup> and is endowed with the kind of acute consciousness with which the twentieth century novel reader is accustomed to being asked to identify. His intensely modern concerns are those of being and not-being and the relativity of time. In his



clairvoyance and his self-consciousness he offers a view of reality as seen by the tortured modern sensibility. In the gap between "is" and "was," in the demands of necessity, in the failure of love, he finds the agonies of a life lived as an ongoing process. But while Darl sees out with a clarity and an eye for detail that are almost painful, we do not see in. Certainly no craziness would surprise us once we learn his mother's response to his arrival in this world, but we have no clear idea of just how Darl is crazy, if he is, just as we have little idea of how he actually talks, or of what sort of a social demeanor he is wont to assume. His concerns, like Addie's, are disembodied and abstract; and thus, like hers, they are vulnerable to our fascination with Anse, a fascination planted and encouraged by the implied author. Take, for example, Darl's philosophizing about being and not-being as he "empties" himself for sleep in a strange room. Sleep is "is-not," he says. In other words, one must be awake and exercising one's humanness in order to be; one must participate in life as a process. But throughout the novel we find Anse's refusal to do so a source of comedy. In fact, Anse sleep walks his way through life with considerable success, and, in doing so, he provides a kind of spoof of Darl's existential agony. Anse's entry into the process of life is unwilled, unanimated, and unsurpassingly trivial; but it seems real to us; and it seems to please Anse well enough to please us a little too. In other words, it makes claims on our identification and uses



up our energy in a laughter that is much easier and more accessible than a profound understanding of Darl's concerns would be; and thus it allows us to place less importance on seeing through Darl's eyes and caring about what we see. When Anse makes sure, in the end, that this world will not be Darl's world, this life not his life, when he emerges himself with new teeth and new duck-shaped bride, proving that the unexamined life is the most resistant to the whims of fortune, we are not altogether without feelings of pleasure. It has been Anse all along who has most lived (in both Jamesian senses) for us, after all, Anse with whom the implied author has most clearly asked us to associate as with a fellow human being. And it is Anse who has allowed us to find in laughter a release from Darl's pain, a pleasurable outlet for the energy that would have otherwise been devoted to participating in his suffering.

In the essays of Joseph Gold, and Viscomi and Seltzer, and in Brooks's classic study, we find a celebration of the achievement of the Bundrens in completing their trip to town and preserving themselves from total destruction by fire and water. For those who do not focus on the irony and tragedy of the stories of Addie and Darl, As I Lay Dying often becomes the story of the triumph of man's spirit over circumstance. In fulfilling Anse's promise to Addie, the Bundrens symbolize the ability of mankind to endure hardship and surmount difficulties in order to achieve a survival that may be minimal, but is, nonetheless, significant. But

our analysis has allowed us to see that Anse's way of overcoming obstacles is a combination of the inertia that makes an object that has once begun to roll continue to do so, an undue respect for platitude and cliché, and a willingness to rely on and victimize others. Surely the completion of the trip to Jefferson cannot, under these circumstances, be representative in any serious Nobel-Prize speech sense of the ability of the human spirit to "prevail." If this is how we prevail, it can hardly be cause for celebration.

So the same consciousness that has created Addie's anguish and Darl's confusion, and Jewel's fury, and Dewey Dell's reluctant fertility, and Vardaman's fish, has created a character who, by his strategic and vivid appearances throughout the novel, and his ability to make us laugh, lessens our concern for their suffering. In doing so, this creator plays on them a "cruel peasant joke," attacks them, as if he were at times unable or unwilling to sympathize with their concerns. The implied author's position in relation to the suffering Bundrens is at times not much different from Anse's own; and as his "ideal readers" we are likely, on occasion, to find ourselves adopting a similar stance.

In Jason Compson we found a character whose arrogant-vindictive personality type seemed to capture the imagination of his creator, who allows him an impact on the novel disproportionate to his apparent thematic and formal function. In Anse we have found a character whose self-alienated manner of confronting his world allows his creator

to use him as a kind of weapon against other characters and themes towards which he apparently feels ambivalence. But we have also noted that these tendencies have not been allowed total domination over the fiction concerned. For many readers Quentin and Dilsey, Addie and Darl still provide the emotional and thematic focus for the novels they inhabit. In our study of Light in August, however, we shall find that this aggressive impulse takes almost total control, dominating the story to such an extent that it becomes profoundly disturbing, and must ultimately be paid for with the martyrdom of Joe Christmas.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>For an analysis of Faulkner's style as it relates to his intent which uses these terms, see Warren Beck, "William Faulkner's Style," in Faulkner: Four Decades of Criticism, Linda Wagner, ed. (East Lansing, 1973).

<sup>2</sup>Faulkner often said that his aim was to create "flesh and blood people that will stand up and cast a shadow," quoted in Andre Bleikasten, Faulkner's As I Lay Dying (Bloomington and London, 1973), p. 65.

<sup>3</sup>This analysis is to be found in The Novels of William Faulkner (Louisiana, 1964), pp. 50-65.

<sup>4</sup>Vickery, p. 57.

<sup>5</sup>This interpretation appears in William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven, 1963), pp. 131-66.

<sup>6</sup>Brooks, p. 165.

<sup>7</sup>Brooks, p. 155.

<sup>8</sup>See "As I Lay Dying As Ironic Quest," Four Decades.

<sup>9</sup>In fact, a survey of the vast amounts of criticism on this little novel will reveal a wealth of diametrically opposed interpretations. One can divide the critics of the novel into two rough categories: those who think that it is primarily comic or "straight" epic, and those who think that it is primarily tragic or ironic. Those who see it as comic or epic believe that Faulkner's comment on the human condition is meant to be positive, that he means to demonstrate the ability of mankind to triumph over exterior obstacles and his own follies. Charles Allen ("William Faulkner: Comedy and the Purpose of Humor," Arizona Quarterly, XVI) for example, considers the novel a classic example of comedy, the story of a group of people surviving and "dominating" the world, and "just barely" their own follies. Ora G. Williams ("The Theme of Endurance in As I Lay Dying," Louisiana Studies, IX, 100-104) also takes a positive view, but she thinks that it is an epic, with Anse Bundren an "awesome" figure once set in motion by the "animating power of Addie-woman-nature-fecundity. Leon F. Seltzer and Jan Viscomi ("Natural Rhythms and Rebellion: Anse's Role in As I Lay Dying," Modern Fiction Studies, XXIV, 556-64), also see Anse as a kind of conquering comic hero, but they insist that it is he who influences Addie, his "natural" influence being that which brings her and the rest of the family to a state of stability. His triumph culminates, they say, in the renewal of his own fertility

through "them teeth" and the duck-shaped woman. Thus they are in direct disagreement with Robert Penn Warren ("William Faulkner," in Four Decades, pp. 94-109), who also sees the Bundren journey as an optimistic comment on the human condition, and who calls Anse heroic, but feels that his acquisition of teeth and wife at the end is a fall from grace. Betty Alldredge ("Spatial Form in Faulkner's As I Lay Dying," The Southern Literary Journal, XI, 3-19), on the other hand, feels that the novel makes a positive comment on life not because the journey is successful, but because Addie Bundren has lived a life of admirable quality, and has made it to her grave in her wedding dress, still unsullied by Anse. Joseph Gold ("Sin, Salvation and Bananas: As I Lay Dying," Mosaic, VII, 55-73), calls the book a "celebration," but insists that it is not idealism, but the reverse, the "heroics of the hearth," the pleasures of a new set of teeth and a sack of bananas that are being celebrated. Idealism, for him, takes the form of Addie's "maniacal schemes" and is surely not to be admired.

Critics who see the novel as making a negative comment on the human condition also disagree as to the nature of the comment. Robert C. Nadeau ("The Morality of Act: A Study of Faulkner's As I Lay Dying," Mosaic, VI, 23-35), who thinks that the novel has its philosophical base in existentialism, sees Addie as the unsuccessful heroine who concerns herself with doing but is thwarted by life. Edward Wasiolek ("As I Lay Dying: Distortion in the Slow Eddy of Current Opinion," Critique, III, 15-23), and James L. Roberts ("The Individual and the Family: Faulkner's As I Lay Dying," Arizona Quarterly, XVI, 26-38), emphasize the tragic aspects of the lives of Addie and Darl. Roberts says that As I Lay Dying expresses the tragedy of Darl's "futile attempt to achieve sympathy and understanding." Wasiolek sees the novel as "insistent on the bitter conditions of man's life." Linda Wagner's view (Hemingway and Faulkner: Inventors/Masters /Metuchen, 1975/) is that the novel depicts a power struggle within a family and ends in a "tragic definition" of the word "family." And Walter J. Slatoff (Quest for Failure: A Study of William Faulkner /Westport, 1972/), who believes that As I Lay Dying is, like all Faulkner novels, highly ambiguous, says that one way to look at the story of the Bundrens is to note that nothing in it suggests that the world not be better off without people. But, he adds rather desperately, this "might well be regarded with amusement."

<sup>10</sup>Karen Horney, Neurosis and Human Growth (New York, 1950), p. 43.

<sup>11</sup>Horney, p. 63.

<sup>12</sup>William Faulkner, As I Lay Dying (New York, 1930), p. 32. Future references to this work will appear in the text.

<sup>13</sup>Vickery, p. 56.

<sup>14</sup>Seltzer and Viscomi, p. 562.

<sup>15</sup>See, for example, Vickery, p. 52, or Robert W. Kirk, "Faulkner's Anse Bundren," Georgia Review, 19 (1965), p. 448.

<sup>16</sup>See Re-appraisals (London, 1963), p. 191.

<sup>17</sup>Gold, p. 72.

<sup>18</sup>This resentment is obviously the dominant response of some readers of the novel, as my summaries of the criticism reveal. It is important to note here that my analysis is, of necessity, based on my own response, though it is supported by rhetorical and thematic analysis, and by the readings of some other critics.

<sup>19</sup>Bleikasten thoroughly catalogs the similarities between Darl's idiom and Faulkner's own. See pp. 26-29.

## CHAPTER IV

### 'KEEP YOUR MUCK': A HORNEYAN ANALYSIS OF JOE CHRISTMAS AND LIGHT IN AUGUST

My analyses of The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying have demonstrated that the aggressive tendencies of the implied author of these works lead him to allow his self-alienated characters, Jason Compson and Anse Bundren, to undercut his and the reader's concern for those characters with whom the novels seem to tell us to sympathize: Quentin, Benjy, Caddie, Addie, Darl. This collusion of implied author and aggressive character leads to some thematic ambiguity in these novels, but it has what sometimes seems the salubrious effect of lightening the misery depicted there, relieving the author and reader, at least briefly, of the burden of accepting and making sense of the suffering of others. It is as if reader and implied author put their heads together from time to time to have a comfortable snicker at those characters who seem to require so much expenditure of energy in pity and intellectual effort. And we have seen that we are also rewarded for our toleration of thematic ambiguity by the brilliance and vividness of the mimetic portraits of Anse and Jason.

The association of implied author, reader, and

self-alienated character in Light in August is not quite so benign or so salubrious as it is in these earlier novels. A Horneyan analysis of some aspects of this novel reveals that its "pinched rotted look," noted by Alfred Kazin,<sup>1</sup> is the result of its subtle invitation to the reader to participate in the world view of its aggressive protagonist; a world view which compulsively rejects or disbelieves in all positive connections between human beings, and harbors in their place feelings of bitterness, resentment, and disgust. At the same time it will reveal that the identification of the creator with his creation has in this case resulted in some failures of coherence in the portrayal. In his desire to enlist our sympathy for and identification with Joe Christmas, the implied author of Light in August sacrifices the psychological consistency of his portrait. We will find that the appeal of the novel rests with what Albert J. Guerard refers to as Faulkner's "highly liberated" use of fantasy<sup>2</sup> rather than with thematic or mimetic consistency. As he does in Sanctuary, Faulkner here explores the darker regions of the human mind without inhibition.

A Horneyan analysis of Joe Christmas's development and his behavior as an adult, followed by an analysis of those aspects of the novel that seem to me to reflect his distorted world view rather than objective reality, and a consideration of those elements of the novel thought to provide a balance to his story, will support my theory that



the aggressive tendencies of the implied author of Light in August are responsible for its overwhelmingly dark view of the human condition.

Though John Lewis Longley, Jr., who sees himself as an heroic holdout against the determinism of modern social science, thinks that the essence of Joe Christmas is that he defies his early conditioning to become a hero for modern times,<sup>3</sup> most critics see Faulkner's portrayal of Joe as a study in the debilitating effects of a bad childhood.<sup>4</sup> A Horneyan analysis will demonstrate that Joe Christmas's childhood and adult development are clearly those of an arrogant-vindictive type. Like Jason Compson's, Joe Christmas's adulthood is made up of attempts to achieve revenge over and mastery of those people and forces responsible for his mistreatment and frustration as a child. As Horney describes it,

Like every other neurotic development, this one started in childhood--with particularly bad human experiences and few, if any, redeeming factors. Sheer brutality, humiliations, derision, neglect, and flagrant hypocrisy, all these assailed a child of especially great sensitivity. People who have endured years in concentration camps tell us that they could survive only by stifling their softer feelings, including particularly that of compassion for self and others. It seems to me that a child under the conditions I have described also goes through such a hardening process in order to survive. He may make some pathetic and unsuccessful attempts to win sympathy, interest, or affection but finally chokes off all tender needs. He gradually "decides" that genuine affection is not only unattainable for him but that it does not exist at all.<sup>5</sup>

"Memory believes before knowing remembers,"<sup>6</sup> begins the chapter on Joe's childhood, indicating that Faulkner

means to trace the unconscious legacy of the child to the man. And what a legacy it is. No child-victim of Victorian literature ever had a worse time of it than Joe. Imprisoned behind the bleak, sootblackened walls of the orphanage, "small, still, round-headed, round-eyed" (117), Joe grows to the age of reason without love, his only treat an occasional "pink worm" of the dietitian's toothpaste. One older girl he likes "well enough to let her mother him a little" (127), but she suddenly disappears (not t.b. or small pox, adoption). Like many another little victim he has someone assigned especially to hate him, Doc Hines the racist lunatic who devotes his life to the destruction of the "abomination" that is Joe. In addition, he suffers the derision of his fellow inmates who, out of some natural but obscure evil impulse, since he does not then and never will look black at all, call him "nigger."

As the toothpaste episode unfolds we see that Joe has very early (he is now five) come to see punishment and persecution as the central facts of his life. When the dietitian tries to bribe him instead of beating him he becomes profoundly confused, and his mistrust of his fellow men increases. By the time he has been adopted by the McEacherns he has taught himself not to expect anything good from life, in fact to defend himself from disappointment by hating, as Hyatt Waggoner says, "not even those who love him but especially those who love him,"<sup>7</sup> He has learned to deny the very existence of the love that has been denied him, and

seems not to hope for any positive results from the adoption. Cautiously he reaches out not at all to McEachern during their long ride to his new home. He sits, a silent little bundle in the wagon, even more taciturn and unresponsive than McEachern himself. But it is Mrs. McEachern's welcome--the attempt to carry him to the house, the washing of his feet, the watching by his bedside--that is most wasted on he who can only wait for "the part that would not be pleasant" (156) to begin. Already he has taught himself not to believe in the genuineness of human affection, so her actions, the "trivial, clumsy, vain efforts" (157), can only mystify and eventually disgust him.

