

The Influence and Subversion of the Southern Folk Tradition
in the Novels of William Faulkner

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Introduction

Faulkner as a Folk Writer

In the introductory essay to *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino argues that William Faulkner owes a literary debt to the writing of the Southwestern humorists, utilising their techniques in a 'homely and sobersided' manner, and emphasises that William Faulkner's works are the most effective way in which '[Southwestern humor] shows signs of living forever.'¹ This thesis demonstrates that it is important to study Faulkner as a folklorist, specifically with regard to the Southern folk and humour tradition, and how a folk influence enhances or creates tension with his influences from Modernist techniques such as the stream-of-consciousness and the internal monologue. Faulkner's folk influence, in a greater sense, shows the artistic and cultural relevance of the Southern tradition, and its continuing influence, and also the most powerful manifestation of Sherwood Anderson's advice that he draw on the culture he knows best to give his works a distinctive style. *Soldier's Pay* and *Mosquitoes* were derivative, influenced by the Romantic and Decadent traditions, while Faulkner's later work moved into the style and thematic content of his and Anderson's own 'yarn-swapping.' This thesis demonstrates that Faulkner 'continued to champion certain ideas of antebellum Southern humorists'² and draws on the Southern storytelling tradition, and then examines two folk themes in isolation, the trickster and the grotesque. Indeed, Chapter One begins a discussion of Flem Snopes as a trickster, which forms the climactic argument in the second chapter. Five authors are examined in detail to provide context. George Washington Harris and Augustus Baldwin Longstreet are the primary humorists in whom can be traced the refined narrator (used to satisfy the Whig audience of the time) giving way to the vernacular voice. Mark Twain exemplifies the vernacular voice becoming dominant, while Charles Chesnutt provides a context for the African American tradition. Chapter Three, which concerns the theme of the grotesque, also examines Erskine Caldwell. Eight Faulkner novels are examined, along with one short story, 'A Rose for Emily.' *As I Lay Dying*, *The Hamlet* and *Light in August* are the most thematically applicable texts, discussed in all three chapters, whilst *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!* inform the first chapter in very different ways. Chapter Two also addresses *Go Down*,

¹ Ed Piacentino, 'Intersecting Paths: The Humor of the Old Southwest as Intertext' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.12

² Jan Whitt, 'American Life is Rich in Lunacy: The Unsettling Social Commentary of 'The Beverly Hillbillies' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.236

Moses and The Town, and the third chapter culminates in an examination of Faulkner's darkest novel, *Sanctuary*.

Folk Culture in Faulkner's Novels

Faulkner's is a world in which, in Richard Dorson's words, 'men met to drink, fraternise and yarn,'³ so the first chapter demonstrates how Faulkner develops this oral culture. He admires the way Harris' mountain man Sut Lovingood 'had no illusions about himself,'⁴ and reflects such honesty in characters such as V.K. Ratliff. His too is a world in which people, in Richard Gray's words, 'pass the day in talk . . . creating folk memory.' This thesis does not, however, give equal analysis to Faulkner and his preceding writers; rather the aim will be to provide a folk and cross-cultural context. This thesis then demonstrates that Faulkner incorporates, develops or rejects these former writers, how he surpasses them, and why.

Walter Blair argues that the Southern tradition differs from its 'British antecedents' due to its influence from the folk tradition and the oral narrative, marked by, in Carl Jung's words, a 'vivacity and ease of expression.'⁵ The idea of a general 'folk culture,' however, an all-encompassing, homogenous culture with no distinctive traits which distinguish specific narrative traditions, is far too simplistic. One also cannot simply say Faulkner has a place within one tradition, or even that he treats one of the chosen themes identically throughout his novels. However, Eric Sundquist argues that in place of the words 'folk culture' one might also use "'vernacular culture' or even 'slave culture.'⁶ One cannot truly examine the folk qualities of any author without examining how their work shows what Henry Louis Gates, Jr. refers to as 'signifying'; a 'dialogue' between the two cultures. At its inception, this thesis intended to examine the influence of the African-American vernacular tradition on Faulkner's novels, drawing on his early storytelling experience from his black nurse, Caroline Barr. Instead, it examines his synthesis of the black and white folk traditions. Faulkner's role as a southern folklorist is therefore even stronger; an interracial influence emphasises

³ Richard Dorson, 'ch.1: New England Storytelling' in *Jonathan Draws the Long Bow* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1946)p.4

⁴ Walter Blair, 'A Man's Voice, Speaking: A Continuum in American Humor' in *Essays on American Humor: Blair Through the Ages* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1993), p.51

⁵ Quoted in Ruth D. Weston, 'Barry Hannah's 'High Lonesome' Humor: New Voices for Old Grotesqueries' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.183

⁶ Eric Sundquist, preface to *The Hammers of Creation: Folk Culture in Modern African-American Fiction* (The University of Georgia Press: Athens and London 1992), p.xi

a greater immersion in the entirety of a culture in which, as W.J. Cash notes, in the South 'rhetoric is of course dear to the heart of the simple man . . . oratory . . . flourishes wherever he foregathers.'⁷ This thesis demonstrates how this 'simple man' – as Faulkner often argued himself to be – was enriched not only by the rhetoric, but also the themes of folk traditions which preceded him, and the figures and voices that feature in such a tradition. Sandra K.D. Stahl outlines how 'literature is viewed as a potential record or source for folklore,'⁸ and Faulkner remains a powerful record of the influence of the Southern Humorists and African-American writers, as well as developing them to their respective literary potential. In this way, Faulkner practises what Richard Dorson calls the 'identify and interpret' formula, and Jacques Derrida's idea that 'every script is a script of another script.'⁹ Likewise, Walter Blair argues there are folk influences in two of Faulkner's most powerfully Modernist novels, *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*.

There is, of course, a distinct difference between the two traditions. Constance Rourke points out that while members of the white folk tradition, particularly its tricksters, rebel against society, the rebellious elements of the black tradition are 'cryptic and submerged.' Chapter Two argues these definitions are too simplistic, and that Faulkner, in Theresa M. Towner's words, '[extends] the reach of the writers'¹⁰ who precede him. Carvel Collins observed that 'whether or not [Faulkner] . . . has borrowed from . . . Longstreet and the other Old Southwestern humorists, he has been exposed to the remains of the experiences to which they were exposed'¹¹; Faulkner is an equally distinct product of folk culture. Ironically, however, Winifred Morgan notes that although scholarship has been written on how 'works of African-American literature and other traditions have 'spoken' to each other, little has been written specifically about the influence [of the black tradition] on the humor of the Old Southwest,'¹² or on Faulkner himself. Morgan argues that 'spelling out' the links has posed a challenge, but has herself established links between black and white tricksters, and this thesis examines how Faulkner contradicts these. Flem Snopes, for example, is a silent figure who

⁷ W.J. Cash, 'Of the Man at the Center' in *The Mind of the South* [1941] (New York: Vintage 1991), p.51

⁸ Sandra K.D. Stahl, 'Studying Folklore and American Literature' in *Handbook of American Folklore*, Richard Dorson, ed. (Indiana University Press: Bloomington 1983), p.422

⁹ Quoted in Ed Piacentino, 'Intersecting Paths: The Humor of the Old Southwest as Intertext' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.8

¹⁰ Theresa M. Towner, 'Al Jackson, Ernest V. Trueblood and Mr. Faulkner, a Member in Good Standing of the Ancient and Gentle Profession of Letters' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.40

¹¹ *Ibid.* p.39

¹² Winifred Morgan, 'Signifying: The African-American Trickster and the Humor of the Old Southwest' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.210

contradicts the 'linguistic excess' that Morgan argues is characteristic of both roles. Flem is also what David Minter calls a 'joyless trader,' concerned simply with profit and corrupting the communal nature of rituals like horse trading, given that 'one thing . . . [Faulkner] did cherish about the folk tradition was talk.'¹³ Likewise, while Morgan argues that white tricksters struggle to win while black tricksters struggle for survival, this thesis demonstrates such definitions are too simplistic and do not reflect the developing use of the theme in Chesnutt, let alone Faulkner; successive development of the black trickster's use of trickery for personal gain made them a less passive figure.