His initial response to his foster mother is the first indication we have that Joe will make the transition from victim to victimizer typical of the arrogant-vindictive type. The real turning point occurs on a Sunday when the eight year old Joe is beaten and starved by his Calvinist foster father in an attempt to get him to learn his catechism. Unable to prevent the beatings, he accepts them without emotion, "with a rapt expression like a monk in a picture" (140). He is calm because McEachern's treatment of him corresponds to his view that life consists of a series of punishments, and because by remaining "rapt" he can refuse McEachern mastery over him. After his inevitable collapse he awakens feeling "quite well," at peace, as if he has just made an important decision. Looking back on this day he thinks, "On this day I became a man" (137),

and it becomes apparent that at this moment, starved and aching from repeated beatings, he embarks on the search for vindictive triumph that will lead him to murder at least twice. Unable to revenge himself as yet on McEachern he lashes out at his foster mother, violently rejecting her offer of love and comfort in the form of food by dumping the tray of secretly prepared dishes in the corner, only later when it is just food and no longer a tangible symbol of the love in which he does not believe, kneeling over it and eating, "like a savage, like a dog" (146). The events of this day establish the pattern of Joe's life. He will for the rest of his days accept, and even seek out, punishment, taking his revenge where he can, and behaving with particular violence in response to offers of love or aid.

Once, however, taken off guard by the exigencies of adolescence, Joe displays the vulnerability to human feelings that his "solution" denies him. In his relationship with Bobbie Allen we find the lessons of his childhood confirmed, and the hardening process completed. Falling in love with a peculiarly stunted blonde waitress with oversized hands, Joe risks a partial abandonment of his drive for mastery and his need to deny positive feelings, only to be taught again that there is not really any such thing as love. At first he is caught up in the mystery of Bobbie and the mystery of sexual love in general,

I do not know yet that in the instant of sleep the eyelid closing prisons within the eye's self her face demure, pensive; tragic, sad, and young; waiting, colored with all the vague and formless magic

of young desire. That already there is something for love to feed upon: that sleeping I know now why I struck refraining that negro girl three years ago and that she must know it too and be proud too, with waiting and pride (165-66).

His belated discovery that Bobbie is a prostitute imported from Memphis to entertain the locals (though, as the older blonde woman complains, in Joe's case she has brought "it" all the way down to Jefferson just to give it away) leads him to compensate for this vulnerability by aggressive behavior. Now he smokes and drinks and "in his loud drunken despairing young voice" (187) calls Bobbie his whore.

It is in the midst of this sexual initiation into adulthood that Joe finds an opportunity for vindictive triumph. His murder, or attempted murder, of McEachern, and his brutal robbery of Mrs. McEachern free him from the role of victim, and release him forever from the standards of behavior that govern mere mortals. He is described on his way back to Bobbie, "The youth . . . rode lightly, balanced lightly, leaning well forward, exulting perhaps at that moment as Faustus had, of having put behind now at once and for all the Shalt Not, of being free at last of honor and law" (194). For the moment he is his idealized self, but, as his haste to return to Bobbie indicates, he is not yet completely hardened.

Bobbie takes care of that. In the scene that follows Joe's heroic journey to her house with Mrs. McEachern's egg money, Bobbie provides Joe with the experience that finally "choke(s) off all tender needs," and leads him to behave for

the rest of his life as if "genuine affection is not only unattainable for him but . . . does not exist at all." Her feelings presumably wounded by McEachern's rather polite reference to her as a "harlot," Bobbie has exchanged her usual cow like demeanor for that of a cornered rat. Her rejection of Joe's offer of matrimony is ugly and vicious,

It was very much like it had been in the school house: someone holding her as she struggled and shrieked, her hair wild with the jerking and tossing of her head; her face, even her mouth, in contrast to the hair as still as a dead mouth in a dead face . . . 'He told me himself he was a nigger! The son of a bitch! Me f---ing for nothing a nigger son of a bitch that would get me in a jam with clodhopper police. At a clodhopper dance!' (204)

No, Bobbie does not want to get married, and Joe's last attempt to win affection is rewarded by several cruel blows to the face. Now, with the taste of bitter rejection mingling on his tongue with the flavor of vindictive triumph, Joe embarks on his adult journey, "the street which was to run for fifteen years" (210), and then for three more before Percy Grimm's knife and gun bring it to a close. Horney writes,

The need for triumph and the need to deny positive feelings, both stemming from an unfortunate childhood situation, are thus, from the beginning, intimately interrelated. And they remain so because they reinforce each other. The hardening of feelings, originally a necessity for survival, allows for an unhampered growth of the drive for a triumphant mastery of life. But eventually this drive, with the insatiable pride that accompanies it, becomes a monster, more and more swallowing all feelings. Love, compassion, considerateness--all human ties--are felt as restraints on the path to a sinister glory. This type should remain aloof and detached.<sup>8</sup>

During his fifteen years on the road, in fact "on the path to a sinister glory," Joe systematically denies his connection to men of any race, and searches out opportunities for the punishment and revenge pattern established in his childhood.

The question of Joe's ambiguous racial identity must be introduced into this discussion of the formation of his adult personality. Though some critics consider it to be central to his development and to his significance for the novel as a whole,<sup>9</sup> it seems to me that Joe's possibly "mixed blood" has only a peripheral effect on the formation of his personality. Though the hatred of old Doc Hines, an important part of the atmosphere of his childhood, might be attributed to his racial ambiguity, the crucial turning points in the development of his neurotic "solution"--the toothpaste incident, the catechism beatings and the rejection of Mrs. McEachern's food, the discovery that Bobbie is a prostitute, the murder of McEachern and the robbery of Mrs. McEachern, the final rejection by Bobbie--cannot be (it is hardly to be supposed that Bobbie would marry him even if he had not told her that he had "nigger blood"). The central fact of Joe's life is not that he may be "part nigger," but that he has been injured and thus seeks to injure others and to deny his connection with them. His "mixed blood" provides him with a means of denying others closeness and thus of denying the existence of values like love and kindness, and it provides him with opportunities

for perpetuating the compulsive pattern of punishment and revenge, but it is not the cause of his alienation.

We get our closest look at the adult Christmas during the three years that he spends in Jefferson before the murder of Joanna Burden. During this time he exhibits virtually every personal quality ascribed by Horney to the arrogant-vindictive type: arrogance, envy, the need to frustrate others, the inability to feel sympathy, the inability to ask for or receive aid graciously, the tendency towards uncontrollable rage. His need to keep others at bay, or, when he has the chance, to make them the recipients of his contempt, to triumph over them with his tongue or his fist, governs his every action.

Appearing on the Jefferson scene, Joe is "sullen and quiet and fatal as a snake" (41). The second time he opens his mouth it is to say in response to Byron Bunch's preferred lunch pail, "I aint hungry. Keep your muck" (31). The men at the mill know him by his "darkly contemptuous" expression, and the "silent and unflagging savageness" with which he shovels sawdust. These are apparently enough to keep them at bay, but with the arrival of Brown, made of denser stuff, Joe resorts to blows, curses, and murder threats.

But it is in his portrait of Joe's most "intimate" relationship that Faulkner shows most vividly the emotional paralysis and the compulsive need to deny others warmth that is the inevitable adjunct to the search for vindictive triumph.



Joe first encounters Joanna Burden when she finds him standing in her kitchen surreptitiously eating the food that he could have had for the asking. Briefly their relationship is based on her supplying him with the food and shelter that he needs but will not ask for. It is not much of a connection, but it is enough to make Joe uncomfortable, especially when he realizes one day, "liplifted," that she has put herself above him by not inviting him into the "house proper." He revenges himself by raping her, unfeminine and unattractive as she is, but his triumph is rendered incomplete by her failure to disintegrate at his touch. Her surrender is "hard, untearful and unpitying and almost manlike" (221), and thus he is compelled to try again. This time he approaches her "in a quiet rage," determined to "show the bitch," but he meets neither enthusiasm nor resistance, and thus is, again, denied the triumph that would allow him to leave her alone. "It was as though some enemy upon whom he has wreaked his utmost violence and contumely stood, unscathed and unscarred and contemplated him with a musing and insufferable contempt" (224). Eventually he rids himself of this sense of her contempt in a scene reminiscent of Catechism Sunday. As he sniffs and audibly identifies each dish of food that has been left for him before he sends it crashing into the kitchen wall ("I dont like beets anyhow.") he feels an exhilarating sense of vindictive triumph. It is no accident that this is one of the few times in the novel that Joe really seems to come

alive, to do more than cast a baleful shadow on the page. These are the moments for which the arrogant-vindictive type lives: the moments that deny his dependency on others and establish his ascendancy over them, the glittering prizes that inspire his search for glory.

Now that he has caught on to the way to establish his ascendancy over Joanna, Joe can stay on at her place and wait for her complete surrender, a surrender which comes in the form of a grotesque middle aged sexual awakening: "In this way the second phase began. It was as though he had fallen into a sewer" (242). The words "fallen" and "sewer" are important here. What happens to Joe in his relationship with Joanna, what leads to her murder, is the fact that her "surrender" ends up confining him. In the "sewer," the "bottomless morass" of her sexuality he is trapped, and, as we have seen, "all human ties . . . are felt as restraints on the path to a sinister glory" by the arrogant-vindictive type. Joe is only able to resume his progress down this path when, following Faulkner's rather bizarre theory of female sexuality,<sup>10</sup> Joanna abruptly becomes an asexual being at the onset of menopause, and insists on praying over Joe and trying to reform him. Now she is vulnerable because she is asking for something that he can deny her, expressing a need that he is, indeed, compelled to frustrate, just as he was compelled to frustrate Mrs. McEachern's need for affection. Again the "need for triumph and the need to deny positive feelings" come into play at the same time.

Now Joe can taste his triumph over Joanna, thinking, "There is something that I am going to do." Now he can deny her any feelings of love or respect, "his lip lifted into the shape of a soundless and rigid snarl," saying, "You just got old and it happened to you and now you are not any good anymore" (262). He hates her now "with a fierce revulsion of dread and impotent rage" (257), for having confined him. His rage, maybe not really so impotent, leads him to tote his razor up her stairs and slit her throat so thoroughly that the country man who finds her body will be afraid to pick it up for fear the head will stay behind. The intensity of his rage is a response to her absolute determination to deny him mastery, but it is also his reply to her attempts to be the loving mother he never had.

All of the elements of Joe's personality, the ways of behaving that come out of his compulsive need to move against others, are revealed in his relationship with Joanna. First, there is his arrogant, rude, affection-denying treatment of her. This is the result, as Horney would point out, of his need to externalize the self-hate that is the inevitable concomitant of the gap between his actual self (a two bit drifter cared about by no one) and his idealized self (the young Faustus above honor and law), his need to deny the existence of positive feelings, and his need to intimidate others into allowing him the vindictive triumph that is his only source of satisfaction. All who come in contact with him: the McEacherns, the mill workers, "Joe

Brown," are treated with the same distancing coldness and contempt. He establishes around himself an impenetrable aura of sullenness.

Then, there is his tendency to respond violently to the friendly gesture, his inability to ask for or receive help graciously, because to do so would be to admit a failure of mastery. This is especially evident in his response to proffered food--Mrs. McEachern's or Joanna's carefully prepared meals, or Byron's lunch. It also extends to money. "What do I want with money?" (185) is his arrogant response to Mrs. McEachern's fumbling attempt to give him some. And he is careful to remind her as he steals her little hoard that he has not accepted it as a gift, "I didn't ask because I was afraid you'd give it to me. I just took it. Don't forget that" (196). It is important to note that this inability to take from others is compulsive, and not a healthy desire "to live on the terms of his own self-definition," as Longley describes it.<sup>11</sup> Joe does not merely refuse aid, he responds with fury, with physical or verbal violence, when it is offered. He does so because of a need to reassert the false feeling of superiority that is threatened when people behave as if they think he needs help.

Joe's relationship with Joanna also brings into clear perspective another pattern of dealing with others typical of the arrogant-vindictive personality. As we have seen, his most common stance is that of a highly controlled

sullenness. As Horney says, Joe's type is "rather over controlled, guarded and vigilant"<sup>12</sup> in his relations with others. But in opposition to this guardedness we find a tendency toward violent and uncontrollable rage. The vindictive type, though he may be very unpleasant indeed, ordinarily does not express much of the hostility that he feels (this would be too dangerous). But on occasion his compulsions overwhelm him, and he feels rage as something impinging on him from outside, something over which he has no control, something which frightens even him. These occasions arise when there is a clear and present threat to his idealized image, when his mastery, or his freedom from positive feelings is threatened. When Brown laughs at him and calls him a "nigger" Joe comes close to killing him, seeing his actions as out of control, as coming from another source, "Something is going to happen to me. I am going to do something" (97). When he goes for a walk in Freedman Town and encounters some blacks talking and laughing, he almost cuts a man with his razor, "What in hell is the matter with me?" he wonders. And then, "Something is going to happen. Something is going to happen to me" (110). As they are throughout the book, blacks here are a reminder to Joe of his despised actual self, the self that he is afraid might be black and thus inferior. Contact with blacks often brings on this kind of rage, most notably when he comes close to killing a white prostitute who has just turned out (not turned away) a "shine." As we have seen, Joe's murder

of Joanna is also the result of vindictive rage, a rage so far out of Joe's control that he begins to think of the murder as past before it has even happened, "Maybe I have already done it," he thinks. "Maybe it is now no longer waiting to be done" (104). Again, we must note a flaw in Longley's argument that Joe is an existential hero. His acts of violence are not evidence of rebellion against a controlling society. They are evidence of a profound loss of choice emanating from an irrational rage at those who threaten his identification with his idealized self.

Faulkner's portrayal of Joe Christmas builds to a climax in his description of the relationship between Joe and Joanna, and, as we have seen, many of the essential elements of his character are revealed there. But the events following the murder are also of importance to our understanding of his character and its significance. Once "something" has indeed happened, and Joanna's throat is slit, Joe's revenge for the damage done him in childhood is almost, but not quite, complete. He has destroyed the punishing man, and the confining women--McEachern will not threaten his mastery again, Joanna and Mrs. McEachern will not try to connect themselves to him again--but one more threat remains. Joe still has to triumph over the spectre of his weakness and inferiority, the "actual self" that he has, in his adulthood, come to associate with blacks. To this end he bursts in upon a black church, cursing God, slapping the minister, knocking a seventy year old man "clean down into

the mourner's pew," fracturing the skull of that man's six foot grandson with a bench leg. "I'll cut a notch in it tomorrow" (308), he thinks, and, for the second time in the novel close to laughter, says, "Have a butt boys," as he flicks his cigarette into the bushes where the mystified and frightened black men wait. The next time we see Joe it is at dawn, and he is feeling a sense of peace and exhilaration, the rewards of complete vindictive triumph. His dragons slain, Joe need fight no longer.

Joe's passive surrender to the law, and then to the gun and knife of Percy Grimm may seem to be grossly inconsistent with his character as I have described it, but in fact his martyrdom is readily explicable in Horneyan terms. Every arrogant-vindictive type, Horney explains, harbors powerful self-effacing trends.<sup>13</sup> They are part of the actual self that he is compelled to despise. They threaten him with helplessness, and they cast doubt on the "truth" of his solution, but they remain to tempt him with a means of obtaining the affection and acceptance that he was first denied and has since denied himself. Drawing on her psychoanalytic experience, Horney describes the frequent reaction of a patient whose vindictive trends are brought to light by analysis: "A period ensues when he feels altogether contemptible and helpless and tends to prostrate himself for the sake of being loved."<sup>14</sup> This extreme response is, in a sense, paralleled by Joe's response to the fulfillment of his vindictive desires. The Joe that we see shaving and





combing his hair, preparing himself, the town says, like a bridegroom, for death, is a Joe who has satisfied his compulsion to make others suffer, and has been overcome by that part of his personality that wishes suffering on itself, and cannot allow itself to fight back. As we shall see, this sudden emergence of Joe's self-effacing trends is part of his creator's plan to elicit our sympathy for and identification with Joe, but first let us understand the psychological implications of his surrender.

The suffering that Joe undergoes during his "passion" and death is, it is clear, very real suffering indeed, and it is shown to be unjustly incurred. Nevertheless, in the context of Faulkner's characterization it is "neurotic" or "functional" suffering in that Joe seeks it out deliberately, and uses it with the apparent object of "dying on the doorstep" of the world that has abused him for so long. Functional suffering, a prominent aspect of self-effacing neurosis, has as its purpose the accusing of others, and the excusing of oneself,<sup>15</sup> and Joe's sudden switch from murderer to passive victim can be understood as a product of his need to do just that. He is reacting to the fulfillment of his drive for vindication in the same way that Horney's patients react to the vision of their own vindictiveness: by switching the emphasis on to himself as needy victim and sufferer. Captured in Mottstown Joe allows Halliday to hit him in the face, "acting like a nigger," (i.e., prostrating himself) for the first time, according to the town (331).

He escapes, apparently only in order to increase his suffering, hurry his martyrdom, and does not defend himself against Grimm even though he is carrying a loaded pistol. Faulkner describes his castration and death in a remarkable passage,

For a long moment he looked up at them with peaceful and unfathomable and unbearable eyes. Then his face, body, all, seemed to collapse, to fall in upon itself, and from out the slashed garments about his hips and loins the pent black blood seemed to rush like a released breath. It seemed to rush out of his pale body like the rush of sparks from a rising rocket; upon that black blast the man seemed to rise soaring into their memories forever and ever. They are not to lose it, in whatever peaceful valleys, beside whatever placid and reassuring streams of old age, in the mirroring faces of whatever children they will contemplate old disasters and newer hopes. It will be there, musing, quiet, steadfast, not fading and not particularly threatening, but of itself alone serene, of itself alone triumphant (440).

Once again, we are witness to the successful completion of the search for glory, but this time the reward is the crowning glory of martyrdom rather than vindictive triumph. This glory is brought with suffering rather than mastery, and it is shown to be a thing greatly to be desired. Those who have neglected and persecuted Joe, who have denied him love and understanding, are now never to lose the memory of his suffering, the image of his martyred face.

Thus far my analysis has been restricted to making psychological sense of Faulkner's portrait of Joe Christmas. It would appear that his character is psychologically explicable as that of a man whose horrendous childhood has caused him to behave in rigidly prescribed patterns--first

as avenging angel, then as suffering martyr--patterns delineated not by objective reality, but by his unrealistic vision of his idealized self. But it is my view that Joe's creator does not always see his creation in this light, that he tends instead to identify with Joe, to accept, and to wish the reader to accept, what would be Joe's own idealized version of himself. This is made evident by certain violations of the integrity of Joe's portrait, by the treatment of his martyrdom, and by the presence of a strain of aggression in the novel as a whole.

Though it is quite rare, in Faulkner's major works, to encounter lines or descriptions which do not ring true to the characterizations of which they are a part, this does happen, it seems to me, in the case of Joe Christmas. Occasionally he is given a line to speak that strikes a dissonant note in relation to the rest of his characterization. These lines seem designed to ask our participation in his irrational sense of injury, to encourage us to identify with him, and to prepare us to accept his "apotheosis" at the end.

For example, there is Joe's plaintive reaction to Bobbie's rejection of his proposal of marriage, "Why, I committed murder for her. I even stole for her" (204). As Waggoner points out, the effect of this passage is sentimental because Faulkner seems to ask us to accept this assessment of the situation, to pity Joe for being betrayed, when, in fact, what he says is a lie.<sup>16</sup> Joe killed

McEachern, gleefully, for revenge, and he stole from Mrs. McEachern, not to get the money for Bobbie, because he could have had it for the asking, but to demonstrate his complete rejection of his foster mother and her way of being. By putting this unlikely line in Joe's mouth (his motives seem clear enough to him moments before), Joe's creator is asking us to play down Joe's victimization of others.<sup>17</sup>

A similar situation occurs when Faulkner has Joe ask Joanna, after hearing the story of her ancestors, "Just when will men that have different blood in them stop hating one another?" (236). Hitherto Joe's sole contribution to brotherly love between the races has been to hate whites for being white and blacks for being black. And the Joe Christmas that Faulkner shows us would never have said those words--self-pity and humanism are most definitely not his style. Here, as in the jarring passage that describes Joe as being "sick for two years" after sleeping with an unsegregated prostitute, his creator is asking us to give more weight to Joe's distress over his racial ambiguity than it will bear. He does so, I think, in order to increase our sympathy for and involvement in Joe's plight.

A similar attempt at manipulation is associated with Joe's statements about what he wants out of life. When Joe says, on two occasions, that all he wants, all he has ever wanted, is peace (104, 313) the context of his statements, and the surrounding imagery of dawn, of softness and coolness, of Joe "becoming one with loneliness and quiet that

has never known fury or despair" (313), encourage the reader to believe that he is speaking the truth. Joe is seen here as the victim of a world that has even refused him peace, though that seems "so little to ask." But, as Faulkner's portrait has shown us, Joe has not found, indeed does not even desire, peace, because he has a compulsive need to move against and triumph over others. In a related passage he is alleged to think as he looks in a window at some white people playing cards, "That's all I wanted. That dont seem like a whole lot to ask" (108), and our sympathetic identification with the subject of racial prejudice is evoked. But we know that once he is away from Hines only Joe's own need to set himself against others prevents him from being thought of as white. A peaceful game of cards with white folks is most certainly not all that Joe Christmas ever wanted.

This sentimentalization of Joe's role as victim culminates in his final martyrdom. As we have seen, Joe's "conversion" itself is psychologically explicable. He is driven from one solution to another by the fulfillment of his vindictive drives, and by the need to accuse others and excuse himself through "functional suffering." But in attempting to discover what the author of Light in August wants us to think of all this we find that he seems to share in Joe's desires to accuse others and excuse himself through suffering, that he too sees Joe's life as justified by his end, that, in fact he sees Joe as his idealized self,

as a god.

There is much discussion among critics as to whether the parallels between Joe and Jesus Christ are meant to be ironic or not. It seems clear to me that they are not. The language used to describe Joe's death, the idiotic cruelty of Percy Grimm, the ugliness of the lynch mob, the sympathy due Mrs. Hines, the dignity of Joe: these are just a few of the things that encourage our positive identification of Joe with Jesus. The religious imagery surrounding Joe's death has been heavily documented. There are angels and halos; there are "slashed garments," and a wound to the body. But it is in the use of language and imagery in the passage describing Joe's death that his identification with the Jesus who ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of his Father is made most obvious. When, on the geyser of "pent black blood" from his loins, Joe seems "to rise soaring into (the) memories forever and ever" of the men who are watching him, when his face is immortalized, "of itself alone serene, of itself alone triumphant," it becomes clear that his death is meant to justify all that has gone before, to, in fact, accuse others and excuse Joe. Like that of Jesus, Joe's martyrdom is seen as willed and redemptive. The compulsions shown to have been set in motion by his childhood are now forgotten as he soars into our memories, purified and glorified by his suffering. Critics have found this apotheosis difficult to account for, and no wonder. As our psychological analysis of Joe's character allows us to

see, it is possible for a man like Joe to feel driven to martyrdom, but highly unlikely that he should achieve such glorious results (based on fantasy, such attempts at martyrdom are unlikely to buy one the kind of eternal life granted to Joe). Joe's soaring departure is made possible not by the realities of his characterization, but by the tendency of Joe's creator to mistake Joe's idealized self for reality.<sup>18</sup>

The implied author's apparent identification with Joe Christmas is related to the pattern of aggression that pervades Light in August, but it is not our only evidence that the novel indulges a great deal in aggressive fantasy. An analysis of some of the patterns of imagery in the novel, and of the treatment by the implied author of characters other than Joe will reveal that the novel consistently demonstrates the same need to deny "weakness," and seek out "triumph" that governs Joe's life until the bench leg comes in contact with Roz Thompson's head.

It has often been pointed out<sup>19</sup> that for Faulkner women represent that aspect of humanity which is most basically human: physical as opposed to intellectual, realistic as opposed to idealistic, enduring as opposed to vengeful, accepting as opposed to aggressive. Ordinarily these dichotomies serve to place the women of his works above the men. They are closer to nature, less inclined to try to force life to conform to their ideals, more able to endure suffering because of their habit of accepting it and going

on. Faulkner's public answer to a question on Light in August indicates that he wished to have this novel considered in the same light. He claimed that the book was written out of his admiration for women, their "courage and endurance," that it was primarily the story of Lena Grove.<sup>20</sup> But if we look closely at the novel we find that instead of representing the "weaker" (that is to say more human, more accepting, and less aggressive) aspects of humanity in a positive sense, the novel presents women as by and large the objects of squeamishness and contempt.<sup>21</sup> Their physical selves, accepting and giving rather than moving against, are either malfunctioning or nauseating; their attempts to love, or to be kind are generally awkward, ridiculous, and/or unsuccessful. In other words, the novel as a whole tends to share Joe Christmas's perspective on women, rather than the perspective of the public Faulkner.

Joe Christmas learns to hate women because of his experience with the dietitian. In his mind they are associated with "muck" of various kinds, this four letter word referring not only to their association with food, but to their sexuality, and to their tendency to try to make a positive human connection with Joe. As we have seen, Joe's "solution" requires that he remain above these things, particularly the latter. A close look at the novel reveals that through his manipulation of situation<sup>22</sup> and use of imagery the implied author of Light in August asks us to share this perspective.



Here is what happens to you if you are a female character in Light in August. If you are past menopause you are asexual, you are ugly, you dress funny, you wear your hair in an unattractive "tight screw" at the back of your head, and your gestures of kindness or affection are "savage," "clumsy," even ridiculous. If you are young and do not have sex then you look "frozen and skinny," are driven to run off to Memphis where you can get what you need, have a nervous breakdown in church, and finally feel so guilty that you jump out of a hotel window. If you are young and do have sex then maybe you are the "prone and abject" participant in a fourteen year old's gang bang, or maybe you are unnaturally short and have great big hands "dead and pale as a piece of cooking meat" (202), the outer signs of your "inner corruption of the spirit" (161). Or maybe you are a "pinksmelling" wild eyed young woman willing to destroy a child's life to keep your activities secret. Or just maybe you can give off the air of an unravished bride of quietness even while eight months pregnant and demonstrate your "courage and endurance" by pursuing across three states a man who does not want you and would not be worth catching even if your "slow time" did not make that event seem highly improbable. But if you are a middle aged woman who has sex, then you are in real trouble, because while a man's "sin" can be "healthy and normal," making love with you is like falling into a sewer. You will try to draw a man into the "black thick pool" of your sexuality. You will be



afflicted with that ghastliest of infirmities, nymphomania, and will cast yourself about in wild poses and shout obscenities. You too look funny in your clothes, but underneath is a "rotten richness ready to flow into putrefaction at a touch" (247). Eventually you will reach menopause and make a fool of yourself by suddenly thinking you are pregnant. Then you will lose all interest in sex and absurdly transfer your energies to a scheme to send your ignorant mill hand lover to law school, that is before you go completely nuts and try to shoot him with an ancient pistol that does not work. Then you will get your throat slit and look funny lying on the ground for all the world to see with your head turned around completely backwards (if you'd been able to do that before, they say, maybe you wouldn't be doing it now). As Guerard points out, "The misogynous imagination selects for its female victims appalling situations and punishments."<sup>23</sup> It would seem that the guiding consciousness of Light in August, far from setting himself to admire the "courage and endurance" of women wishes to reject and deny the messy humanity that they represent. Their sexuality in particular is shown to be the source of corruption, ugliness, stupidity, mean-spirited behavior, and bad smells.

To a lesser extent the blacks of the novel are also the objects of this compulsive rejection of all that is "weak" or "inferior" (i.e., not aggressive) in humanity. It has not gone unnoticed that there are some blatantly racist descriptions in the novel, such as that which refers

to the "vacuous idiocy" of "idle and illiterate" (53) Negro nursemaids, or the "fumbling and timeless Negro fashion" (68) of a black expectant father. But there is also a consistent pattern of imagery that places blacks in the messily human, and thus despicable, category of women: their alleged inferiority and tendency to connect with one another (they seem to crowd together, and they are over and over described as "fecund") qualifying them to be the recipients of the implied author's contempt. Like women, blacks are associated with smells and unpleasant enclosure. Freedman Town is like "the bottom of a thick black pit" (107). This echo of the description of Joanna's sexuality is no accident; a walk in Freedman Town is like a return to "the lightless hot wet primogenitive Female" (107), and, as we have seen, that is like a stroll through the sewer. Joe can hardly breathe lying next to his ebony carving of a common-law wife, and blacks are smelled before they are seen. The air around whites is "cold and hard," and, if they are male, presumably odor free.

Just as Faulkner's answer to the university student's question asks us to see Light in August as a celebration of womanhood, however, some elements of the novel ask us to see it as a sympathetic tract on the race question. In other words, the novel seems at times to ask the question so improbably attributed to Joe, "Just when do men that have different blood in them stop hating one another?" As we have seen, Faulkner's portrayal of Joe asks for our sympathy

for the outsider, the "nigger," the victim of the lynch mob, the man unjustly hated because of the "curse" of his alleged black blood. But at the same time we are subtly asked to despise all those who do not pursue mastery and deny positive feelings, and thus the black race, condemned to an inferior position, and prone to close associations is seen as fumbling, stupid, and smelly.

A look at the positive imagery associated with aggression in the novel confirms our theory that it tends to encourage aggressive fantasy and discourage its antithesis. When Samuel A. Yorks points out that in the world of Light in August it seems "better to be castrated than seduced"<sup>24</sup> he is referring to the way the novel continually contrasts the admirably "clean" tendency to move against people or things, or to separate oneself from them, as opposed to the "messy" tendency to move toward them, to make physical or emotional connections.