The Interracial Dialogue

Ralph Ellison argues the black voice was 'co-creator of the language that Mark Twain raised to the level of literary eloquence.'¹⁴ Shelley Fisher Fishkin acknowledges Mark Twain's debt to the Southwestern humorists, but her book *Was Huck Black?: Mark Twain and African-American Voices* argues Twain also has an African-American influence as well as being 'unabashed and hyperbolic in his idealization of backwoods folks'¹⁵ and thus is an important influence in this study. Just as Faulkner was first introduced to the storytelling culture by Caroline Barr, Fishkin argues Twain's narrative voice owes much to 'Uncle Dan'l,' his own uncle's slave. Fishkin writes Twain 'helped open American literature to the multicultural polyphony that is its birthright and special strength,'¹⁶ and brings the power of the individual voice to the mainstream, which Faulkner develops in *Absalom, Absalom!* Twain, like Faulkner, occupies a place beyond the refined or raucous simplicity of the Southwestern humorists, while Faulkner himself develops the vernacular tradition beyond simply an interracial overlap. The first and second chapters of this thesis demonstrate Twain to be the author who begins the transition from the judging tone of Longstreet or the anarchy of Harris to provide a sense of conscience to the folk tradition; Twain also develops what Fishkin called the 'lyrical and exuberant energy of vernacular speech'¹⁷ to sustain an entire novel in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

¹³ Richard Gray, 'ch.3: Rewriting the Homeplace' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.162

¹⁴ Shelley Fisher Fishkin, Introduction to *Was Huck Black?: Mark Twain and African-American Voices* (Oxford University Press: New York, Oxford 1993), p.4

¹⁵ Jan Whitt, 'American Life is Rich in Lunacy: The Unsettling Social Commentary of The Beverly Hillbillies' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.232

¹⁶ Shelley Fisher Fishkin, Introduction to *Was Huck Black?: Mark Twain and African-American Voices* (Oxford University Press: New York, Oxford 1993), p.3

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p.5

Twain brings the 'outlaw vernacular of Huck forward'¹⁸ to create what Sandra K.D. Stahl calls the 'eye-dialect' tradition, the representation of natural speech, emphasising Bakhtin's idea that the novel should be primarily concerned with 'the speaking person and his discourse.'¹⁹ Faulkner himself called Twain 'the father of American literature'; there is therefore a possible influence and, by extension, a debt to the black tradition. Malcolm Cowley observed Faulkner's own narrative voice was likewise influenced by 'kitchen dialogues between the black cook and her amiable husband; on Saturday afternoon gossip in Courthouse Square'²⁰ and described Faulkner as 'fascinated by country people and country ways.'

Ed Piacentino argues Twain to be the most evident 'beneficiary' of the Southwestern humour tradition, which may be true. However, this thesis argues that Faulkner develops the tradition in the most inventive and powerful way, a specific example of the cross-cultural links Piacentino outlines. Little examination exists, however, of how Faulkner uses the stream of consciousness to create a 'folk inner narrative' as he does with Jason Compson's section in *The Sound and the Fury* or Dewey Dell's in *As I Lay Dying*. Likewise, Dewey Dell and Rosa Coldfield represent another development and subversion of the folk archetype, that of the female storyteller. There is foregrounding for the female storyteller and trickster in Chesnut, once again linking the black and white traditions; the voice is one of the only symbols of power available to marginalised people. As Winifred Morgan puts it, the black and white traditions 'listened' to each other, each having what Henry Louis Gates referred to as a 'signifying' influence on the other, since it is in the African-American tradition that 'women do win and not . . . through the manipulative use of their sexuality.'²¹ Faulkner 'uses the confidence man as an essential ingredient of [his] comedy,'²² and while he creates no instances black female tricksters, characters such as Addie Bundren represent a 'confidence woman,' a subversion of Winifred Morgan's image of the trickster as 'male and . . . surprisingly macho,' converting the brash bragging culture into a new 'silent trickster.' The 'black and white' definitions are just that, far too simplistic,

¹⁸ Henry Nash Smith, 'ch.6: An Object Lesson in Democracy' in *Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer* [1962] (Atheneum: New York 1974), p.141

¹⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel' in *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press 1981), p.332

²⁰ Quoted in Don H. Doyle, Introduction to *Faulkner's County: The Historical Roots of Yoknapatawpha* (The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill and London 2001), p.14

²¹ Winifred Morgan, 'Signifying: The African-American Trickster and the Humor of the Old Southwest' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.216

²² Sarah Gordon, 'Not such High-Falutin' Company: Flannery O' Connor's Southern Folk' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006) p.79

and the folk tradition is a fruitful source for development and subversion, which is represented in Faulkner.

Regarding the Further Contextual Framework of the Thesis

The Creoles: George Washington Cable

Several writers are discussed in this thesis for contextual information. George Washington Cable's *Old Creole Days*, for example, relates in significant ways. He is not necessarily applicable to the framework of the thesis, but still he examines several myths of the New Orleans Creole tradition and shows, in a general sense, many themes in common with Faulkner's writing. The story 'Madame Delphine' deals with similar themes of ancestry and miscegenation to those which Faulkner addresses in *Light in August*. Like Calvin Burden, Cable's Capitaine Lemaitre takes a fierce pride in his French blood, while Cable's Creoles speak in what resembles an African-American dialect, as the following passage shows:

A lady sez to me to-day: 'Pere Jerome, 'ow dat is a dreadful fool dat 'e gone at de coas' of Cuba to be one corsair. Ain't it?' 'Ah Madame,' I sez, "'tis a terrible. I 'ope de good God will fo'give me an' you fo' dat.'²³

This speech resembles the black diction demonstrated in later discussion of Zora Neale Hurston and the black vernacular of Chesnutt's conjure tales, but Cable's work fits less comfortably within this thesis, since his themes are more sociological than directly 'folk influenced.' Likewise, Cable features powerful storytellers, but his intermingling of urban European cultures did not fit within the more rural frameworks within which this thesis works. He also makes powerful use of the frame narrative to represent how the vernacular speech becomes dominant when in dialogue with refined sentiment, which this thesis discusses only in passing regarding Longstreet and George Washington Harris. The following passage from the opening of Cable's 'Café Des Exiles' seems reflective of this:

That which in 1835 – I think he said thirty five – was a reality in the Rue Burgundy – I think he said Burgundy – is now but a reminiscence. Yet so vividly was its story told me . . . the old Café Des Exiles appears before my eye . . . and I doubt not I see it just as it was in the old

²³ George Washington Cable, 'Madame Delphine' in *Old Creole Days* [1879] (Pelican Publishing Company: Louisiana 1991), p.14

times . . . An antiquated story-and-a-half Creole cottage sitting right down on the banquette, as do the Choctaw squaws who sell bay and sassafras . . . an ancient willow . . . partly hides the discolored stucco . . . as if the old café was . . . disrobing for its execution.²⁴

The passage opens in the manner of a story being told to a listener, with pauses and admissions in gaps in the teller's knowledge, but also uses diction too refined to be the vernacular speech we would associate with common Southern townspeople. However, Cable's story opens with the appearance of an oral narrative and highlights the unreliable nature of passing information through such channels. The speaker admits being unable to remember either the exact time or location of the events they recount; they admit themselves their account is merely 'reminiscence,' subject to inaccuracies and, as the opening chapter of this thesis states, deliberate revisions to serve an agenda. Furthermore, Cable rarely gives his storytellers opportunity to speak in their own voice, and simply states the power of their vernacular without examples; conversely, this thesis demonstrates Tony Tanner's argument that 'the elegant educated narrator is all but banished from the book by the extraordinary vernacular hero.'²⁵

Cable also acknowledges the prevalence of the culture of gossip. In 'Jean-Ah Poquelin,' the reclusive eponymous character becomes the subject of talk and speculation in his community, accused of violence and witchcraft; although Cable does not express this gossip in the dialogic sense we see later in Faulkner. He does, however, recognise the danger of 'hideous nursery fictions,' so an introductory discussion of Cable foregrounds the discussion in Chapter One of how a community based in gossip is largely defined by its enemy; W.J. Cash outlines that in a Southern community, talk becomes 'not only a passion but a primary standard of judgment.' As they speculate over Poquelin, Cable tells us 'the common people began to hate him,' saying they would rather meet 'a bear robbed of her whelps' than Poquelin on the street. The animosity directed towards such a recluse serves as a foreground for Thomas Sutpen, and represents the construction of an identity for those a community knows nothing about. Faulkner's communities level far more extreme threats towards the outsider, since Poquelin is threatened only with being tarred and feathered, not lynched. Cable does, however, emphasise the flaws in the culture of gossip, since he reveals that Poquelin remained reclusive to hide his leprous brother, and is a character of far more 'self-forgetful goodness' than those who

²⁴ George Washington Cable, 'Café Des Exiles' in *Old Creole Days* [1879] (Pelican Publishing Company: Louisiana 1991), p.85

²⁵ Tony Tanner, 'ch.6: The Doctors of the Wilderness' in *The Reign of Wonder: Naivety and Reality in American Literature* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, London, New York, Melbourne 1965), p.101

gossiped about him. Such misinformation, and the community's willingness to act on it, takes on a deadly significance in *Light in August*.