When Joe violently removes his undergarment in the bizarre "streaking" episode, his right hand slides "fast and smooth," striking the remaining button a "light, swift blow" (100). Then the dark air breathes "smoothly" around his male nakedness, it is "soft" and "cool." This is his answer to the "thick still black pool of more than water" (99) that is the image for Joanna's frantic attempts to move toward him with all of her almost worn out sexual being. This same contrast of phallic with womb-sewer imagery is encountered in the description of Joe's trip through the



black section of town. Here Joe is the "lone telephone pole," connoting something "clean, hard, and dry,"<sup>25</sup> as Yorks points out, while, as we have seen, the black area where people are gathered closely together, presumably in the process of being "fecund," is like the womb, "lightless, hot, wet," like "the bottom of a thick black pit." And it also appears in the description of Joe's response to Bobbie's explanation of menstruation. Nauseated, he runs to the woods where he takes brief solace in the "hard trunks" of the trees, "branch shadowed, quiet, hardfeeling, hard-smelling, invisible" (197), and then seems to see a row of misshapen urns (the shape of the womb the functions of which are to give and receive rather than move against): "Each one was cracked and from each crack there issued something liquid, deathcolored, and foul" (178). Naturally Joe vomits. But then he buys a nice new rope with which to escape from the house at night, and the next time he sees Bobbie hauls her off to the woods with no preliminaries.

In the descriptions of Joe's childhood the imagery used in connection with McEachern and his cruelty towards Joe tends to be more positive than that connected with Mrs. McEachern's ineffective attempts to move toward him. McEachern is frequently described by terms like "hard," and "vigorous." He is "rocklike," indomitable. He smells of the "clean hard virile living leather" with which he beats Joe coolly, without heat or anger (139). Mrs. McEachern, on the other hand, is a "stiff caricature" when she reaches

out her hand to Joe. She is "shapeless, a little hunched" (145). She hovers, she fumbles, and she huddles, like some unattractive little bird. This imagery is not wasted on Longley, who refers to her "sickening attempts to make (Joe) as cringing as herself."<sup>26</sup> It is Joe, of course, who accepts and models himself after his foster father and despises his foster mother because he cannot understand or believe in love, but the novel seems to lend some support to his choice.

Even in Percy Grimm's final pursuit of Joe, we see that the imagery gives a positive connotation to aggression and a negative connotation to its opposite. Grimm's face is "rocklike," "bright." It has "that serene, unearthly luminousness of angels in church windows" (437). The rest of the community, on the other hand, huddled together look at "his tense hard young face," their own faces "blanched and gaped with round, toothed orifices" (434). Likewise, Christmas, in his final aggressive action, the last violent explosion before the drive for martyrdom takes over completely, is a figure of some beauty compared to the minister who, frantically and ineffectively, tries to give him aid, with "his bald head and his big pale face" (438). Joe runs up Hightower's hall, "his raised and armed and manacled hands full of glare and glitter like lightening bolts" (438).

Light in August presents a world where the warm gesture, the act of giving or physical union, and the very source of life itself are seen as unbeautiful, awkward,



even "foul," while the tendency to move against others, or at least to maintain a "clean" and "hard" separateness is invested over and over again with a certain beauty. Like Joe Christmas, the consciousness that created this world seems to have a compulsive need to deny the reality and efficacy of human bonds, and to indulge in intense and vivid fantasies of triumph. That the novel also presents a world where human physical and emotional realities are warmly, if a bit condescendingly, accepted, does not belie the significance of this to our understanding of it.

For many critics the story of Lena Grove and her protector Byron Bunch is far more central than I have made it out to be. We can surmise from the interpretations of some critics that they see the implied author as solidly aligned with this amiable pair, inviting the reader to view the other characters and happenings of the novel from this perspective. Carl Holman, in his classic study of the novel, says that Byron and Lena "establish a norm for the other actions, a definition of the natural order against which the perversions and distortions of the other stories are to be set."<sup>27</sup> Wagner thinks that Byron is "the real standard" by which the other characters are to be judged,<sup>28</sup> while both Cleanth Brooks and Olga Vickery speak of Lena's power as a representative of Nature to rescue Byron and Hightower, to drag them into life,<sup>29</sup> and Yorks too sees her as a "redemptive figure."<sup>30</sup> For these critics the story of Joe with all of its violence and hatred and vision of tortured and

victimized humanity redeemed through suffering, is balanced by an opposing view of a humanity able to accept life as it is and even move in a positive direction--to fall in with the rhythms of nature, and even to try to establish "a morality in life itself."<sup>31</sup> But although the structure of the novel (Lena used as a frame, Byron tying the various stories together) and some of the rhetoric (Lena is made so appealing in the first chapter that one almost feels redeemed by her oneself) support this interpretation, I do not believe that the novel as a whole justifies it.

I am not the first to notice that the thematic impact of Byron and Lena is reduced by their creator's tendency to undercut them by making them appear stupid or silly. Lena is the "mental pigmy" that Heimer<sup>32</sup> describes her as being, and she is never really allowed out of the comic mold of appealing, fertile, but amusingly limited female. Though we are led to believe that she might become an important thematic force when she draws Hightower into life through the birth of her baby, we cannot retain that impression when we see her reduced to a comic figure<sup>33</sup> (in the Bergsonian as well as the conventional sense) when she mechanically resumes her pursuit of Lucas after he jumps out the window; "Now I got to get up again" (410), she says out loud to herself. And in the scenes that portray a Lena who could not resist the callow Burch rejecting the advances of Byron, her devoted protector, it is obvious that the implied author is more concerned with humor than with theme. The

humor is very good, and Lord knows it is welcome, but it has a profoundly negative effect on Lena's status as a redeemer. The qualities that she represents: loyalty, endurance, an accepting spirit, are ultimately made ridiculous. Her loyalty is misplaced, her endurance seems to be the result of a one track mind, and her accepting spirit begins to seem almost moronic as she continues to ignore the negative aspects of her situation and extoll the virtues of travelling, "My my. A body does get around" (480). There is, in the latter part of her characterization at least, a partial denial of the "positive feelings" that she represents, which coincides with the strain of aggression in the novel.

This strain of aggression is even more clearly at work in the novel's treatment of Byron Bunch. The original description of Byron is flavored with sentimentality. He works six days a week, not for money or pleasure, but because working is somehow the thing to do, and because it keeps him out of trouble. On the seventh day, not content to go to the local church of his choice, or even to ride two hours to a different one like McEachern, he rides all night Saturday and all night Sunday in order to lead the choir at an all day country church service, only to be on hand with "clean overalls and shirt" when the mill whistle blows Monday morning. He eschews "meanness" to the extent that he does not even know who the local moonshiner is, and his only friend is an ex-minister who is neglected and

persecuted by the rest of the town. He stumbles on this man's doorstep every time he goes to visit him until, transformed by love and a newly found decision making ability, he is able on one occasion to stride right on in. This portrait is sentimental because it is based on exaggeration and cliché. Unlike the Faulkner of Snopes who was able, as we shall see, to create in V. K. Ratliff a "good" man of many dimensions, a character who gets right up and walks off the page, the implied author of Light in August seems only able to define a healthy lack of aggression in a character by relying on stereotype.

As Slatoff points out,<sup>34</sup> Faulkner allows Byron a brief gain in stature (as he arranges for Lena's lying-in and defies the Mrs. Grundies of Jefferson he stands up straight and has a "new air born somewhere between assurance and defiance" 295). But in the final chapter he is greatly reduced. The furniture dealer, rather a wonderful narrator who brings Ratliff to mind, describes Byron as "the kind of fellow you wouldn't see at first glance if he was alone by himself in the bottom of a empty concrete swimming pool" (469), and says it is impossible to imagine "any woman knowing that they had ever slept with him, let alone having anything to show folks to prove it" (470). He "trots" into the store and, overeager, comes out with so many bags that, little as he is, he can hardly see over them. He is "a durn little cuss" about to "burst out crying" because of sexual frustration. He is not only rejected by Lena, but

hoisted out of the truck by her as if he were a six year old. I submit that in these scenes Byron's creator has castrated him just about as effectively as Percy Grimm castrates Joe Christmas. His thematic role as a man who accepts and involves himself in humanity is seriously undercut. He becomes first and foremost a "little" man, cute and amusing, but ennuch-like and ineffective.

We have seen that the drive for triumph and the need to deny positive feelings play important roles in the guiding consciousness of Light in August. But we have also seen that the canonization of the aggressive protagonist (with whom the implied author seems to identify) is bought with his suffering, with his ultimate assumption of the role of passive victim. And we have seen that various attempts (mostly half-hearted or unsuccessful) are made throughout the novel to portray the importance of positive feelings. What can we hypothesize about the implied author in relation to these conflicting aspects of the novel?

It seems to me that the occasional attempts to espouse non-aggressive values in Light in August is meant to serve the same purpose for the novel as a whole as Joe's "passion" and death serve in relation to his character. By showing Joe's assumption of a self-effacing value system at the end, and by closing the book with Hightower's conversion and the coziness of the furniture dealer's narration, the implied author is attempting to compensate for the intense aggressiveness of the novel as a whole.

As we have seen, Guerard attributes much of the appeal of Faulkner's work to "highly liberated fantasy." It is my view that the central fact about Light in August, its source of appeal, the quality that makes it fairly hum with forbidden energy, is its "highly liberated" use of aggressive fantasy, and its equally liberated use of the fantasies of martyrdom that surround Joe's demise, that glorious ultimate revenge of the victim. Joe may be made to wonder why the blacks in the cabin are "of their brother afraid" (317), Hightower may see at the last moment that he was wrong to neglect his wife, Mrs. Armstid may demonstrate the fundamental generosity of her kind by giving away her egg money, but these moments do not define the essence of Light in August. This is found in the disturbing and vicious chapters on Joe's affair with Joanna Burden, in the portrayal of his stand-off with McEachern, in the descriptions of his violent progress down the "lonely street," in Doc Hine's excruciating narration of his attempts to destroy "God's abomination," in the image of Joe's ascension into heaven on the geyser of "pent black blood" from his wound. These passages are pictures of behavior that have little basis in objective reality, either because the characters involved are driven by their inner dictates rather than by clear perceptions of reality, or because they are the result of the "highly liberated fantasies" of the implied author. Their appeal is not to our reason, or to our admiration for Nobel-Prize-speech sentiment, but to the darker regions of our minds.



This darker region responds also to the portraits of Jason Compson and Anse Bundren, but it is in Light in August and, perhaps, in Sanctuary, that the appeal is most overwhelming. As we shall see in our exploration of The Hamlet the appeal of Faulkner's later work has a different source.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Alfred Kazin, "The Stillness of Light in August," in Faulkner, Robert Penn Warren, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, 1966), p. 161.

<sup>2</sup>Albert J. Fierard, The Triumph of the Novel: Dickens, Dostoevsky, Faulkner (New York, 1976), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>John Lewis Longley, Jr., The Tragic Mask: A Study of Faulkner's Heroes (Chapel Hill, 1963),

<sup>4</sup>For most recent studies see, for example, T. H. Adamowski, "Joe Christmas: The Tyranny of Childhood," Novel, IV (197 ), 240-51; Doreen F. Fowler, "Faith As A Unifying Principle in Faulkner's Light in August," Tennessee Studies in Literature, XXI (1977), 49-57, and for a very successful study of the Oedipal conflict as a possible source for Joe's behavior, see Louise A. Poresky, "Joe Christmas: His Tragedy As Victim," Hartford Studies in Literature, VIII (1976), 209-22.

<sup>5</sup>Karen Horney, Neurosis and Human Growth (New York, 1950), p. 202.

<sup>6</sup>William Faulkner, Light in August (New York, 1972), p. 111. Future references in text.

<sup>7</sup>Hyatt Waggoner, William Faulkner (Kentucky, 1959), p. 103.

<sup>8</sup>Horney, p. 203.

<sup>9</sup>For critics who think Joe's "mixed blood" to be a central question, see for example, Peter Swiggart, The Art of Faulkner's Novels (Austin, 1962), who attributes Joe's pattern of self-destruction to the "moral and social problem of the racially divided South," or Olga Vickery, The Novels of William Faulkner (Louisiana, 1964) who emphasizes Joe's obsession with the white/black dichotomy, or Adamowski, who thinks that Joe's "Negritude" plays an essential role in his development, or Longley who emphasizes Joe's freedom from racial identity as part of his freedom to define himself.

<sup>10</sup>A possible source for Faulkner's notions about middle-aged female sexuality is suggested in Ilse Duso Lind, "Faulkner's Women," in The Maker and the Myth: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, Evans Harrington, Ann J. Abadie, eds. (Jackson, 1978). Lind says that the theories of Louis Berman and Havelock Ellis are responsible for this aspect of the portrayal of Joanna.

<sup>11</sup>Longley, p. 195.

<sup>12</sup>Horney, p. 205.

<sup>13</sup>Horney, p. 207.

<sup>14</sup>Horney, p. 207.

<sup>15</sup>Horney, p. 235.

<sup>16</sup>Waggoner, p. 116.

<sup>17</sup>It is important to note that while Jason and Anse are often given to self-pitying statements with little basis in fact, it is always obvious that we are meant to distance ourselves, to laugh at them for it. Such is not the case here.

<sup>18</sup>For a more mimetically plausible view of the end of a man like Joe, see the description of Jason Compson's trip to Mottstown in the final section of The Sound and the Fury.

<sup>19</sup>See, for example, the writings of Cleanth Brooks, in this case most notably, "The Community and the Pariah," Twentieth Century Interpretations of Light in August (Englewood Cliffs, 1969), pp. 55-70, or, more recently, Sally R. Page, Faulkner's Women (Deland, 1972), or Linda Welshimer Wagner, "Faulkner and (Southern) Women," The South and Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha, Evans Harrington, Ann J. Abadie, eds. (Jackson, 1977), pp. 128-46.

<sup>20</sup>Quoted in Page, p. 143.

<sup>21</sup>The misogyny of Light in August has been much discussed. See, for example, Samuel A. Yorks, "Faulkner's Women: The Peril of Mankind," Arizona Quarterly, XVII (1961), or Jackson W. Heimer, "Faulkner's Misogynous Novel: Light in August," Ball State University Forum, XIV (1973), 11-15, or Leslie A. Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel (New York, 1962), pp. 309-10. Some critics defend Faulkner against charges of misogyny. See for example, Lind, Wagner, Page, cited above.

<sup>22</sup>By the phrase "manipulation of situation" I mean to refer not only to plot, but to other things under the control of the author rather than attributable to objective reality. For example, if an author wishes to depict a prostitute, objective reality requires that he have her sell her sexual favors. Her appearance and behavior can be manipulated to suit his desires or aesthetic purpose.

<sup>23</sup>Guerard, p. 110.

<sup>24</sup>Yorks, p. 120.

<sup>25</sup>Yorks, p. 125.

<sup>26</sup>Longley, p. 197.

<sup>27</sup>Hugh C. Holman, "The Unity of Faulkner's Light in August," PMLA, 73 (1958), p. 163.

<sup>28</sup>Wagner, p. 191.

<sup>29</sup>Vickery, pp. 82-83. Brooks, pp. 64-65.

<sup>30</sup>Yorks, p. 119.

<sup>31</sup>Vickery, p. 33.

<sup>32</sup>Heimer, p. 13.

<sup>33</sup>Walter J. Slatoff makes this point in Quest for Failure: A Study of William Faulkner (Westport, 1972), p. 177.

<sup>34</sup>Slatoff, p. 178.