The Flush Times: Joseph Glover Baldwin

Like Longstreet, Joseph Glover Baldwin also represents the themes and styles of the conservative society this thesis has rejected; both Longstreet and Baldwin 'learned their trade from . . . British satirists and considered themselves superiors of the rough frontier folk.'²⁶ Constance Rourke notes that politically, Longstreet and Baldwin intended a 'drastic criticism of Jacksonian democracy,'²⁷ in which 'men of a generally coarser kind [came] . . . generally to the front, men of the finer . . . type gradually [lost] control,'²⁸ which both authors found threatening. In the introduction to *The Flush Times of Alabama and the Mississippi*, Baldwin offers apologies for the 'imperfections' of his work, by which he means the coarseness of the men he represents. He, like Longstreet, is concerned with containing the frontier within a refined frame narrative. Baldwin argues it would be impossible to attribute a 'leading vice,' to the rambunctious titular attorney of his story 'Ovid Bolus, Esq.', since he regards Bolus as a vulgar threat, as Longstreet does his horse traders or the violent men of Georgia; Baldwin refers to Bolus' 'lingual recklessness' as if the bragging culture represented the savage and the untamed. Though Bolus is supposedly such a powerful speaker, Baldwin rarely allows the character to speak for himself, as might, say, Mark Twain, instead spending much of the opening of the story simply telling his readers of Bolus' potential for 'lying.' Like Longstreet, Baldwin clearly has some admiration for such a man, if only a begrudging one, but determines to maintain narrative distance from the 'folk' community. Baldwin claims to understand the need to avoid a narrator being too 'fastidious,' yet, even when he tries to praise Bolus' lying, he does so by encapsulating Bolus' voice within his own; it is doubly ironic that Bolus often makes himself the hero of his 'romantic exploits,' since within this narrative he has no opportunity to actually speak of these exploits himself. Conversely, in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Rosa Coldfield's powerful rhetoric allows her to take control of the story of her life which has previously contained suppression and romantic disappointment, and raise it to the stuff of folk legend. Even Simon Suggs, Baldwin's most famous folk character, is presented in the framework of an epistolary story, with a refined editor

²⁶ Ruth D. Weston, 'Barry Hannah's 'High Lonesome' Humor: New Voices for Old Grotesqueries' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.185

²⁷ Constance Rourke, 'ch.1: Corn-Cobs Twist Your Hair' in *American Humor: A Study of the National Character* (New York Review Books 1931), p.29

²⁸ W.J. Cash, 'Of Easing Tensions – And Certain Quiet Years' in *The Mind of the South* [1941] (New York: Vintage 1991), p.192

corresponding with Suggs who asks him to send a 'daguerrotype.' Suggs' response draws an immediate contrast and expresses the vibrancy of vernacular speech even in the context of writing:

As to my doggertype I can't send it there aint any doggertype man about here now. There never was but one, and he tried his mershine on Jemmy O . . . and Jem was so mortal ugly it bust his mershine all to pieces . . . and liked ter killed the man that ingeenered the wurks.²⁹

Suggs' writing uses the same compelling vernacular as Sut Lovingood, but it is harder for his voice to command attention without an immediate dialogue to act as a foil for his speech. Despite his scorn for 'book-larnin,' Suggs is himself a lawyer, and so has ingratiated himself within the 'respectable' Southern upper classes and is distanced from the working class democracy the folk tradition represents. In the opening chapter, this thesis examines a speech from Pap Finn which exemplifies the vernacular and prejudices of one of the folk community's most ignorant representations, with no refined observing narrator or attempt at sophisticated language. Twain represents a development from Baldwin into the vernacular taking precedence, whilst Baldwin's characters such as Suggs have less opportunity to articulate themselves. This is doubly significant, since Suggs is presented as being a swindling trickster, a role traditionally characterised by powerful vernacular speech, as with Sut Lovingood or Twain's Duke and Dauphin. Baldwin's character Cave Burton, a renowned trickster and 'slang-whanger,' actually keels over dead from the power of his own rhetoric, but Baldwin does not illustrate the rhetoric to his reader, and this thesis states an author truly within the folk tradition must celebrate his great talkers, as Faulkner does V.K. Ratliff and Rosa Coldfield.

The African American Tradition: The Hidden Trickster in Joel Chandler Harris

Constance Rourke says that the black folk tradition was '[a fount] of secret wisdom . . . dropping hints of something – a crime, a punishment, a fate – too deep for words.'³⁰ Despite being a white writer, Joel Chandler Harris draws on the African-American tradition in the Uncle Remus tales, specifically the black trickster, and exemplifies the interracial influence this thesis discusses. Brer Rabbit is relevant to the African-American idea of the 'weakest and sharpest of all animals' using cunning to defeat a stronger opponent, but within the context of animal stories the idea can be

²⁹ Joseph Glover Baldwin, Simon Suggs Jr., Esq.; A Legal Biography' in *The Flush Times of Alabama and Mississippi: A Series of Sketches* [1853] (Bibliobazaar: Marston Gate, Great Britain 2008), p.118

³⁰ Constance Rourke, Introduction to *American Humor: A Study of the National Character* (New York Review Books 1931), p.xvii

hidden within the 'dialect of the cotton plantations.' Conversely, however, Harris' trickster was often only trying to survive, as was the tradition in black folklore. Thus Chesnutt informs the main body of this thesis more powerfully, since the wily former slave Uncle Julius, and the invested self-interest contained within his narratives, develops the black trickster in a far more subversive way. Likewise, the black storyteller Uncle Remus remembers the slavery days as 'laughin' times,' and while Brer Rabbit may represent a clever black trickster, there is no direct attempt to subvert 'social superiors.' This is in contrast to Chesnutt's stories, since Julius' conjure tales often direct the plantation's Northern owners away from the advantageous ventures he pursues.

Brer Rabbit, like a black slave, is in a world where stronger elements want to kill and suppress him, and both represent what Ralph Ellison called the "smart man playing dumb" as a weak man who knows the nature of his oppressor's weaknesses.³¹ The idea of the trickster as underdog stands in contrast to the white tradition, where, in Richard Dorson's words, the focus was on 'strong men' such as Davy Crockett or Mike Fink. The tradition moves from what Blair called the 'folk gods and giants' to the underdogs, subverting the folk culture in keeping with Toni Morrison's dictum that American folk writing, indeed all American writing, must be examined 'for the impact the Afro-American presence has had on the work.'³² Harris' story 'The Wonderful Tar-Baby,' for example, immediately draws on a disparaging image of black people, but also on how a symbolically 'black' trickster must use cunning to protect himself from being literally immobilised by a stronger oppressor. Brer Fox even criticises the captive rabbit for acting 'boss er de whole gang,' almost as if Brer Rabbit were an 'uppity' slave. And, like a slave, Brer Rabbit is aware of the sadism of his oppressors, and exploits Brer Fox's cruelty for his escape. Knowing Brer Fox, the symbolic 'massa,' will want to torture him in the worst way possible, Brer Rabbit begs, 'I don't keer w'at you do wid me, Brer Fox . . . so you don't fling me in dat brier-patch.'³³ Brer Fox, thinking this is Brer Rabbit's worst fear, does so, and allows the rabbit to escape. Yet, as with Chesnutt's conjure tales, such stories are only fantasy and escapism, and few slaves had the physical means to subvert their masters; in Eugene Genovese's words, slaveowners, and the whites who came after them, 'could not help contributing to their slave's

³¹ Eugene D. Genovese, 'De Big Times' in *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage 1976), p.582

³² Shelley Fisher Fishkin, Introduction to *Was Huck Black?: Mark Twain and African-American Voices* (Oxford University Press: New York, Oxford 1993), p.9

³³ Joel Chandler Harris, 'The Wonderful Tar Baby' in *The Complete Tales of Uncle Remus: Joel Chandler Harris*, Richard Chase, ed., [1955] (Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1999), p.12

creative survival³⁴ that is, fantasising about escape from their inhumane existence. It has been refreshing to discover how powerfully the traditions could overlap and how the African-American tradition of survival is subverted into the pursuit of personal gain in the tricksters of both Chesnutt and Faulkner.

'Speak Yourself Into Being': Zora Neale Hurston

Despite drawing on black folklore, Harris was still a white Southerner, and his dialect differs from an author such as Zora Neale Hurston. Hurston spent her adult life in Florida, but her 'project was to create a literary language informed by the perspective as well as the poetry of rural black Southerners.'³⁵ Her writing evokes the folk-poetry of the black community and is a useful secondary source regarding African American folk culture, since 'the poetry [she] . . . passes on through Janie is black, oral and Southern,'³⁶ encompassing three elements of the folk community this thesis discusses. Joel Chandler Harris claims that the individual narrative serves as an assurance of 'independence and strength,' and just as George Washington Harris immerses himself in the white folk voice, so Hurston did the black voice. While Faulkner has only one prominent conduit to the black folk tradition through Caroline Barr, and was outside the black tradition looking in, Hurston draws on the black folk memory in which she herself was immersed. She takes black writing far beyond simply the plantation tradition, while still recognising the empowering significance of folklore and storytelling, the 'indomitable resilience of the imagination' which, this thesis argues, is a significant tool for the vulnerable elements of both black and white society. Furthermore, she outlines the black tradition as one which 'swapped stories' in the same manner as the white, albeit with very different intentions. Hurston describes folklore as a kind of 'quiet resistance,' a quality also present in Rosa Coldfield's storytelling and even some of the actions of Joe Christmas (whom, as this thesis shows, serves to blur the lines of black and white folk figures, as does Lucas Beauchamp).