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 3, 1862. It is a very important document, as it contains the President's annual message to Congress. The letter is written in a formal, dignified style, and it is one of the most important documents in the history of the United States. It is a document that has been read and studied by many generations of Americans, and it is a document that has shaped the course of our nation's history.

2. The second part of the document is a letter from the Secretary of the War Department to the Secretary of the Navy, dated January 10, 1862. It is a very important document, as it contains the Secretary's report on the state of the war. The letter is written in a formal, dignified style, and it is one of the most important documents in the history of the United States. It is a document that has been read and studied by many generations of Americans, and it is a document that has shaped the course of our nation's history.

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## CHAPTER V

### 'HE'S DONE MORE THINGS THAN ANY MAN I KNOW' A MASLOVIAN STUDY OF V. K. RATLIFF AND THE HAMLET

In my studies of As I Lay Dying, The Sound and the Fury, and Light in August, I treated the creation of the novel as a defensive strategy, analyzing characterization and presentation of theme as part of the implied author's "search for glory," a system of defenses designed to protect him from his basic anxiety. In this way I was able to uncover some sources of conflict in these complex and troubling works, all three of which are highly successful realistic novels in terms of their ability to involve us in their characters and situations, but all three of which lack unity and consistency of judgment on the worlds they present. These novels are, ultimately, ambiguous in their meaning and impact because of the "self-alienation" of their implied authors, who attempt to persuade their readers to share their outlooks on the world; outlooks which, given the nature of self-alienation, must embody conflict. In my study of Jason Compson and The Sound and the Fury, I found that Jason, though unquestionably presented as a villain and a very disturbed human being, is allowed to have an impact on the way the reader views the rest of the Compson family. As a representative



of the implied author's repressed aggressive trends, he interferes with the basically self effacing message of the novel. And in my study of Anse Bundren and As I Lay Dying, I found that Anse, too interferes with our response to other characters and themes as he becomes the instrument of his creator's repressed aggressive trends, assaulting our identification and concern with the suffering of the other Bundrens and the things they represent. But it is in Light in August that the most profound conflict appears. In this novel the defensive strategies of the implied author can actually be observed to break down under the pressure of what becomes an open conflict between his dominant self effacing "solution" and his barely repressed aggressive trends. Having allowed these aggressive trends such free play that they virtually take over the novel, the implied author is compelled to quell the anxiety this causes by martyring Joe Christmas, his aggressive alter ego, and allowing him a kind of self-effacing apotheosis. The reader asked to accept this shift in emphasis is confused--the world view embodied in Light in August to this point has been distinctly in the aggressive mode, a far different outlook than the one he is finally asked to accept. In all of these novels, then, the conflict between the author's basically self effacing way of approaching the world, and his strong but repressed aggressive trends has worked against integration and coherence. In the troubled atmosphere of Light in August, we find a

surfacing of the tension that seems to have been brewing in the earlier novels.

Coming to The Hamlet after Light in August, most readers would notice a pronounced change in atmosphere. What was dark and murky is now lighter and more clear, what was tense and conflict ridden is now more relaxed and unified. The contention of this study is that this shift is not only due to a change in subject matter (from the tragic life of a half-breed outcast to the ongoing existence of a varied community), but to a change in the impetus and nature of the creative process itself. While the earlier novels are the products of creating consciousness who make them expressions of their defensive strategies, The Hamlet is the product of a creating consciousness in the process of authentic self realization. It is "fueled" not by the need to erect defensive strategies in order to avoid conflict, but by the desire to express a particular, unique "human nature" through the creation of a fictional world. Freed from the rigid demands of the "search for glory" the self-realizing man is able to use his imagination in order to create works of art that express his true inner nature, and since these works are expressive rather than defensive, they will exhibit a unity and integration not found in works created by a self-alienated consciousness. Such is the case with The Hamlet. By using the theories of Maslow regarding the process self-realization (or "self-actualization")<sup>1</sup> we shall be





able to uncover the "real self" that seeks expression in its creation, and to understand and appreciate its uniqueness in the Faulkner canon as a coherent and positive work.<sup>2</sup>

In my analyses of the earlier novels, I found that in each case the conflict leading to the ambiguity of the novel as a whole centered around the relationship of the implied author to one particular mimetically successful character, and his attempts to draw the reader into that relationship. It is as if the implied author of each work had been carried away by the success of his mimetic portrait, and running along behind him with pencil in hand, as Faulkner would say, found himself indulging trends that he might otherwise have repressed more successfully. In The Hamlet too we find that one character seems to have captured his creator's imagination by his ability to "stand up on his hind legs and cast a shadow," and that this character's nature has been allowed to dominate his world. The characterization of V. K. Ratliff, however, becomes not a vehicle for the expression of repressed trends, but a way to reflect the drive towards self-realization that is responsible for the creation and flavor of the novel as a whole. His relationship to the novel's controlling consciousness is very close--as we shall see, they can almost be said to function in tandem--so that the essence of Ratliff is parallel to the essence of the novel itself. In inviting the reader to participate

in his admiration of and identification with Ratliff, the implied author invites him to join in the uniquely unified and consistent world view embodied by the novel.

Ratliff was probably Faulkner's favorite of his own human creations. He was often heard to remark on the abilities and attractions of this particular emanation of his imagination. "Ratliff is wonderful," he liked to say, "He's done more things than any man I know."<sup>3</sup> In the context of The Hamlet, Ratliff is the object of a good deal of positive rhetoric on the part of the implied author, who seeks to "bounce" the reader into sharing his obvious admiration for the sewing machine salesman. As the novel opens, this rhetoric is very direct (an unusual circumstance indeed in Faulkner's work); the omniscient narrator, whose reliability we never doubt, introduces Ratliff affectionately. He is said to speak in a "pleasant, lazy, equable voice which you did not discern at once to be even more shrewd than humorous."<sup>4</sup> His animals are well treated and "sturdy" (always an important sign of a desirable character in Faulkner); and he himself is neatly dressed, if "tieless." He has a "bland affable ready face," and is an excellent listener--a friendly man, who takes us easily to others as they take to his "pleasant, affable, courteous, anecdotal" personality. He knows everything a man in rural Mississippi should know--what is happening with all of his neighbors, and the name of every "man, mule, and dog within fifty miles" (H, p. 13), not to mention, as we find

out later, the origin and destination of every back road. Later the evaluation of Ratliff becomes less direct. We are not told so overtly to admire his abilities as a shrewd dealer, or his warmth toward and concern for his fellow man, or his easy, self deprecating humor, or his talent for storytelling. Rather, we are allowed to see how important these things are in the world of Frenchman's Bend, and how superior Ratliff is to most of those with whom he comes in contact.

A survey of critical assessments of Ratliff indicates that this rhetoric is successful. Most critics see him as highly admirable. For Joseph Trimmer he is a modern hero in pursuit of "knowing" in the Conradian sense, a uniquely creative man who "welcomes the relativity of knowledge because it allows for the continuously exciting game of reassessment and recreation."<sup>5</sup> He is Warren Beck's "man in motion,"<sup>6</sup> and Benjamin McClelland's "redeemer for modern man."<sup>7</sup> Edwin Moses admires his "passionate humanity,"<sup>8</sup> and just about everybody appreciates his humor and resourcefulness. By using Maslow's theories and descriptions of self-actualization to analyze Ratliff's character in detail, we can offer yet another appreciation of this vividly realized paragon of humanity, and because of the close association between Ratliff's nature and that of the novel itself, we can extend our insights to include an understanding of the "health" and integration of The Hamlet as a whole.

It is Joseph Reed who provides us with the most useful way of viewing Ratliff's relation to the fictional world he inhabits. In his opening description of Ratliff, Reed says, the omniscient narrator of The Hamlet, whom we can identify with the implied author, since we have no reason to doubt his reliability, is essentially describing his own genial, relaxed self, and the introduction of Ratliff signals his "abdication" of control of the novel and, "the orderly transfer of his functions to Ratliff," who then "remains in control for the rest of the novel."<sup>9</sup> Of course this is not literally true; Ratliff is a fictional character and can hardly assume control of anything. But it does provide us with a good analogy for understanding the close connection between Ratliff and The Hamlet. It is as if Ratliff were himself the implied author of The Hamlet, as if the "core of norms and choices" that went into its creating were his, as if the microcosm of Frenchman's Bend were the world seen through his eyes. By alternating our discussion of Ratliff's self-actualizing qualities with discussion of the way those qualities are reflected in The Hamlet as a whole, we can achieve insight into the uniquely life affirming quality of this powerful novel.

The self-realizing person, as my original discussion of Horneyan and Maslovian theory reveals, is more open to the world as it is than are those who are self-alienated. Because he is not plagued with basic anxiety, he is able

to greet the world on its own terms, without the barriers thrown up by the imaginations of those whose insecurity will not allow them to contact life directly. Thus he can see clearly where they might be forced to distort reality, he can feel spontaneously where they might need to repress their true feelings, he can enjoy the workings of his senses when they might need to avoid recognizing sensual signals, and he can appreciate the everyday when they might need to deny or reject the doings of the world associated with the actual self. As we examine Ratliff in detail, we shall find that he is characterized primarily by his easiness and competence in dealing with a reality that forces others to create elaborate and rigid systems of defense. And, as we examine his reflection in The Hamlet, we shall find that although it does not, certainly, ignore the negative aspects of the human condition--it is, after all the story of the triumph of "evil" over "good"--it is full of the sense of human potential. What we find in The Hamlet is not an easy "optimism" to combat the "pessimism" of Faulkner's earlier works, but a new willingness to celebrate the capacities of humankind, whether or not these capacities allow humankind to "prevail," as the speech-making Faulkner would have it.

One of Maslow's primary insights, gleaned from his research on mentally healthy adults, is that self-realizing people have clearer and more efficient perceptions than self-alienated or average people, because "the effects of



wish, desire, prejudice upon perception . . . should be very much less in healthy people than in sick."<sup>10</sup> Since the outer world does not threaten them, they are able to see it for what it is instead of using their imaginations to transform it into something more in line with their needs. In Ratliff we find a character who usually sees things as they are, rather than as he wants or needs to see them, and whose eye for detail gives him a better grasp of what goes on around him than that of the most clairvoyant of Faulkner's madmen. A look at Ratliff's superior perception, coupled with a look at The Hamlet's detailed and unambiguous manner of dealing with its characters and the "realities" of Frenchman's Bend, provides a good starting place for our study of the close connection between Ratliff's nature and the nature of the novel itself.

The most common way to view the plot of The Hamlet is to see Ratliff as humanity's defense against the Snopeses: Faulkner's "Roland," who, he was wont to say in interviews, always shows up when the battle against evil is joined.<sup>11</sup> He does serve this function, and he is able to do so because he sees clearly. Like the self actualizing subjects of Maslow's study, he has an uncommon ability to detect the "spurious, fake, and dishonest,"<sup>12</sup> and to evaluate correctly the natures and motives of his fellow men. From the very beginning of The Hamlet, he provides a counter to the fundamental spuriousness and dishonesty



of Flem Snopes, who, if he does not ever short change his customers, does, with his every action, deny the concept of honorable and open intercourse among human beings. Since Ratliff's perceptions are undistorted, he is much better equipped than any of the other characters to grasp what Flem is up to, but this is not the only advantage that his clear sight gives him in human relationships. He is also able to confront and evaluate the other inhabitants of Frenchman's Bend with an unusual insight and lack of defensiveness. This ability is reflected in The Hamlet itself, where we find a greater willingness to seek out an undefensive understanding of all personality types than we have hitherto encountered in Faulkner's works.

We are introduced to Ratliff's undistorted, undefensive style of seeing and evaluating others in the early scenes in which he talks about and meets with Ab Snopes. Ab, he tells us, is not naturally mean; he is just "soured" by a lifetime of failures, which Ratliff hilariously, if not truthfully, represents by the story of Pat Stamper and the pumped up horse. Ab was, apparently, a close companion of Ratliff's boyhood, and Ratliff has retained an interest in him. But when he takes Ab a bottle of moonshine and meets with surliness and silence, Ratliff responds with gentleness rather than resentment, because he sees clearly enough to understand the source of the rudeness. When he says that he hopes that Ab will do well on his new place, Ab retorts, "What's it to you if I do

or don't?" "Nothing," Ratliff answers, "pleasantly, quietly" (H, p. 49). The situation does not call for resentment--quiet acceptance and the unsentimental kind of concern demonstrated in the stories that Ratliff tells are appropriate ways of greeting the bitterness of a man like Ab. The tone of Ratliff's response is maintained by The Hamlet itself in the face of "soured" characters like Mink, Houston, and Armstid, and this has a lot to do with the novel's ability to sustain a relaxed and easy atmosphere in spite of the presence on its pages of intense suffering and evil doings.

Will Varner says that Ratliff is sometimes a little too smart to suit him (H, p. 22), too smart, one imagines, because the suspect dealings of the Varners are as transparent to him as those of the Snopeses. But, like everyone else in Frenchman's Bend, and like the reader, Varner relies on Ratliff for his understanding of the Snopeses. It is "very likely Ratliff alone" who is not surprised when Flem tops Varner by making him pay for a chaw of tobacco from his own store (H, p. 53). It is also Ratliff who understands why Jody is running the store while Flem has taken on the more important job of weighing the cotton. The other men are puzzled from the beginning about how to view Flem, but through close observation and superior perceptions, Ratliff comes to understand him, and to show us and the others how we should respond to him. The "Spotted Horses" episode is a case in point. While

the other characters allow themselves to be duped by Flem and the redoubtable Buck Hipps into buying useless, even dangerous, animals, Ratliff tells us and them that the best way to avoid this Snopesian scheme is to be humble about one's capacity to resist and absent oneself from the area. "A fellow can dodge a Snopes," he points out, "if he starts lively enough" (H, p. 276). Ratliff knows that Flem's plan is to use the weak perceptions of the other men, whose ability to judge horseflesh is destroyed in this case by their need to prove their masculine abilities to trade shrewdly and handle horses competently, to his own advantage. Ratliff's ability to detect the fake and dishonest in this case saves him some money and aggravation, and provides the reader with a clear view of what is happening. He also provides an evaluation of the episode after it is over, demonstrating that he is able to see that although it is funny, it is not only funny. "That's one way to look at it," he says when Varner describes it as an entertaining interlude,

In fact, it might be a considerable comfort to Bookwright and Quick and Freeman and Eck Snopes and them other new horse-owners if that side of it could be brought to their attention, because the chances are aint none of them thought to look at it in that light yet (H, p. 308).

It is Ratliff also who sees Mrs. Armstid's plight most clearly, tells Flem about it too, for all the good it does. His description of what her life has come to is unsentimental, but evocative. We know from what he says

that Mrs. Armstid is not to be patronized or pitied. She must instead be respected for her dignity and endurance. Such a clear implication concerning how we are to "take" a character is not common in earlier Faulkner.