³⁴ Eugene D. Genovese, Preface to *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage 1976), p.xvi

³⁵ Cheryl A. Wall, 'Women of the Harlem Renaissance' in *The Cambridge Companion to African American Women's Literature*, Angelyn Mitchell and Danille K. Taylor, ed., (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2009), p.47

³⁶ Bernard W. Bell, 'ch.4: The Harlem Renaissance and the Search for New Modes of Narrative' in *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition* (University of Massachusetts Press: Amherst 1987), p.127

Just as Charles Chesnutt claims he 'found it unconscionable to ignore moral questions or the spectacle of people in society,'³⁷ Hurston uses the storytelling culture to articulate the cruelty black people suffer, such as the following extract regarding the slave John:

Ole John, he already rich, he didn't have to work . . . so he went to drivin' hawse and buggy for Massa. And when nobody wasn't wid him, John would let his grandma ride in Massa's buggy. Dey tole ole Massa 'bout it and he said . . . 'de first time I ketch her in it, Ah'm gointer kill her' . . . Pretty soon some whitefolks tole Massa dat John was takin' his gran'ma to town in his buggy . . . so ole Massa come out dere and cut John's gran'ma's th'out.³⁸

Immediately we have the subversive nature of slaves, looking for any small advantage over their master even if it is only riding in his property, and conversely the fury of their master at the flouting of his authority. The tale also shows the the danger under which they live, illustrating a system which keeps an entire race of people suppressed and constantly in danger of violence; any active subversion can cost them their life, as it can Faulknerian characters such as Lucas Beauchamp or Joe Christmas. The white humorists, conversely, often used tricksters who commit acts of violence or otherwise upset the stable environment in the interest of self-gain or simply the fun of trickery. John decides to trick his master as a means of revenge, once again subverting archetypes through which revenge is relegated to the motivation of the white trickster. John also draws on the white trickster's tradition of spectacle, fooling people into thinking his horse can talk and charging his audience to watch. Like Brer Fox, John's master is both greedy and gullible, and asks John if his own horse would talk should he cut his own grandmother's throat. The master is foolish enough to do so, and, once he realises his mistake, tries to drown John, an action which echoes Brer Fox (emphasising such tales as within the black tradition) but with a far darker significance. Having been released by a toad, John exploits his master's greed by convincing him that he earned the money from his horse trick simply by allowing people to throw him into the river. As a result, the master allows John to drown him in the river; greed proves his undoing, as it does in the Brer Rabbit stories. Hurston's folktales, however, are more effective, and less coded than Harris'; although like Chesnutt's they still include fantastical elements such as the toad. Her storyteller - named Julius - is commended for telling an 'over-average lie.' Yet the stories are not frivolous, as in Baldwin, they are an insight into a damaged

³⁷ Bernard W. Bell, Conclusion to *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition* (University of Massachusetts Press: Amherst 1987), p.340-1

³⁸ Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* [1935] (Harper and Row Publishers inc.: New York 1990), p.44

consciousness due to past mistreatment, 'both terrifying and a source of mirth.'³⁹ Eugene Genovese reasons that in reality, the superstition of conjure only gave slaves power over their fellow slaves, which is why it took on such a powerful role in fantastical stories. This thesis has examines how Faulkner, too, used storytelling and the subversive trickster figure as a means of expression for the repressed.

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Cheryl A. Wall argues that Janie Crawford's 'quest for identity depends on her ability to speak herself into being.'⁴⁰ As she researched folklore, Hurston noticed that women were 'denied access to the pulpit and the porch, the privileged states of storytelling and . . . denied the chance of self-definition,'⁴¹ as true of Janie as it is Rosa Coldfield. Yet, in Genovese's black trickster manner, Janie learns words are 'potent weapons for social control or liberation,' and takes part in 'mouth almighty.' The first chapter of this thesis argues the power of the culture of gossip, and the damage it can cause. To counter this, one must tell one's own story in order to control the fabrications and lies.

Hurston argues the 'oldest human longing' is self-revelation; Janie knows the gossips do not care which 'bone they gnaw on' as long as they can subvert the story to 'sound like evil.'⁴² Again, this thesis demonstrates the darker significance the culture of talk assigns to its defined 'enemy.' Janie, however, is able to use 'talking back' as a means to assert her independence, and criticises her first husband, Logan Killicks, for suggesting he has done her a favour by marrying her - by virtue of which she should obey him - telling him 'you'se mad 'cause Ah'm tellin' yuh whut you already knowed.'(p.42) In other words, power comes from crafting the existing events into one's own narrative, as is so for many of Faulkner's characters. Likewise, Joe Starks refuses to allow Janie a voice when he becomes mayor, saying 'mah wife don't know nothin' 'bout no speech-makin'.' (p.57) Rather, he thinks his wife can only be elevated by his 'big voice'; even the local gossips remark Janie 'sho don't talk much.' (p.67) Ironically, Hurston says Janie often thinks up powerful tall-tales to tell when she listens to the porch talk, emphasising her suppressed potential for verbal power.

³⁹ Eugene D. Genovese, 'Origins of the Folk Religion' in *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage 1976), p.218

⁴⁰ Cheryl A. Wall, 'Women of the Harlem Renaissance' in *The Cambridge Companion to African-American Women's Literature*, Angelyn Mitchell and Danille K. Taylor, ed., (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2009), p.46

⁴¹ Richard Gray, 'ch.4: making it new: the emergence of modern American literature 1900-1945' in *A History of American Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 2004), p.514

⁴² Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* [1937] (Virago Press: Brettenham House, Lancaster Place, London 1986), p.8 (subsequent references in the text)

After years of abuse and criticism, Janie finally speaks back to Joe for attacking her age and appearance, saying 'stop mixin' up mah doings wid mah looks,' (p.105) and articulates the folk poem which follows:

Naw, Ah ain't no young gal no mo' but . . . ah'm a woman every inch of me, and Ah know it. Dat's uh whole lot more'n *you* kin say. You big-bellies round here and put out a lot of brag, but 'tain't nothin' to it but yo' big voice. Humph! Talkin' bout *me* lookin' old! When you pull down yo' britches, you look lak de change uh life. (p.106)

Janie's speech draws applause from onlookers, as did Longstreet's (white, male) horse traders, with the character Sam Watson crying 'Great God from Zion . . . y'all really playin' de dozens tuhnight.' (p.106) Unlike Julius, Janie, addressing other black people, does not have to hide her feelings in symbols or myths, and holds her audience captive just as Rosa Coldfield does Quentin Compson. Later, as Joe dies, Janie asserts herself one last time, telling him that, contrary to the doctor's words, 'you got tuh die, and yuh can't live.' (p.114) Janie continues to tell Joe that, despite being married to her for twenty years, he has taken no time to know her. His refusal to listen to others has cost him both their relationship and his life, since he refused to listen to the doctor's advice which might have healed him.

Deductions of the Thesis

This thesis' examination of Longstreet shows the refined sentiment he and Baldwin were writing, and their narrative distance from the folk community. It demonstrates how Twain and Chesnutt made the vernacular character central to their writing, and Faulkner developed such characters to even greater potential. Faulkner uses his characters inner thoughts to create not just a vernacular culture, but a vernacular consciousness, which may have been influenced by black and white folk traditions. Its examination of Hurston and far more detailed discussion of Chesnutt argue the power of storytelling and vernacular speech to give voice to the downtrodden. This thesis examines in detail how Rosa uses this inventive power, and her reasons for doing so. While Hurston provided a secondary folklore source, Chesnutt is the predominant African-American source. It is he who shows the subversive power of black trickery against the power of whites, as the second chapter demonstrates with regard to *Light in August* and *Go Down Moses*. Chapter Two also discusses female tricksters, influenced by both Hurston and Chesnutt, in the figure of Addie Bundren; linking and subverting the two racial traditions, but also arguing that tricksters are developed, or corrupted, in a

modern sociological sense in the figure of Flem Snopes. Chapter Three argues that Chesnutt introduces the psychological grotesque in his tales of the mental suffering of the slaves, developing the themes of white authors such as Harris or Caldwell, who largely present the theme in a detached, humorous way. Faulkner, this thesis argues, imbues characters such as Temple Drake or Gail Hightower with complexity by providing insight into their damaged psyches and making them more three-dimensional psychological grotesques. Ultimately, whether Faulkner develops folk themes through the stream-of-consciousness and examination of the inner psyche, or the influence of business models of the modern era on the culture of trade and trickery, he represents a synthesis between the black and white folk tradition, and emphasises the interconnected nature of both, and their continuing relevance.

Chapter One

William Faulkner and the Storytelling Culture

The Role of Voice in Fiction

In *The Life of William Faulkner*, Richard Gray argues Faulkner celebrates his own culture in which ‘Southerners love to talk because . . . oratory is our heritage.’⁴³ Faulkner therefore tried to incorporate such a sense of the speaking voice in his own writing, since in his view ‘the novel is for the ear.’⁴⁴ It is through voice, Gray argues, and drawing on the oral culture, that Faulkner is able to create an ‘imaginative empathy.’⁴⁵ This chapter discusses the culture from which Faulkner drew such ideas, the role of the speaking voice in fiction, and how Faulkner develops this culture through use of the internal monologue and the recreation of the past in narrative form.

Mikhail Bakhtin champions the power of voice, reasoning that without investing our utterances with our own subjective intentions an utterance can never be truly our own, but rather remains ‘half someone else’s,’ since we would effectively simply be restating their intention. However, the discourses we hear are not passive, but actively trying to influence us; Bakhtin argues:

As soon as a critical interanimation of languages began to occur in the consciousness . . . as soon as it became clear that these were not only various different languages but even internally variegated languages, that the ideological systems and approaches to the world that were indissolubly connected with these languages contradicted each other . . . then the inviolability and predetermined quality of these languages came to an end, and the necessity of actively choosing one’s orientation among them began.⁴⁶

The dominant discourse in a text is not necessarily that which the author intended. Rather this stratification occurs largely with respect to the voice which monopolises the attention of the

⁴³ Richard Gray, ‘ch.1: Fictions of History: An Approach to Faulkner’ in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.3

⁴⁴ Richard Gray, ‘ch.4: Of Past and Present Conflicts’ in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.179

⁴⁵ Richard Gray, ‘ch.2: Faulkner the Apprentice’ in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.101

⁴⁶ Quoted in Richard Gray, ‘ch.5: Public Faces and Private Places’ in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.296

reader. Bakhtin refers to this technique as 'pseudo-objective motivation,'⁴⁷ the author concealing his own opinions and instead articulating what would be the opinion of his characters. The reader must be wary of the influence of the dominant discourse, which has been established as having its own agenda and often power to influence the beliefs or actions of others. Storytellers, Bakhtin argues, are 'carriers of a particular verbal-ideological linguistic belief system, with a particular point of view on the world . . . with particular value judgments and intonations.'⁴⁸ As a result, the novelist, or the teller, knows their discourse is open to dispute and must be concerned with 'purifying, championing and defending' its own validity: 'for this discourse cannot forget or ignore . . . the heteroglossia that surrounds it.'⁴⁹ Bakhtin's emphasises the personal narrative as self-definition, and the importance of the 'speaking voice.'

In a Southern context, Theresa M. Towner recognises the use of 'multiple narrators and different linguistic strategies'⁵⁰ in Southern literature which reflects Bakhtin's idea of competing discourses and intentions, all trying to command the attention of the reader. George Washington Harris often provides a listener named George to emphasise the vernacular power of Sut Lovingood, since George's voice all but disappears except for passive interjections.⁵¹ Carvel Collins argues Faulkner's work is inextricable from the humorist context since 'whether or not [Faulkner] has borrowed from . . . Southwestern humorists, he has been exposed to the remainder of the experiences to which they were exposed.'⁵² In the elaborate oral narrative of *Absalom, Absalom!* Thomas Sutpen is increasingly obscured and revealed as the characters circle back to provide their own accounts of his life,⁵³ in a utilisation of 'the southwestern humor tradition of multiple narrators

⁴⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel' in *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Michael Holquist, ed. Carol Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press 1981), p.305

⁴⁸ Ibid.p.312

⁴⁹ Ibid.p.332

⁵⁰ Theresa M. Towner, 'Al Jackson, Ernest V. Trueblood and Mr. Faulkner, a Member in Good Standing of the Ancient and Gentle Profession of Letters' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.47

⁵¹ Towner also argues that Faulkner '[depends] upon and [extends] the reach of writers working in America's earliest kind of native humor.' (Piacentino, p.40)

⁵² Theresa M. Towner, 'Al Jackson, Ernest V. Trueblood and Mr. Faulkner, a Member in Good Standing of the Ancient and Gentle Profession of Letters' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.40

⁵³ Daniel Hoffman noted *Absalom, Absalom* used 'The delaying tactics of the common folktale,' (Piacentino, p.40)

with different linguistic strategies . . . and stretchers at somebody else's expense.'⁵⁴ Yet the accounts of Sutpen reveal a considerable amount about the four narrators who construct his story, as has been discussed in the final section of this chapter.

The Uses of Vernacular Culture and Storytelling in the Southwestern Humorists

Augustus Baldwin Longstreet stands in marked contrast to the vernacular characters featured within his stories. Frank W. Shelton says that:

Longstreet may reveal a kind of sneaking admiration for the vitality of the life of the frontier, but, through the use of a cultivated narrator and the contrast of that narrator's elevated language with the dialect used by the low characters, Longstreet retains a distance and a detachment from, and finally a disapproval of, the kind of life he describes.⁵⁵

Certainly, Longstreet's language seems to support this quotation, if we consider the following passage which opens 'The Horse-Swap':

During the session of the Supreme Court, in the village of _ . . . I observed a young man riding up and down the street, as I supposed, in a violent passion. He galloped this way, then that, and then the other; spurred his horse to one group of citizens, then to another, then dashed off at half speed, as if fleeing from danger . . . while he was performing these various evolutions, he cursed, swore, whooped, screamed, and tossed himself in every attitude which man could assume on horseback.⁵⁶

The introduction refers to Rourke's recognition of the threat to refined society Longstreet perceived in 'Jacksonian democracy.' As a result Longstreet uses a refined, educated speaker to distance himself from the frontier and '[nullify] its challenging energies.'⁵⁷ The speaker is possibly a lawyer, from his elevated diction; note, for example, he 'observed' the rider rather than simply

⁵⁴ Theresa M. Towner, 'Al Jackson, Ernest V. Trueblood and Mr. Faulkner, a Member in Good Standing of the Ancient and Gentle Profession of Letters' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.47

⁵⁵ Frank W. Shelton, 'George Washington Harris and Harry Crews' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.120

⁵⁶ Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, 'The Horse Swap' in *Georgia Scenes, Characters, Incidents & c., in the First Half Century of the Republic [1875]* (Bibliobazaar: Marston Gate, Great Britain 2009), p.23 (subsequent references in the text)

⁵⁷ Tony Tanner, 'ch.6: The Doctors of the Wilderness' in *The Reign of Wonder: Naivety and Reality in American Literature* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, London, New York, Melbourne 1965), p.98

claiming to 'see' him. A character in a novel, Bakhtin reasons, 'always has . . . a zone of his own, his own sphere of influence one the authorial context surrounding him,' and Longstreet seems to intend his narrator's voice to be the dominant discourse, while the rider's cursing and whooping seem intended to present him as uncouth and undesirable. Bakhtin argued that every utterance exists within a system of 'living heteroglossia,' yet they do not co-exist passively. Instead, all utterances utilise others, and 'the word acknowledges . . . another word . . . only as the neutral word of language, as the word of no one in particular, as simply the potential for speech,' and possibly the potential for one's discourse to influence the other. This discourse would be required to defend its 'particular way of viewing the world . . . that strives for a certain social significance.'⁵⁸ Despite Longstreet's wish for the narrator to be the prominent voice, the trader Yellow-Blossom's vernacular boast 'I'm the boy . . . perhaps a *leetle*, jist a *leetle*, of the best man at a horse-swap that ever trod shoe-leather,' (p.24) with its evocation of the travelling hustler, adds a far more dynamic voice in contrast to the narrator's diction. The distinctive tone of Blossom's voice, Bakhtin reasons, is the 'character zone,' 'the field of action for a character's voice, encroaching in one way or another on the author's voice,'⁵⁹ particularly when a sentimental narrator attempts, often unsuccessfully, for his discourse to supercede that of a vernacular character. George Hovis argues attention is always drawn away from the 'civilised East' and towards 'the main narrator, whose home is the frontier.' Hovis' terminology is important; though Blossom, for example, is not the narrator of 'The Horse Swap,' he becomes its 'central voice' through his own lyrical vibrancy. Longstreet may well have intended his narrator to be the desirable discourse, but the refined diction appears stiff and stunted in contrast to Blossom's 'loosely-strung poetry' and when, as Bakhtin argues, 'consciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity of *having to choose a language*,'⁶⁰ it is Blossom to whom it is drawn. However, Blossom's speech still fulfills the role of what Bakhtin called 'individual language,' one discourse outside the desirable social norm, while the narrator emphasises the desirable 'unitary language.' Thus the dominance of Blossom's vernacular becomes all the more ironic. The voice of the narrator seems to change from simply disapproving to actively didactic when he observes the sore on Bullet's back, remarking 'my heart sickened at the sight, and I felt that the brute who had been riding him in that situation deserved the halter.' (p.30) Longstreet's message seems to emphasise men of the frontier as cruel and brutish, and only worthy of attention if accounts of their actions are mediated

⁵⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel' in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press 1981), p.333

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p.316

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p.295

through the view of a more conservative narrator; perhaps as an attempt to excuse the ‘sneaking admiration’ for them. The same is true of Longstreet’s ‘The Fight,’ in which a refined narrator once again provides the frame narrative for two southern braggarts:

Neither had the least difficulty in determining the point by the most natural and irresistible deductions *a priori*; and though, by the same course of reasoning, they arrived at directly opposite conclusions, neither felt its confidence in the least shaken by this circumstance. The upper battalion swore ‘that Billy only wanted one lick at him to knock his heart, liver and lights out of him; and if he got two at him, he’d knock him into a cocked hat.’⁶¹

In a way, Longstreet has incorporated the Southern bragging tradition in this passage, yet in another has distanced himself even further from his characters, since the vernacular characters do not even speak for themselves – as they do in ‘The Horse-Swap.’ Rather their words are entirely reported through the voice of the narrator, thus giving the undesirable characters no platform to express discourse of their own; we could hardly, for example, expect one of the fighters to use a term like ‘a priori.’ As a result, the significance of the available narrator appears somewhat diminished.