This comparative lack of ambiguity with regard to the evaluation of characters in The Hamlet extends beyond the presence of Ratliff. Like the healthy perceiver he has created, this implied author seems altogether more willing to commit himself to judgments of characters than the implied author of the earlier novels. Ratliff himself, as we have seen, is admired much more openly than any previous character. The passage that introduces him enumerates his attractive qualities, and, as Reed points out, makes it clear that he will be our "focus and representative,"<sup>13</sup> that, unlike previous characters, he can be relied on for the "right" perspective. And, as Irving Howe says, "The Snopes hoard is etched with a bitter precision."<sup>14</sup> In this case the "precision" stems not only from mimetic skill, but from a clarity regarding the meanings to be attached to Snopesian doings. Flem, for example, remains a "flat" character so that his villainy may be unequivocal. And in the portrayal of Mink the debilitating effects of compulsive aggressiveness are evaluated more clearly than they are in the cases of Jason Compson or Joe Christmas. Mink's headlong pursuit of disaster is presented and evaluated without distortion. In his bizarre marriage, in his encounter with Ratliff, in his ill-fated contretemps

with Houston, in his ultimate fate, we see a consistency in what he does, how it is greeted by the world he inhabits, and how we, as readers, are asked to view it. His life is certainly unfortunate, but, given his nature, its downward spiral is inevitable. We must feel concern for him, but we cannot admire his fatally rigid way of dealing with the world.

The ability of the implied author of The Hamlet to assess his creations openly and undefensively, an ability that is reflected by his portrayal of Ratliff's way of understanding and evaluating his fellow man, is an important part of the "health" of the novel as a whole. But it is no more important than the intense air of reality achieved in the novel through the attention and stature given to the mundane details of human existence, and here, too, Ratliff serves as a reflector of the implied author.

As the narrator of the tales known in other contexts as "Barn Burning" and "Fool About a Horse," that appear at the beginning of The Hamlet, Ratliff sets a high standard for the perception of the details of everyday life in Frenchman's Bend. He sees the things that surround him with the clarity and precision of an Oriental water colorist. Telling Jody Varner about the arrival of the peripatetic Snopes family at the house assigned them by the unfortunate De Spain, Ratliff describes the removal of the Snopes household:

'Soon as the wagon stopped Miz Snopes and the widow got out and commenced to unload. Them two gals aint moved yet, just setting there in them two chairs, in their Sunday clothes chewing sweet gum, till Ab turned around and cussed them outen the wagon to where Miz Snopes and the widow was wrastling with the stove. He druv them out like a pair of heifers just a little too valuable to hit hard with a stick, and then him and Flem set there and watched them two strapping gals take a wore-out broom and a lantern outen the wagon and stand there again till Ab leant out and snicked the nigh one across the stern with the end of the reins' (H, p. 14).

The sweet gum, the wore-out broom, the failure of the men to help, the snick across the stern: this richness of detail is the product of the mind of a gifted perceiver.<sup>15</sup> The scene is a perfectly realized little vignette, as important in its own way as the most dramatic moment in the novel.

Later, in his recounting of the Ab Snopes-Pat Stamper episode, Ratliff's ability as a teller of tall tales is at least matched by his ability to recall and reproduce the details that characterize this day and all such days made up of rural concerns: the sidemeat "plopping and spitting in the kitchen" (H, p. 31), the young boy and the man wasting the afternoon that should have been spent plowing sitting on the fence "just moving enough to keep outen the sun" while admiring Ab's latest trade (a good deal, "a straight stock and a old wore out sorghum mill" that had not even belonged to Ab in exchange for a horse that could at least walk home from Beasley's even if Vynie does call it a yard ornament); the long trip to

town with Ab and Ratliff "walking up every hill that tilted enough to run water offen it" (H, p. 33), to save the horse, or maybe just to save the mule since the horse is "kind of half walking and half riding on the double tree" (H, p. 33) anyway.

The tone of The Hamlet is set by these stories of Ratliff's and, imbued with his spirit and his perceptual gifts, the novel dwells lovingly and with great clarity on the texture of the daily lives of its characters. We see this in the attention paid to food for example: to Eula's cold baked sweet potatoes, to Tull and Bookwright's mammoth breakfast, to Mrs. Varner's "packed shelves and potato cellars and festooned smoke-house rafters" (H, p. 97), to the sardines that I. O.'s mystery wife and her six month old baby share, to the "hot vivid smell of ham" drifting from Mrs. Littlejohn's kitchen, to the meal scraping and hot sweetened water that comprise Mink's diet after he has finished the cold peas and stale coffee, to the ham and hot bread and coffee that he gets in jail, better food than he can afford to eat at home. We know what these characters eat because the implied author has Ratliff's clear sightedness, and his healthy man's concern for and delight in the homely detail. And as readers we enjoy the in-the-know status of one who realizes that cold sweet potatoes may be eaten out of hand for a snack, and that a working man might well eat a half dozen fried eggs along with the rest of his breakfast,

and thus are we "bounced" into sharing the novel's respect for the everyday.

We are also privy to the housekeeping and farming practices that provide the routine occupations of our characters. Mrs. Littlejohn does her wash in a pot set over a fire in her yard; May is a little late to plant; Mink's crop is pitifully stunted because he cannot afford fertilizer; cotton is ginned and weighed in a shack across from Varner's store; Houston's house is almost totally without furniture, and Mrs. Armstid weaves at night in order to buy shoes for her children. We have a great sense of how these people live and spend their days, and, again, our desire to identify ourselves with the knowledgable Ratliff prompts us to care about these homely details.

And in this novel as in no other we are made aware of the animals that are such an important part of the texture of rural life: Ratliff's undersized but sleek and well-kept team; Varner's old white horse with the "sonorous organ tone" and the habit of standing on three legs; Mink's malnourished yearling; the cow Vynie heaves into the wagon; the "gaunt rabbit like mules" owned by the Armstids; the young mules whose reins Tull never should have wrapped around his wrists. There are even animals with starring roles, like Beasley's horse, Ike's cow, the spotted horses, Houston's "magnificent grave blue ticked Walker hound," and the stallion who kills his wife. Just as Ratliff thinks it important to remember the name of every mule and



dog in the area, we are encouraged by the novel's obvious interest in these animals to see them as significant, to appreciate their contribution to the texture of life in Frenchman's Bend.

Like Ratliff himself, The Hamlet reveals an intense respect for the minutiae of human existence, a respect that would not be possible for the self-alienated person, who has to deny the world of the actual. Ratliff, as a healthy man, finds much to appreciate in the undramatic ongoingness of the lives around him, and in this he reflects a concern of the novel itself, which seeks to celebrate human possibilities, even in their homeliest manifestations.

In his work with self actualizing subjects Maslow found that the healthy man's eye is not only keen but "innocent." In talking to people who seemed to be in contact with their real selves, Maslow found that they had an unusual ability to observe things without feeling the desire to apply to them some preconceived cultural notion, and without feeling threatened by the unprecedented or unfamiliar. In The Mansion, characterized like The Town by more direct thematic statement than we find in The Hamlet, Ratliff is given a little speech which indicates that his career sees him as blessed with this kind of "innocence," this pleasure in and acceptance of the unrubricized. Faced with a piece of avant garde (and apparently bawdy) sculpture by Barton Kohl and asked if he is shocked,

Ratliff replies, "Do I have to be shocked and mad at something just because I never seen it before?" He looks at the sculpture for a while and thinks maybe he "recognizes" what some of it is, but then he realizes that recognition is not the important thing:

Because anybody can see and hear and smell and feel and taste what he expected to hear and see and feel and smell and taste, and wont nothing much notice your presence nor miss your lack. So maybe when you can see and feel and smell and hear and taste what you never expected to, and hadn't never even imagined until that moment, maybe that's why Ol Moster picked you out to be one of the ones to be alive (M, p. 173). .

Though he makes no such speeches in The Hamlet (and just as well, too) Ratliff does display the quality he describes here, enjoying the "ambiguous and unstructured" without having to label it, and refusing to be shocked and mad at the unfamiliar. "Innocence" is one of the words used to introduce him in the early pages of The Hamlet. In this context the word seems to refer to a certain wide-eyedness, a certain refusal to take things for granted. Part of the good old boy mentality of many of Faulkner's "peasants" is a tendency to label, and thus to dismiss, groups of people. Jason labels and dismisses women, blacks, stockbrokers, and farmers, in a kind of parody of the conventional wisdom. But Ratliff stands outside the society of Frenchman's Bend, and never shares automatically in its judgments. Something that he "never seen" before, like Eula or the spectacle of Ike and his cow, is the subject of his careful and idiosyncratic

consideration, and is never dismissed with a standard cultural judgment. Women he considers not in a mass, but as individuals. Eula, Mrs. Mink Snopes, Mrs. Armstid, Mrs. Littlejohn, Mrs. Varner: he notices and appreciates the uniqueness of each one, reflecting the novel's remarkably varied and flexible view of mature womanhood, such as is lacking, according to many critics, in earlier Faulkner.

Similarly, the episode involving Ike and his cow strikes the "innocent" Ratliff differently than it does the other men, for whom "stock diddling" is an automatic source of titillation and humor. Ratliff is shocked and mad about Lump's sideshow, not because he has never seen it before, but because he can stand outside his rural culture and see it in a universal context, as a debasement of human love and dignity.

Another aspect of Ratliff's "innocence" is his failure to assume the standard masculine role, or, indeed, any fixed role whatsoever, within the society that surrounds him. His work as a sewing machine salesman leaves him free from obligations to crop or store and puts him in touch with the daily lives of all and sundry. He moves among women and men, rich and poor with equal ease, wearing neither the overalls, which are the standard dress of his companions on the gallery of Varner's store, nor the white shirt and tie favored by those who, like Jody and Flem, want to dress the part of prosperity and

respectability. Rather he wears the "perfectly clean" but faded "neat tieless blue shirts," which, in defiance of society's idea of what constitutes man's work, he makes himself.

The Hamlet, too, wears a faded blue shirt, uniquely fashioned, not the contrived, attention getting outfit of "count no count" or the just folks "overalls" of one of Will Varner's jokes. It does not set itself apart from the culture it portrays, but neither does it participate in its prejudices or habits of mind. It has the "innocence" to see in an over-sized prepubescent blonde all the glory, magnetism, and humor of the eternal feminine, and to make of the story of Mink Snopes not another Caldwellian saga of the victimized dirt farmer, but a unique combination of farce and revenge tragedy.

This cultural "innocence" marks much of Faulkner's work, but none so emphatically as The Hamlet. Perhaps this is why the novel conveys, as Reed says, "a feeling of continuing surprise, not just to us, but to the author."<sup>16</sup> The implied author seems often to be surprised and delighted: by Ratliff himself, by Flem's ability to get around the Varners, by Eula, by Houston's devotion to his Lucy, by the bullet that actually makes its way out of Mink's gun, by Flem's success in duping Ratliff. Like Ratliff, The Hamlet itself seems to enjoy seeing what it did not expect to see.



This openness to surprise is further revealed in the novel's approach to character. Cleanth Brooks speaks of the "compound of irony and wonder"<sup>17</sup> with which The Hamlet approaches its characters. To focus on the "wonder" is to notice how much the authorial consciousness seems to enjoy the uniqueness of his human creations, an enjoyment that has exactly the "tone" of Ratliff's storyteller's enthusiasm for human excesses and idiosyncracies. Warren Beck defines the grotesque as "sheer pleasure that a man should be so markedly himself,"<sup>18</sup> and this is a pleasure luxuriously indulged in by The Hamlet. In this novel many characters are so markedly themselves as to elicit the wonder and enjoyment of all their observers. Will Varner, obviously a favorite with Ratliff and the implied author, rises and breakfasts in the middle of the night only to do nothing whatsoever all day. Mrs. Varner, after years of employing a cook, still cannot believe her capable of the most minor culinary feat. Labove's "incredibly old" grandmother clatters around the house in cleated football shoes and a letter sweater. Mrs. Snopes can see just far enough out of the trap that is her life to name a son Launcelot. Vynie Snopes wants a separator so badly that she trades her only cow for it. Mink Snopes shoots a man with a gun "oiled" with bacon grease, then tries to commit suicide by wedging his neck behind a moving wagon wheel. All of these characters and their doings are the product of the mind of a person who is open to all kinds of human

realities, who enjoys his fellow man and their peculiarities instead of dealing with them defensively. His "wonder" is that "innocent" ability of the self-realizing person to see and enjoy others for what they are, without having to view them through a rigid system of defenses.

Maslow speaks of the "deep feeling of identification, sympathy, and affection," demonstrated by his subjects for the rest of humanity.<sup>19</sup> Though a healthy person is superior to many of his fellow men (in his ability to perceive, to understand and to judge, in his capacity for enjoying that which is not labelled, and in his independence from social pressure), he never condescends. And, as Brooks has noted, the Faulkner of The Hamlet "simply does not condescend to his characters, not even by feeling compassion for them. His interest in his characters goes far beyond modes of condescension."<sup>20</sup> In our observation of Ratliff we see that his dealings with suffering humanity parallel the implied author's approach to the "less fortunate" in The Hamlet as a whole. When Mink Snopes's wife must carry on, attempting to support her family and to endure her husband's plight, Ratliff comes to her aid, feeling for her "a sort of shocked and sober . . . not pity, rather concern," as he watches her cope with the "old agonies: terror, impotence, hope" (H, p. 260). The "old agonies" are the same for all, and Mrs. Snopes's unfortunate condition does not deprive her in Ratliff's eyes of dignity or importance. "Pity" is simply eliminated

as a proper response. Even Ratliff's response to the idiot Ike is one of identification rather than pity. In the face of his own unwitting participation in Flem's victimization of Ike, Ratliff feels "something black . . . , a suffocation, nausea" (H, p. 85). The suffering of another becomes his suffering. When he sees Ike and the cow, their activities transformed by Lump into a carnival act, he feels that "it was as though it were himself inside the stall with the cow, himself looking out of the blasted tongueless face at the row of faces watching him who had been given the wordless passions but not the specious words" (H, p. 196). Similarly, Ratliff's approach to Mrs. Armstid's plight is not to feel pity for her, but to recount for the other men the awesome list of her duties, so as to make clear her stature as a human being, and her right to their respect. His story implies what Maslow would call his "sympathy and affection" for her as a fellow human, but his insistence on not giving her the five dollars himself implies that he assumes, too, her equal capacity to be responsible for herself. His interest in her is strong, but it does not include the fashionable "compassion" which might ameliorate her condition, but at the expense of true human fellowship.

The Hamlet as a whole shares Ratliff's perspective. Wherever human suffering is portrayed in the novel, the the circumstances and technique of its presentation are such as to ask the reader to identify with the sufferer



without condescending. By allowing us to view each character's obsession as if from the inside, the implied author uses a subtle rhetorical device to persuade us to identify with him, to see his suffering as if it were our own. In The Hamlet this is done differently than in The Sound and the Fury, for example, where the fact that we hear Jason's story in his own voice encourages us to grant him fellow-human status. Here stories of the sufferers are told in the third person, but with a sense of participation in the sufferer's perspective. The story of Ike and the cow, presented in the controversial "mock epic" section of "The Long Summer" is a case in point. I see this section as more than a spoof of the pastoral tradition, and certainly as less than a depiction of the ideal love.<sup>21</sup> Rather, it is a treatment of Ike's romance from what would be Ike's point of view, if he were capable of having one; the story is told in what would be Ike's words if he had words, and is given the importance and stature that Ike would give it if he had the power. This is the peak of Ike's existence, and by seeing it as if from his own perspective, we participate in its intensity--to the extent, of course, that such participation is possible.

The obsessions and sufferings of the rest of the characters are approached in much the same way. The extensive and rather exaggeratedly juicy depiction of Eula allows, indeed forces, us to share in what is, objectively speaking, Labove's bizarre obsession with a girl who is

too young even to be called jail bait. We identify with his suffering because we have been "bounced" into an obsession with her ourselves by an implied author who is obviously far from immune to her appeal. The presentation of Mink's case is similar. We are witness to his inevitable decline towards disaster and its causes, but we know so much about the extraordinarily frustrating conditions of his existence, and we have gone through the experience with Houston and the heifer in such painstaking detail that we cannot help but identify with some of his anger and bitterness--even Varner does a little of that. And even though Mink is a little man in every sense of the word, he defies us to patronize or pity him. "I ask you to let me alone," he says to his slimy cousin (H, p. 242). As a bitter, tortured man, much afflicted with the "old agonies," he asks not pity, but a respectful distance, and that is what he gets: from the sheriff, from his creator, and from us. Houston's grief commands the same uncondescending respect and appreciation, and so do Henry Armstid's wretched circumstances.

As with Ike's idyll, which we must be careful not to approach with an excess of solemnity, since it is obviously part of a rural genre whose dominant tone is humorous, the stories of these fellow sufferers contain a leavening of humor that rescues them from the sentimental and promotes the sense of irony lauded by Brooks. Ratliff's sense of humor, another mark of the healthy man, is shared by the

novel as a whole, which asks the reader to leaven his identification with the suffering of others with an occasional laugh at the gap between what is and what ought to be. Maslow describes the humor of his healthy subjects as "unhostile," and "philosophical," the "humor of the real," which "consists in large part of poking fun at human beings in general when they are foolish, or forget their place in the universe, or try to be big when they are actually small."<sup>22</sup> The humor of The Hamlet helps to clarify the novel's perspective on the suffering of its characters. Though, as we have seen, we are encouraged to identify with and respect those who suffer, we are also encouraged to maintain an ironic distance. We are asked to participate in their obsessions, but not in the unrelieved way that we must participate in those of Quentin Compson or Addie Bundren or Joe Christmas. Mrs. Mink Snopes, for example, takes over some of the household chores of Ratliff's nieces and nephews even though her workload is already incredibly heavy. The sacrifice is excessive and unnecessary, and, amusingly, her reward is their "juvenile contempt" for her efforts. Labove's first response to Eula is hilarious in its excessive drama. "Don't leave her here!" he thinks desperately to himself (Eula is about eight at the time). Mink's revenge tragedy becomes blackly humorous as he wrestles with Houston's recalcitrant corpse, "the son of a bitch started coming to pieces on me," he says (H, p. 258). And Mrs.

Armstid's hissing tennis shoes, and her ridiculous assertion that she would know the five dollars that she made by weaving if she saw it, help to keep her martyrdom in perspective.

The tall tale, which Millgate defines as an "essential feature of the novel's mode,"<sup>23</sup> provides another form of humor in The Hamlet, one that is directly parallel to Ratliff's manner of presenting human experience in the early pages of The Hamlet. The tall tale is a form well adapted to the humor of the healthy man, since it exhibits a robust appreciation for the possibilities of the human species at the same time that it mocks our pretensions about our place in the universe, especially when, as in The Hamlet, it is presented in a realistic context, Maslow's subjects find humor in the spectacle of human beings "forgetting their place in the universe" and arrogating to themselves a sort of super human ability to affect events, or "trying to be big when they are actually small," and overestimating their impact on the world. The tall tale is, by its very nature, a story involving people who step outside the bounds of the actual in order to perform some unlikely feat, or present some unlikely spectacle, and in The Hamlet these stories inevitably end with a resounding crunch as the adventurers are forced to come in contact with the world of the real. The impact of the stories is comprised of a combination of admiration for man's ability to reach, and amusement at his failure



to grasp.

As he introduces us to Ab Snopes in the early episodes, Ratliff proves himself a teller of tall tales by his refusal to restrict himself to the literally true, or even to the plausible. Ab's absolute defiance of the man to whom he must, for his livelihood, be subordinate, may be as unlikely as the idea that a horse can be inflated with a bicycle pump, but both episodes celebrate the great resources of human nature at the same time that they highlight amusingly man's vulnerability and his tendency to overstep himself. The Hamlet follows Ratliff's lead in indulging in this kind of tall tale humor. The story of Eula, for example, and of the trials of her brother, who must transport her "mammalian elipses" around Frenchman's Bend have some characteristics of the "tall tale." Eula's sexual appeal is freely and vigorously exaggerated, and so is Jody's agony as the protecting brother. Eula is the Paul Bunyan of female sexuality, a legend created without inhibition. When she eventually gets into trouble and, grotesquely enough, marries Flem, we are introduced in a grimly humorous way to the limits of the power of even the most overwhelming human sensuality. Likewise, the mutual attachment of Lucy Pate and Houston, with its quality of the fated and its Ulysses like period of separation is humorously exaggerated. Lucy has a kind of supernatural magnetism that renders the male Houston helpless to resist in spite of his strenuous efforts to do so. Her

death, while hardly "funny," is ironic. The point of this tall tale is that even the most spiritual and intense human relationship overestimates itself if it thinks that it can be "big" enough to circumvent even the most incidental accident of fate. And the tales found in "The Peasants" have a similar impact and function. The magnificent meanness and unruliness of the spotted horses is hardly within realistic bounds. Certainly the incident of the slit vest is a classic:

The stranger gathered himself then sprang away. As he did so, a second horse slashed at his back, severing his vest from collar to hem down the back exactly as the trick swordsman severs a floating veil with one stroke.

'Sho now,' Quick said. 'But suppose a man dont happen to own a vest' (H, p. 273).

Suppose he don't indeed. The end result of the spotted horses episode is a crunching return to the actual in the form of Henry Armstid's broken leg and Vernon Tull's catastrophic encounter. In the exaggeration of the meanness and wildness of the horses, and the cookie eating Texan's coolness, we find a celebration of the vast possibilities of life on earth, and in the realistic denouement we find a grimly humorous treatment of its limitations.

But, perhaps most importantly, the story of the old Frenchman's Place, with its classic elements--the salted claim, the psychic, the greed maddened participants--is less a realistic view of Flem's ability to con just about anybody, than it is a slightly self-mocking example of

the raconteur's art. Here we find that Ratliff, who is so good at telling stories on others, stories that demonstrate his appreciation for man's capacities at the same time that they mock his pretensions, is caught in such a story himself. As Edwin Moses points out, it is, realistically speaking, highly unlikely that the Ratliff that we know would have been taken in by such a hoax,<sup>24</sup> and other critics have been vastly irritated by the apparent inconsistency in Ratliff's characterization. "No, it will not do," says Irving Howe testily.<sup>25</sup> Actually, this episode has little to do with the realistic side of Ratliff's portrait. It is part of the distinctive self actualizing humor of The Hamlet that he must be hoisted on his own petard in a story that exaggerates man's capacities only in order to mock his pretensions. The final episode of The Hamlet is no more realistic than Eula's extraordinary lethargy or Buck Hipps's desire for cookies, and it has much the same impact and function.

Ratliff has an appreciation for life in general that goes along with his appreciation for his fellow man and his humor. The healthy man, says Maslow, lacks cynicism and staleness, has a "continued freshness of appreciation" that allows him to enjoy life, and never to suffer from the burnt out syndrome.<sup>26</sup> Ratliff enjoys his trade so much, for example, that he pursues it even though he would not have to, since people would be happy to feed him just for the pleasure of having him around. "Shrewd dealing"



brings him a pleasure that "transcends mere profit." He likes the thing for itself. And he loves "retailing" the news that he is always the first to have (H, p. 68). He enjoys the simple bodily pleasures also. It is significant that, unlike the other men of The Hamlet, he takes an active interest in food, not so likely to go without it when circumstances are pressing. Realizing even before he checks the dates on the coins that Flem has tricked him, he makes coffee and a batch of skillet cornbread over the open fire, cooking some bacon to go along with it, and eats with enjoyment while the others continue to dig. And even when he is recovering from his gall bladder operation he finds things to appreciate in the experience of convalescence.

. . . the sheer happiness of being out of bed and moving once more at free will, in the sun and air which men drank and moved in and talked and dealt with one another . . . He did not still feel weak, he was merely luxuriating in that supremely gutful lassitude of convalescence (H, p. 68).

For many the enforced inactivity would be either an annoyance, or an excuse to avoid effort. For Ratliff it is in itself enjoyable.

The Hamlet as a whole has this same appreciation for the small pleasures of life, the same lack of "staleness" that we find in Ratliff. In our discussion of the use of homely detail in the novel, we have noted its loving treatment of the minutiae of human existence. In none of the Faulkner novels studied earlier do we dwell so much on food, for example, or on sex as a pleasure rather than

as an occasion for tortured ambivalence, or as an outlet for aggression. Other simple things, such as fence sitting, or sprawling and chatting in front of Varner's store, or the "blue and drowsy and empty days filled with silence and the smell of burning leaves and woodsmoke" (H, p. 259) that compose the fall before the winter no one will ever forget, are also presented as actively enjoyable.

Along with the healthy person's enjoyment of simple things comes his lack of cynicism about life in general. That Ratliff has a sense of irony is made abundantly clear in the stories he tells, but it does not lead him to develop a cynical philosophy. At least once in the novel he takes exception to what might be considered a classically cynical twentieth century response to the "old agonies." Seeing Ike for the first time, he says, "And yet they tell us we was all made in His image." But Bookwright's reply, "From some of the things I see here and there maybe he was," meets with a reproach from Ratliff, "I dont know as I would believe that even if I knowed it was true" (H, p. 81). Ratliff simply refuses to consider life a tale told by an idiot, and this refusal characterizes The Hamlet as a whole, and accounts for some of the differences in atmosphere between it and the earlier novels considered. The Hamlet is not so self-consciously optimistic as, say, the Nobel Prize speech, but it does present a world in which humane values are prized, and human beings are given dignity and worth.

In the creation of Eula, for example, we find a celebration of fertility, of the ongoingness of the human species, that is absent or more ambiguous in earlier novels. Her attraction is unadulterated and intense, undiluted by the questions that surround the portrayals of Caddy, or Dewey Dell, or Lena.

Human dignity is also affirmed in The Hamlet, albeit in a subtle manner much different from the rather direct attention given it in The Reivers. We hear no speeches about it, but it is embodied throughout the novel: in the character of Ratliff, who carries himself with a calm assuredness, and does not kow tow even to Will Varner, in the respect for Ike's humanity shown by Mrs. Littlejohn and Ratliff, and even by Houston, in Mink's refusal to steal from the man he has so disastrously murdered, in Mrs. Armstid's composure during her encounter with Flem, even in Eula's refusal to call what she is in "trouble."

The value of romantic love is also affirmed by The Hamlet in ways that it is not by the earlier novels. We have the love affair of Lucy and Jack Houston, whose love is rich and life shaping, perhaps the only successful portrayal of a fulfilling relationship between consenting adults in all of Faulkner's work. Strangely enough, the portrayal of Ike's interlude with Houston's cow is also a celebration of the power of love, though a certain lack of earnestness made inevitable by the very nature of the story prevents us from seeing Ike as a white knight. Here



again, as in the treatment of suffering humanity, The Hamlet walks a fine line between the sentimental and the nay saying. The humane value of love as man's salvation and joy is affirmed, but the recognition that love is also a maker of fools saves the affirmation from any hint of sentimentality.

Charity, another form of love, is also affirmed as a value in The Hamlet, in much the same way that it is affirmed by the creation of Dilsey in The Sound and the Fury. It is seen not as an easy solution to the "old agonies," since the objects of charity in both novels are able to benefit little from anyone's assistance, but as an activity that ennobles whoever engages in it, and exemplifies the solidarity and worth of mankind in general. It is not Mrs. Compson, or the girl Quentin, or even Benjy, really, who benefit from Dilsey's care. It is mankind in general who is "washed" in her "blood." In the same way, Ratliff's involvement with Mink's wife cannot save her, but it can serve as a humane gesture, reflecting positively on the quality of life in Jefferson. Mrs. Littlejohn's protection of Ike makes more difference to our view of the Frenchman's Bend community than it does to Ike himself, and the sheriff's suggestion that Mink be given a seat in the shade could hardly have less impact on the obsessed man himself, but it does present the possibility of brotherly love from an unexpected source. In the context of The Hamlet we learn to appreciate such gestures. Like the

birthday cake that Dilsey buys for Benjy, they give off a light which may not illuminate the gloom, but which is in itself beautiful.

According to Maslow, his mentally healthy subjects were invariably found to be "problem-centered rather than ego centered,"<sup>27</sup> and here too Ratliff and the implied author of The Hamlet conform to his description. We can see the significance of this more clearly if we compare Ratliff to our other subjects. As we have observed, Jason Compson is crippled in his dealings with his family and the outside world by his compulsive need to see himself as superior to others. His ego needs leave him wretchedly unable to deal with any problem outside of himself. Anse Bundren, faced with the problem of transporting Addie's body to Jefferson, is more preoccupied with his own misfortune than with the problem itself, and relies a good deal on the effective exercising of his claims to achieve an almost accidental success in solving it. And the conflicts within Joe Christmas's tortured psyche occupy him fully. There is no question of his attempting to deal with external problems.

Ratliff's crusade against what later comes down to be known as Snopesism is evidence of his interest in problems outside of himself. He has a fascination with the Snopeses as a phenomenon, and as a problem that he would like to solve. He demonstrates considerable tenacity when it comes to thinking of solutions to this and other problems, and

he is not averse to making the effort to carry them out. One of his most telling lines is spoken in a conversation with Tull and Bookwright during which he discovers that, while he has been on what you might call sick leave, Flem has begun cheating blacks through usury. "It aint right," says Tull, "But it aint none of our business." "I believe" Ratliff replies, "I would think of something if I lived there" (H, p. 71).

Several times he does think of something, and, though his plans are never entirely successful, they do demonstrate a determination to have an effect on the outside world, to change the direction of circumstance instead of indulging in paranoid tirade, or committing suicide, or expecting his wishes to be magically granted, or striking out violently and irrationally. The goat deal, the raised voice designed to jolt Varner out of his complacency, the plan to separate Ike from his cow, the description of Mrs. Armstid's workday delivered in front of Flem, even the ill-conceived Old Frenchman's Place caper: all are the schemes of a would-be solver of problems.

According to Reed, "power" is the theme of the Snopes trilogy and knowledge is power.<sup>28</sup> In The Hamlet we find that a great deal of emphasis is placed on knowing one's way around, on being able to analyze and propose solutions to problems, on perpetrating the clever deal. It is a novel that looks outward rather than inward, that deals with man as part of a social unit rather than as an





individual psyche, and thus it is a novel that places far more emphasis on problem solving than the earlier, more "psychological" novels. Though, like Ratliff himself, the novel is unable to propose successful solutions to the problems it confronts, like him, it does not turn away from them. From Ab Snopes's battle of wits with De Spain, to Ratliff's misguided attempt to make his fortune and stop Flem, the focus in The Hamlet is on doing; the man to be admired is the man who can use his human ingenuity to deal with the harsh requirements of life in rural Mississippi and to combat evil, with or without success, in the form of Snopesism.