Conversely, the following passage from George Washington Harris’ ‘Ole Skissim’s Middle boy’ is noteworthy:

When I were a little over half-grown, had sprouted my tail-feathers and were beginnin’ to crow, there were a-livin’ in my neighborhood a dreadful fat, mean, lazy boy ‘bout my age. He were the middle son of a ole lark, name Skissim, who tinkered onto ole clocks and spinnin wheels, ate lye hominy, and exhorted at meetin for a livin while this middle son of his’n did the sleepin for the whole family . . . I hadn’t found out then, certainly, that I were a natural-born durned fool. I sorta suspicioned it, but I still had hopes. So I were fool enough to think I were smart enough to break him from snoozin *all* the time.⁶²

⁶¹ Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, ‘The Fight’ in *Georgia Scenes, Characters, Incidents & c., in the First Half Century of the Republic* [1875] (Bibliobazaar: Marston Gate, Great Britain 2009), p.54

⁶² George Washington Harris, ‘Ole Skissim’s Middle Boy’ in *Sut Lovingood* (New York: Grove Press 1954), p.18

Bakhtin says the author uses the 'common language,' 'sometimes abruptly exposing its inadequacy to its object and sometimes . . . becoming one with it, directly forcing it to reverberate with his own 'truth,' which occurs when the author completely merges his own voice with the common view.'⁶³ Bakhtin refers to this latter as 'pseudo-objective motivation,' the author concealing his own opinions and instead articulating what would be the socially acceptable opinion of his characters. Bakhtin refers to adoption of the character's outlook as the 'character zone,' 'the field of action for a character's voice, encroaching in one way or another on the author's voice,'⁶⁴ Longstreet, with his refined distance from his characters, may be an example of an attempt to emphasise their undesirability, albeit a futile one, while Harris, who uses no external narrator and allows the vernacular to become dominant, exemplifies the 'wild boisterousness of the backlandsman at play.'⁶⁵ From the opening of the passage, 'when I were' where Longstreet would most likely have said 'when I was,' we are treated to Sut Lovingood's unrefined and uneducated diction; Sut's description of his formative years in which he 'began to crow' places him within the Southern tradition of 'roarers' and vernacular heroes. He is also something of a tall-tale teller, given to stretching the truth to give his account more vibrancy, such as his description of sprouting tail feathers. His account continues in a loosely-strung poetic ramble, his long lists of adjectives further emphasising the Skissim boy's negative attributes with vitality a more refined narrator might have eschewed. Indeed, Sut's diction not only evokes a clear image of his people, but also his time, the 'ole clocks and spinnin wheels,' the 'lye hominy,' all contribute to a greater lyrical tapestry. Furthermore, Harris' informal style is evident when Sut breaks off from his narrative to consider the significance of the time, before he discovered himself a 'durned fool.' By contrast, the more conservative Longstreet does not allow his vernacular characters to describe themselves with self mockery; rather such criticism would be provided by the detached narrator. Sut therefore seems somewhat more self-assertive in the very fact that he articulates his own criticism.

It is in Mark Twain, however, that the vernacular voice exerts its most powerful influence. While Sut occasionally converses with the more refined George, Twain dispenses with any frame narrative and celebrates Huck's 'outlaw vernacular' as if we are instantly hearing a vernacular tale: 'You don't know about me, without you having read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom*

⁶³ Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel' in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press 1981), p.302

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p.316

⁶⁵ W.J. Cash, 'Of an Ideal and Conflict' in *The Mind of the South* [1941] (New York: Vintage 1991), p.72

Sawyer, but that ain't no matter.⁶⁶ Twain in fact edited this opening from 'you will not know about me' and 'you do not know about me' into its final form, editing out any unrealistic eloquence and instead capturing what Marianne Moore called the 'accuracy of the vernacular.'⁶⁷ Indeed, Twain's notice that 'Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot will be shot,' (p.1) emphasises a desire that his novel resemble the immediacy of a spoken narrative rather than a refined plot. While Huck's vernacular is not quite as accentuated as Harris', he is symbolic of not only the shift from Longstreet's finer sentiment to a new vernacular Southern literature, but also the inherent untrustworthiness of the teller; Huck has unintentionally said that since we as readers know nothing about him, he has the ability to tell us whatever account of the events he wishes. Huck admits himself that the account of Tom Sawyer is 'mostly true, with some stretchers,' yet still 'the voice of the outlaw speaks with exclusive authority.'⁶⁸ However, Twain extends the potential of the vernacular as a tool to provide revelatory statements about his characters, examining such aspects within what may appear simply prose poetry. For example, consider the following passage from *Pap Finn*:

Call this a govment! Why, just look at it and see what its like! Here's the law a-standing ready to take a man's son away from him – a man's own son, which he had had all the trouble and all the anxiety and all the expense of raising! . . . The law backs that old Judge Thatcher up and helps him keep me out o' my property. Here's what the law does. The law takes a man worth six thousand dollars and up'ards, and jams him into an old trap of a cabin like this, and lets him go round in clothes that ain't fitten for a hog. They call that a govment! A man can't get his rights in a govment like this . . . yes, and I *told* 'em so; I told old Judge Thatcher so to his face. Lots of 'em heard me, and they can tell what I said . . . I says, look at my hat – if you call it a hat – but the lid raises up and the rest of it goes down till it's below my chin . . . like my head was shoved up through a jint o' stove-pipe. Look at it, says I – such a hat for me to wear – one of the wealthiest men in this town, if I could get my rights. (p.28)

⁶⁶ Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* [1884] (Harper Press: London 2010), p.3 (subsequent references in the text)

⁶⁷ Richard Gray, 'ch.4: making it new: the emergence of modern American literature 1900-1945' in *A History of American Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 2004), p.545

⁶⁸ Tony Tanner, 'ch.8: The Voice of the Outlaw' in *The Reign of Wonder: Naivety and Reality in American Literature* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, London, New York, Melbourne 1965), p.142

Like Sut Lovingood's, Pap's vernacular is almost a prose poem in itself, and is hardly passive, since from the very opening statement he intends to advertise a litany of hard luck to any available listener; Smith celebrates how Twain 'seizes in a few lines the essence of Southern prejudice.'⁶⁹ His narrative is somewhat circular; his second sentence effectively restates the point of his first, further emphasising his self pity and the myths he has fabricated to perpetuate it. Pap reveals far more than he himself knows; his repetition of 'a man's son . . . a man's own son' emphasises his possessiveness over Huck and the money he represents. Despite having shown Huck nothing but neglect and abuse until now, Pap will shamelessly advertise himself as the unloved father deprived of his due, fabricating a myth of being a far more established man than he has ever been simply because he believes blood-ties entitle him to Huck's money. In his tirade against Judge Thatcher, his self-pity extends beyond simply neglect from his family against the society he believes is determined to keep him in his degraded situation. Here, in fact, is evidence of Twain's work having a sociological sophistication which Harris' does not. Pap is not entirely wrong, and his lot is indeed partly ordered by the wealthier whites who suppress both black and poor white people, as W.J. Cash remarks: 'hardly any Southerner of the master class . . . apprehended that the general shiftlessness and degradation of the masses was a social product.'⁷⁰ Pap continues to build a verbal myth of himself not only as deprived and degraded, but also rebellious, and his frequent cries of 'I told 'em so' once more fabricate his self-image as the somewhat romanticised peasant rebelling against his oppressors. His unlikely claim to have insulted Thatcher to his face show he wishes to appear the rabble-rouser, his assertion 'lots of 'em heard me' showing he believes himself a powerful orator capable of commanding attention, the self-made man deprived through injustice. Twain seems to be using this monologue to mock Pap, especially when Huck remarks that halfway through this speech Pap trips over a tub of salt-pork, appearing more a comic stooge than the commanding figure he imagines himself. Twain has, in one passage, both celebrated and exposed the pitfalls of the common man, yet Pap's narrative vibrancy prevents his characterisation from being entirely negative; thus the focus has shifted entirely from Longstreet's attempt to mock the common man and keep him at a narrative distance.

In the African-American tradition vernacular and storytelling acquire a didactic agenda, and Bernard Bell argues that Charles Chesnutt in particular imbues his folk writing with a social message.

⁶⁹ Henry Nash Smith, 'ch.6: Sound Heart and Deformed Conscience' in *Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer* [1962](Harvard University Press: Atheneum, New York 1974)

⁷⁰ W.J. Cash, 'Of an Ideal and Conflict' in *The Mind of the South* [1941] (New York: Vintage 1991), p.78

Chesnutt, like Longstreet, uses a more sentimental frame narrator to provide an audience for the vernacular narrator Uncle Julius. His story 'The Goophered Grapevine' opens with the northerner, John, remarking 'some years ago my wife was in poor health, and our family doctor, in whose skill . . . I had implicit confidence, advised a change of climate.'⁷¹ Like George's, John's eloquent diction seems aesthetically stunted, especially when contrasted to the vibrancy of Julius' vernacular. Upon first meeting him, John asks Julius 'do you live round here,' (p.34) and Julius replies 'I lives des ober yander, behine de nex' san'-hill, on de Lumberton plank-road.'(p.34) His diction bears some resemblance to Sut Lovingood, whose language is far less restrained. Julius continues in the tradition of loosely strung vernacular, achieving a poetic rhythm as he warns John the vineyard he plans to buy 'is goophered, - cunju'd, bewitched.' (p.35) John's unfamiliarity with the term 'goophered' immediately places him outside both the Southern and African-American vernacular culture, with its specific codes and cultural memory. Chesnutt has used dialogue to instantly establish distance between black and white cultures; John asks how Julius could know it was 'bewitched,' using the term which most reflects the language of the educated whites. Furthermore, Julius may be using his culture to his advantage, our first example of storytelling being used to a direct agenda, a significant device in Faulkner's writing. It is not until he learns John plans to buy the vineyard that Julius begins to tell his tale of bewitchment. He tells how, when the old plantation owner Dugal McAdoo realised his scuppernongs were missing, 'co'se he 'cuse' de niggers er it,'(p.36) using vernacular to inform his listeners that slaves always bore the brunt of any blame on the plantations, but also to mock his oppressor – he tells John how Dugal attempted to lay traps for the slaves until Dugal, who "us a monst'us keerless man – got his leg shot full er cow-peas.'(p.36) Here the powerless have a means to expose the stupidity of their oppressors; Dugal is similar to Pap Finn in his furious buffoonery. Therefore we see another synthesis between the presentation of the brash or prejudiced in black and white folk culture; they seem constantly in dialogue with each other, as Bakhtin would say, while the wealthy and established appear flat and restrained, the targets of vernacular mockery or criticism. Yet the dark irony is that Julius can only mock or criticise the slave system through tales with fantastic elements, and would not hold more power than whites in an established social sense.

In another overlap between the black and white traditions, Chesnutt and Harris both use the narrative technique of a refined narrator to emphasise the power of the vernacular, as can be seen in the following exchange from Harris' 'Mrs. Yardley's Quilting':

⁷¹ Charles Chesnutt, 'The Goophered Grapevine' in *The Conjure Woman and Other Conjure Tales* [1899] (Duke University Press: Durham and London 1993), p.31 (subsequent pages references in the text)

'That's been one durned nasty, muddy job, and I is just glad enough to take a horn or two on the strength of it.'

'What have you been doing, Sut?'

'Helpin to salt ole Missis Yardley down.'

'What do you mean by that?'

'Fixin her for rottin comfortably . . . coverin her up with soil to keep the buzzards from cheatin the worms.'

'Oh, you have been helping to bury a woman,'

'That's it . . . why the devil can't I explain myself like you? I ladles out my words at random like a calf kickin at yaller-jackets; you just rolls 'em out to the point like a feller a-layin bricks – every one fits.'⁷²

The irony of his question, of course, is that Sut is once again the vernacular speaker who dominates the discourse. George's reply to Sut's vernacular over Mrs. Yardley's burial is the staid 'oh, you have been helping to bury a woman,' while ironically even Sut's complaints about his rough diction are folk poetry, lamenting he can only speak 'like a calf kickin at yaller-jackets.' Julius' air of solemnity and mystery, on the other hand, both differentiates him from the humour of Sut Lovingood, and engages John and Annie sufficiently to become the dominant discourse commanding the attention of the discourses around it (though never, of course, nullifying those discourses entirely). It is ironic that John refers to Julius' imagination as 'sluggish' since Chesnutt deliberately uses the vernacular diction to revitalise the dialogue, just as the reader was drawn to Longstreet's horse-traders rather than his narrator. Julius' himself takes on the role of the vernacular trickster; having heard Julius' story of the haunted vineyard, and decided not to buy it, John discovers Julius earnt, 'a respectable revenue from the product of the neglected grapevines,'⁷³ and is most likely using the ghost story to prevent John destroying his means of support.

⁷² George Washington Harris, 'Mrs. Yardley's Quilting' in *Sut Lovingood* (New York: Grove Press 1954), p.171-2

⁷³ Charles Chesnutt, 'The Goophered Grapevine' in *The Conjure Woman and Other Conjure Tales* [1899] (Duke University Press: Durham and London 1993), p.43

As I Lay Dying, The Sound and the Fury and the Modernist Incorporation

When discussing Modernist fiction, Peter Nicholls describes how 'writing gives us access to the innermost mechanisms of the psyche, revealing a violent disunity within the subject.'⁷⁴ Nicholls argues that by suspending any linear sense of narrative the Modernist author is able instead to '[achieve] an unusual intensity of experience,' as the expressiveness of speech gives way to the insularity of thought. In Faulkner, however, there are overlaps between patterns of thought and speech, creating a folk stream-of-consciousness. It is the use of internal narrative which sets Faulkner apart from the more stylistically simple humorists, although both Faulkner and Chesnut develop the folk tradition by introducing narrators who have direct agendas. Nicholls' reference to the 'intensity' of the private self suggests that inner thought allows characters expression beyond their capabilities in the public sphere. Their educational background leaves them lacking the means to express themselves verbally and Faulkner creates characters whose inner monologues reveal more of their inner desires or failures than they themselves are aware, just as Pap Finn's tirade reveals more of his character than he realises. Furthermore, as with Uncle Julius, their storytelling and gossip often has a direct agenda.

Jason Compson is a good example of the inner monologue revealing more than the character intends. His entire section consists of his thoughts rather than direct speech, opening '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 . . . waiting for six niggers . . . to fix breakfast for her,'⁷⁵ clichéd misogyny directed towards his niece and stylistically emphasising the vernacular nature of his thought. Indeed, the line 'once a bitch . . . what I say' appears as if in answer to a question; Jason's public image seems prominent enough to constitute his entire consciousness. Faulkner's knowledge of techniques like internal monologue allows him to present Jason as Pap Finn extended into the stream-of-consciousness, his thoughts revealing his arrogance and self-pity to such an extent he appears somehow pathetic. Like Finn, Jason is a product of the narratives around him, which encourage him to blame his lot in life on the stereotypes encouraged by society; women, black people and Northerners. Furthermore, his inner thoughts are dialogic, incorporating a conversation with his mother about Miss Quentin. In Jason's memory, for example, Caroline laments she cannot

⁷⁴ Peter Nicholls, ch.1 'Ironies of the Modern' in *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (Macmillan Publishers Ltd., Basingstoke, Hampshire 2009), p.20

⁷⁵ William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* [1929] (London: Vintage 1995), p.153 (subsequent page references in the text)

bear the stain on her reputation due to Quentin's promiscuity. Jason reveals his mother's pretensions as well as his own, emphasising Bakhtin's idea that a discourse only attains significance if in dialogue with others. The recalled conversations also show a certain cold rationalism in Jason's outlook, and his answer to Caroline's lament that the school will think she cannot control her daughter, which concerns her only because she believes it taints her 'genteel' Bascomb bloodline, is to reply, 'Well, you can't, can you. You never have tried to do anything with her.' (p.153) His narrative also reveals his cruelty; when Caroline reminds him Quentin is his own flesh and blood, Jason replies, 'Sure . . . That's just what I'm thinking of. Flesh. And maybe a little blood too, if I had my way. When people act like niggers, no matter who they are the only thing to do is treat them like a nigger.' (p.154) He reveals his feelings towards his niece exceed bitterness to outright sadism, and emphasises his racism and disgust for female sexuality as he appears to associate black women with wanton promiscuity.

Jason continues to show similarities to Pap Finn; just as Pap uses the rhythms of repetition to emphasise his anger at the government, Jason mentally repeats his words, 'I never had time to be. I never had time to go to Harvard like Quentin or drink myself into the ground like Father. I had to work,' (p.154) when Caroline claims he is the only one of her children who is not a reproach to her, since he holds a job and, in her eyes, reflects her 'noble' Bascomb blood. This statement echoes in his psyche and emphasises he, too, feels self-pity and blames his lot in life on external occurrences of systems. He rages against having to support the family of 'invalids and idiots and niggers' (p.209) (showing no sympathy for either his brothers' suicide or mental problems), and 'them up there in Washington spending fifty-thousand dollars a day . . . in Nicaragua or some place.' (p.199) Like Pap, Jason deludes himself about the grandeur he feels he truly deserves and which the government keeps from him; indeed, both see themselves as neglected in favour of black people. Jason, however, is a less sympathetic character, since, unlike Pap, he is the son of a Southern aristocratic family, and thus is not as downtrodden as many true members of the folk community.

Repetitions are an important trope of Jason's psyche, and speech – for him there is no difference – particularly since they seem all he has to articulate himself when challenged. When Miss Quentin disputes him, his repetitions of 'you will, will you' shows him rendered inarticulate in his fury that anyone could dispute his image as the sustainer of the Compson family, and he simply speaks and thinks in the same fragmentary clichés. His speech and then direct inner description of his action repeat each other verbatim, such as his enraged cry to Quentin; 'You wait until I've got this belt out

and I'll show you,' I says, pulling my belt out.'(p.157) His discourse of dominance and self-aggrandisement leaving him incapable of any deeper self-reflection. Once again he blames his own hardships on external scapegoat constructed through his social prejudices, this time women; Jason inwardly seethes that he 'can't seem to learn that a woman'll do anything.' It appears that his continual attempts to present himself as the Southern 'helluva fella' have left him unable to feel anything deeper inside, or his inner shallowness leaves him desirous to be self-advertising to hide his personal failures. Unlike Pap these failures are not necessarily economic, but are reflected in Jason's coldness and inability to relate to others; 'an idiom that hardly begins to bridge the gap between himself and the world, or to heal his divisions.'⁷⁶

Anse Bundren bears some similarities to Jason, and yet ironically the myths in which he remains convinced are not regarding his greatness, but rather of his fallacious identity as ideal father and husband.