In its vividly conveyed perceptions of reality, its clear judgments, its accepting attitude towards a varied and sometimes difficult collection of humanity, its humor, and its focus on doing rather than on feeling, The Hamlet conforms to Maslow's descriptions of the signs of mental health. Our analysis of the "core of norms and choices" that comprises the essence of the novel, reveals that it is consistent with the drive towards self-realization. The reader comes to accept this "core" and to participate in this healthy drive through his identification with Ratliff, who consistently reveals the qualities and attitudes encouraged and approved of by the novel. The primary implied author-character-reader triangle of The Hamlet is one designed to "bounce" the reader into an attitude about mankind that modern psychology would define as "healthy."



Since the drive towards "health" is, as we have seen, a movement away from conflict and towards integration, The Hamlet is a more unified novel than The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, or Light in August. The implied author's rhetoric is consistent with his mimetic portrayals, and all aspects of the novel--its imagery, its tone, its humor, its choice of subjects, its plot--work together to express a coherent world view. In this novel humanity and the human condition are seen and evaluated from a clear, unchanging perspective, which insists on the appreciation of man's capacities, both large and small, and which offers sympathy for and identification with its difficult, but not necessarily hopeless, plight. In the battle between Flem Snopes and Ratliff and his ragtail minions, Flem emerges the victor, but the whole of The Hamlet works to make us see that there is much to be celebrated and enjoyed even in a world not always designed to suit human needs and preferences.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Maslow uses the latter term, but "self-realization" seems to me to express more clearly the opposite of "self-alienation." Maslow's theories are most usefully set forth in Motivation and Personality (New York, 1970), and Towards a Psychology of Being (New York, 1968).

<sup>2</sup>Faulkner's later novels, The Town, The Mansion, and The Reivers are also "positive," but they are not as coherent, or as "healthy" as The Hamlet.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Michael Millgate, The Achievement of William Faulkner (New York, 1966), p. 196.

<sup>4</sup>William Faulkner, The Hamlet (New York, 1956), p. 12. Subsequent references to this work will appear in the text.

<sup>5</sup>Joseph F. Trimmer, "V. K. Ratliff: A Portrait of the Artist in Motion," Modern Fiction Studies, XX (1954), 452.

<sup>6</sup>Warren Beck, Man in Motion, Faulkner's Trilogy (Madison, 1963).

<sup>7</sup>Benjamin McClelland, "Not Only to Survive, But to Prevail: A Study of William Faulkner's Search for a Redeemer of Modern Man," Dissertation Abstracts, 32:6438A.

<sup>8</sup>Edwin Moses, "Faulkner's The Hamlet: The Passionate Humanity of V. K. Ratliff," Notre Dame English Journal, VIII (1973), 98-109.

<sup>9</sup>Joseph Reed, Faulkner's Narrative (New Haven and London, 1973), p. 223.

<sup>10</sup>Maslow, Motivation, p. 154.

<sup>11</sup>See Faulkner in the University, Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph Blother, eds. (Charlottesville, 1959), p. 204.

<sup>12</sup>Maslow, Motivation, p. 153.

<sup>13</sup>Reed, p. 225.

<sup>14</sup>Irving Howe, William Faulkner (New York, 1962), p. 248.

<sup>15</sup>It is unlikely that Ratliff actually witnesses this scene himself, just as it is unlikely that the Pat Stamper-Ab Snopes horse trade is to be taken as literally true. But the source and impact of Ratliff's detailed imagery

is the same as if he were presented as an all-knowing, "reliable" narrator.

<sup>16</sup>Reed, p. 225.

<sup>17</sup>Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven, 1963), p. 172.

<sup>18</sup>Beck, p. 146.

<sup>19</sup>Maslow, Motivation, p. 165.

<sup>20</sup>Brooks, p. 173.

<sup>21</sup>Joseph Gold in "The Normality of Snopesism: Universal Themes in Faulkner's The Hamlet," in Faulkner: Four Decades of Criticism, Linda Welshimer Wagner, ed. (East Lansing, 1973), is not the only critic to praise Ike's ability to love as the proper "antidote to Snopesism."

<sup>22</sup>Maslow, Motivation, p. 169.

<sup>23</sup>Millgate, p. 186.

<sup>24</sup>Moses, p. 104.

<sup>25</sup>Howe, p. 248.

<sup>26</sup>Maslow, Motivation, p. 163.

<sup>27</sup>Maslow, Motivation, p. 159.

<sup>28</sup>Reed, p. 222.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

The work of William Faulkner is certainly perceived by many as falling in that rather intimidating artistic category which does not invite the appreciation of the casual audience. The originality of his technique, the complexity and ambiguity of his "message" for modern man, the frequent opacity of his prose style, and his bizarre choice of subject matter combine to make his novels seem suitable only for the highly trained reader, whose goal is not pleasure, but exegesis. As avant garde "high art" they seem independent of the realm of common human emotions and responses, existing in a rarefied aesthetic and intellectual atmosphere where only academics dare to tread.

This study has aimed to remove Faulkner, at least temporarily, from this context, maintaining that his work has as much to do with the homely matters of how human beings think and behave in everyday situations as with the fashioning of beautiful vases suitable for kissing,\*

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\*The vase image comes from Faulkner, who likened his pleasure in The Sound and the Fury to that of the Roman artisan who made himself one perfect vase and wore its edges away with kissing.

or the expounding of complex philosophies. By focusing on his mimetic achievement, and on the very human responses of his "writing selves" and their characters and readers, we have sought to see him in the light of a porch sitting teller-of-tales, whose first goal is to elicit strong emotional responses from his auditors, responses which stem from their participation in the human content of his stories. The application of psychological theory has been designed to explore and explain the pleasure, confusion, exasperation, laughter, satisfaction, and anger that make up these reactions, and, in the process, to evaluate the nature of the tale teller's achievement. The study aims to make Faulkner's work more accessible to all readers. Critics of the psychological method often express the fear that psychological interpretation inhibits reader response by interposing an alien structure on the literary experience. But my goal has been to draw the reader closer to the sources of his natural enjoyment of and interest in fiction, and thus to intensify his pleasure. By examining Faulkner's characters, and the second selves that he created to rule over their novelistic worlds, as if they were human, and by speculating about their relationship to the real human beings who read about them, the study seeks to humanize the literary experience itself.

We have treated Jason Compson, Anse Bundren, Joe Christmas and V. K. Ratliff as if the mimetic illusion were entirely successful, as if they were in fact real

people, neighbors, perhaps, whose lives we have been able to watch closely and measure against a theoretical structure designed to explain human motivation and behavior. In doing so we have, if nothing else, extended our contact with them, multiplied our excuses for discussing them, increased our pleasurable sense of having participated in their lives. But the approach also has analytical rewards specifically related to the individual characterizations studied. The application of Third Force theory has offered us a means of assessing and evaluating the characters, of increasing our understanding of their individual human natures and our ability to measure their success as mimetic creations. Overall, the study is intended to present a detailed, appreciative, and revealing consideration of the art of characterization.

The chapter on Jason Compson, for example, seeks to treat not just his heavily ironic section of the novel, but virtually every detail that we are given about his life, attempting to review and account for every revelation of his human nature made by the novel. In doing so, it intends to offer not only a new awareness of the richness of his portrayal, but an extension of our pleasurable sense that we are in close contact with a fellow human being. Particularly by giving us a way to talk about Jason's childhood, a subject that is pretty much irrelevant to the central concerns of The Sound and the Fury, but is, nevertheless, very interesting in itself, our approach



enriches and increases our involvement in Jason's humanity in a way that a more traditional approach, intent on proving the novel's "unity," for example, could not do. In addition, Horney's detailed theories about the arrogant vindictive personality give us a standard by which to analyze Jason's nature and to measure the consistency and "reality" of his portrait. By matching the events of his life and his emotional responses to Horney's account, we are able to trace the origins of his unpleasant personality, to understand the sources of his reaction to a given situation, and to appreciate his vividness, his similarity to a man that we might meet in real life. We can no longer see him simplistically, as a mere villain, or a mere vehicle for his creator's irony, nor can we make the more drastic error of considering him as a spokesman for "sanity" or common sense. We are instead forced to notice that he is a complicated human being, and to take his complexity into account when considering him in relation to the novel as a whole.

The study of Anse offers slightly different rewards in this category. While Jason is generally regarded as a fully realized character, though his nature may not be fully understood, Anse is usually dealt with as if he were a flat comic type. A particular contribution of the psychological approach in his case is that it allows us to apprehend what is, in fact, Anse's considerable complexity, in this way intensifying our pleasurable illusion that he is



real. The application of Horney's concept of the "neurotic claim" seems to open up our view of him. No longer merely the butt of the joke, he becomes a human being with understandable motives and a characteristic way of interacting with others. In addition, as we analyze and evaluate these motives and interactions, we become acquainted with his considerable limitations, and our view of him is clarified. When we understand the implications of what he says and does, we cannot make the mistakes made by other critics in their assessments of his accomplishments. It becomes clear that it is inappropriate to praise Anse for guiding his family through fire and water, or for showing tenacity in the face of adversity, since these achievements are merely the by-products of his self alienation. Nor can we ignore the capacity for inflicting real damage on others that is consequent on his total self involvement. By seeing Anse as a character quite able to stand up on his hind legs and cast a shadow, and by examining carefully the nature of the shadow that he casts, we increase our pleasure in and comprehension of an important part of the human experience of As I Lay Dying.

The chapter on Joe Christmas is also much concerned with attempting to bring to our attention, and thus help us to enjoy, the vast amount of information that the novel provides about his character. But the primary advantage of our approach in his case is that it helps us work towards a clear interpretation of the nature of his personality.

He is the most complex of our subjects, his motives and reactions often so obscure and bizarre that the reader's ability to see him as a human being in whose life it would be possible to participate is inhibited. By offering explanations for Joe's perverse rejection of all human warmth, his violent reactions, and his strangely joyful surrender, Horneyan theory helps to clarify our view of his character, and allows us to appreciate the reality of his portrait in human terms. It also prevents us from labelling him inappropriately. He cannot, for example, be a modern existential hero if his actions are compulsive rather than willed.

Finally, the study attempts to extend and elucidate Faulkner's appealing and vivid portrait of V. K. Ratliff through the application of Maslovian theory. By giving us a detailed way to talk about Ratliff's success as a human being, the concept of self-actualization both extends our pleasurable sense that we are participating in his life, and gives us a positive standard by which we may judge his "goodness" and "health." Ratliff is not actually presented as a traditional "main" character in The Hamlet, and for this reason he may fail to get the notice he deserves. The action of the novel cannot really be said to revolve around him and his concerns; rather he floats in and out of the narrative, his brush with death dealt with almost incidentally, his involvement in many of the climactic moments that of sideliners rather than participants. The



use of Maslovian theory to examine his character in detail has the effect of highlighting it, of bringing to our attention a rather elusive, but highly successful mimetic achievement. It also seeks to resolve questions about his desirability as a human being, which stem from our lack of a positive standard for judging human worth. Some critics have faulted Ratliff for being too materialistic or not "loving" enough, for example, while others, as we have seen, insist that he is totally admirable. In other words, his effect on readers has not been consistent. By offering a modern "guide and model" for evaluating human motives and behavior, Maslovian theory allows us to see that Ratliff is, in fact, as good a man as his creator would have us believe him to be.

But the goals of this study are not only related to its treatment of individual characters. Third Force theory, applied to the concept of the implied author and his interaction with characters and readers, has aided in our attempts to open up the creative process for our examination, and it has helped to reveal much about the human dynamics of the novels studied.

The studies of The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying reveal a common pattern. In each novel the repressed aggressive trends of the implied author lead to ambiguity. This ambiguity is found in the impact of both novels, and is the result of the conflicting signals of the implied author's rhetoric, his intrapsychic conflicts brought into

play by his interactions with his own creations. In both novels the implied author gives the reader two messages. The dominant and more overt message is that one should empathize with the sensitive and/or helpless victims who are usually considered the novel's most "sympathetic" characters, making an effort to understand and care about their sometimes obscure, complex, and difficult ways of viewing the world, and resenting those who persecute them. The secondary and more covert message is that these characters and their concerns are laughable, and that it is he who comes out on top, not he who sacrifices, with whom we should empathize. Though a study of the critical literature on these novels turns up hints that other readers have felt the impact of the "covert messages" that I describe, none have had a systematic way of dealing with them, and thus they have gone largely unrecognized and undiscussed. By offering a way of understanding these conflicts, Horneyan theory makes an interesting, and perhaps very important contribution to Faulkner studies.

The study of Light in August, deals not in subtle distinctions and qualifications, but in radical strategies and intense conflicts. The use of Horneyan theory in this case leads to the rather startling assertion that the impact of Light in August is related closely to the implied author's almost voluptuous indulgence of aggressive trends (in which he encourages the reader to share), and to his attempts to disguise and compensate for this indulgence

in various ways, including the martyrdom of Joe Christmas. We find that there is a profound split between the "compensating" aspect of the implied author, which praises and asks our approval of the world view implied by the Lena-Byron-Hightower plot, and which sees Joe Christmas as a helpless victim of his environment, and his "indulging" aspect, which leads him to use every covert rhetorical device at his command to persuade the reader to accept a world view parallel to that of the arrogant-vindictive Joe Christmas. Ultimately we are able to see that the power of the novel resides in its ability to fulfill aggressive desires in disguised form, and this explains much about the peculiarly violent and muddy atmosphere of the novel, and the difficulty critics have had in agreeing on its significance.

The study of The Hamlet, on the other hand, asserts that the power of that novel lies not in its exploitation of conflict, but in its movement toward the unity that results from the pursuit of healthy self realization. There is an enormous difference between the perspective implied by Light in August and that implied by The Hamlet which Third Force theory allows us to account for systematically. In doing so, it reveals the unique and significant achievement of The Hamlet. Here the implied author-character-reader "triangle" is free of ambiguity and conflict. The "healthy" outlook of the implied author is reflected in the portrayal of Ratliff and urged on the reader by its



incorporation into the rhetoric, and even the technique, of the novel itself. As a result, the novel is devoid of the thrill that accompanies participation in forbidden fantasy, and without the perversely enjoyable humor that stems from our covert association with Jason Compson and Anse Bundren, but it is possessed of an openness to human possibilities and, indeed, to life in general, that is unique in the Faulkner canon.

This particular psychological approach, then, seeks to bring us new insight into the achievements of Faulkner's most creative period: the highly effective realistic characterizations, the rhetorical power that transcends the objective mode and allows the reader to participate in some complex and fascinating perspectives, the creation of varied and vivid worlds for our delighted observation. Though three of the novels studied are revealed to be "flawed" because of their relationship to the defensive strategies of their creators, each study has sought to offer an appreciation and explanation of the impact of the novel concerned, rather than to dismiss it because of the "imperfections" that psychological analysis reveals. This study seeks to use modern psychological theory in a positive and illuminating way, as a means of dealing with the often neglected human element of the novelistic experience.

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