I told Addie it wasn't any luck living on a road when it come by here, and she said, for the world like a woman, 'Get up and move, then.' But I told her it wasn't no luck in it, because the Lord puts roads for travelling; why He laid them down flat on the earth. When he aims for something to be always a-moving, He makes it long ways, like a road or a horse or a wagon, but when He aims for something to stay put, He makes it up-and-down ways, like a tree or a man. And so he never aimed for folks to live on a road, because which gets there first, I says, the road or the house? Did you ever know him to put a road down by a house? I says . . . Putting it there where every bad luck prowling can find it and come straight to my door, charging me taxes on top of it. Making me pay for Cash having to get those carpenter notions when if it hadn't been no road come there, he wouldn't a got them; falling off of churches and lifting no hand in six months and me and Addie slaving and a-slaving . . . And now I got to pay for it, me without a tooth in my head, hoping to get ahead enough so I could eat God's own victuals as a man should . . . Got to pay for being put to the need of that three dollars. Got to pay for the way them boys have to go away to earn it. I have heard men cuss their luck, and right, for they were sinful men. But I do not say it's a curse on me, because I have done no wrong to be cussed by. I am not religious, I reckon. But peace is my heart: I know it is. I have done things neither better nor worse than them that pretend otherlike, and

⁷⁶ Richard Gray, 'ch.3: Rewriting the Homeplace' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.146

I know that old Marster will care for me as for ere a sparrow that falls. But it seems hard that a man in his need could be so flouted by a road.⁷⁷

Like Jason, Anse repeats 'I says' after many of his thoughts, thus seeming to actively qualify them as having the qualities of speech. He may be accustomed to presenting a public image until it is all he is capable of, yet for almost the opposite reason; while Jason wants to present himself as savvy and dominant, Anse presents the image of the pitiful poor white whom the town cannot help but aid in his plight. Indeed, Anse too could be seen as a development of Pap Finn, even something of a figure of mockery. Just as Pap lambasts Thatcher for trying to take Huck away from him, Anse blames the fact that his children resent him on the road, and the new travelers and ideas it introduces, rather than his own actions or neglect. The fact his self-pity exists in his very patterns of thought makes it an indispensable factor in his identity, and a somewhat beneficial one, since for years it has enabled him to take advantage of others. Once again repetitions constitute much of Anse's thoughts, not only providing the semblance of natural speech but also showing that, like Finn his laments are somewhat to advertise himself, even when he has no audience, as if the speech we become accustomed to shapes our consciousness. Anse, like Pap, elevates himself to the status of a tragic and persecuted figure. He says he 'does not say it's a curse on him' emphasising, of course, that this is exactly how he would like to think. His true feelings are emphasised by his need to qualify that he is not a self-pitying man, as if addressing an audience, or possibly attempting to justify his self-pity with his own conscience.

The lack of distinction between Jason and Anse's public and private selves is all the more noteworthy when compared to characters whose inner thoughts indicate far deeper feelings or passions than they would have the means to articulate. After Addie Bundren's death, Dewey Dell is only able to express her grief in monosyllabic cries – 'Ma! Ma!' – albeit charged with emotion. In a section narrated by Darl she is presented as the public figure in her brother's private memory: 'Dewey Dell leans down, trying to press her back. 'You, Cash,' she shouts, her voice harsh, strong, and unimpaired. 'You, Cash!' He looks up at the gaunt face framed in the window in the twilight . . . For a while still [Addie] looks down at him . . . neither with censure nor approbation.' (p.42-3)

The reader may view Dewey Dell's diction as plausible; the Bundrens are poor and uneducated, and rarely speak publicly in more than monosyllables. Dewey Dell, however, is inwardly

⁷⁷ William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* [1930] (London: Vintage 2004), p.30-3 (subsequent references in the text)

tormented by her pregnancy and her desire to hide it from her family until she can procure an abortion, and her cries – ‘you, Cash,’ ‘Ma!’ – seem charged with frustration and confrontation, which suggests deeper underlying feelings of rage or helplessness. Her inner reality, however, reflects Peter Nicholls’ definition of the Modernist consciousness as ‘estranged and locked in ‘[e]xquisite loneliness,’⁷⁸ constantly in a state of ‘exile and loss.’ Dewey Dell seems to articulate her sense of isolation when she mentally outlines the need to hide her pregnancy:

It’s because I am alone. If I could just feel it, it would be different, because I would not be alone. But if I were not alone, everybody would know it. And he could do so much for me, and then I would not be alone. Then I could be all right alone . . . when mother died I had to go beyond and outside of me to grieve because he could do so much for me and he don’t know it . . . I don’t know how to cry. (p.52)

Her secret prevents her forming the intimacy with her family which might have been attained through talk and confidence, forcing her to retreat into her private self. Yet there is a second level to Dewey Dell’s loneliness, which has led to her regarding the grief she feels over Addie’s death as akin to ‘going outside herself,’ separating herself from the sense of isolation she feels has become her identity. Once again Faulkner expresses her feelings in far more eloquent speech than Dewey Dell possesses in conversation, adding a level of high rhetoric to the more simple folk tradition. The same is true of Dewey Dell’s inner sense of her intense connection to Darl – ‘He could do everything for me. And he don’t know it. He is his guts and I am my guts. And I am Lafe’s guts.’ (p.53) Or consider her following description of a cow’s breath:

a sweet, hot blast, through my dress, against my hot nakedness moaning . . . I feel my body, my bones and flesh beginning to part and open upon the alone, and the process of coming unalone is terrible . . . I begin to rush upon the darkness but the cow stops me and the darkness rushes upon the sweet blast of her moaning breath, filled with wood and with silence. (p.56)

Dewey Dell is unlikely to have been able to speak in such elevated diction, but her inner psyche allows her to communicate a sense of her own fecundity reflected in the cow’s breath, while the imagery of her falling apart elevates her speech to a prose poem illustrating her feelings of

⁷⁸ Peter Nicholls, ch.8 ‘Modernity and the Men of 1914’ in *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (Macmillan Publishers Ltd., Basingstoke, Hampshire 2009), p.165

helplessness. Conversely, when she spots Vardaman watching her she has only basic verbal expression; her repetition 'you durn little sneak,' while rendered inarticulate by shock and rage is similar to Jason Compson's furious outbursts. Faulkner provides his characters with a depth unavailable in Sut Lovingood – unlike Jason, Dewey Dell has an intensely private self. When she refers to the cow's 'stertorous' moaning, for example, it is far more likely she would have described it as 'hoarse' had she been speaking, but her psychology might recognise this adjective as the best way to describe the sensory experience of its breathing. Likewise, her sense of being 'a wet seed wild in the hot blind earth' (p.58) uses rhetoric Faulkner might have used himself, but which is unlikely to have been spoken by a country girl. However, it effectively communicates her sense of detachment from her mother and family.

In contrast, Walter Blair says that Tull and the Jefferson gossips represent the culture of talk, 'a series of mock oral narratives,'⁷⁹ the public sphere who observe the Bundrens in their bizarre journey. This external view of their actions provides the reader with means by which to question them which they might be less inclined to do if invested too strongly in the character's intense subjectivity. When Tull remarks 'That bridge won't stand a lot of water . . . has someone told Anse about it,' Armstid too remarking he 'wouldn't monkey' with the fragile bridge; their conversation emphasises the futility of the Bundrens' quest and somewhat diminishes the epic proportions to which their inner monologues elevate it. When analysed through the public gaze, their quest appears not only futile but disrespectful to Addie's corpse, their conversation an example of the public exposing the private, creating an identity for the outsider as part of the social sphere through the medium of talk rather like the chorus in Greek tragedy. Gray describes how the Bundrens' journey becomes a 'ballad' in the eyes of their observers. Furthermore, Tull, like Sut Lovingood, uses folk imagery to criticise the nature of Jefferson; the women are 'like bees murmuring in a water-bucket,' (p.78) evoking a perpetual cacophony of gossip and judgment, as if they were something aggravated and capable of harm. Like the Greek chorus, they do not attempt to influence the action, and none of them makes any attempt to warn the Bundrens. The culture of talk constructs not only a sense of community, but also those who are excluded from it. When Cash and Tull discuss Cash's broken leg, Quick remarks 'a fellow can sure slip quick on wet planks,' while Tull's inner thought '*If it takes wet boards for folks to fall, it's fixing to be lots of falling before this spell is done,*' (p.82) emphasises nobody plans to inform the Bundrens of the danger. Like Jason, the memory of conversation so

⁷⁹ Walter Blair, 'A Man's Voice, Speaking' in *Essays on American Humor: Blair Through the Ages*, Hamlin Hill, ed., (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1993), p.43

pervades Tull's consciousness that he mentally re-enacts it. Gossip is ever present in the consciousness of the community it pervades, and Tull recalls asking Peabody, '*Neither does Peabody mind the folks falling. How 'bout it, Doc?*' providing Peabody's reply that as a doctor, injuries will bring him more business, to emphasise the sense of a dialogic consciousness. Once again, Faulkner's development of vernacular speech into vernacular thought allows insight into motivations or prejudices which are not spoken outright. As with Dewey Dell, Tull's inner monologue allows him rhetoric he would most likely be unable to speak. When he describes Whitfield's singing, Tull says the reverend's voice is 'bigger than him' emphasising his oratorical power, almost a presence all by itself apart from the man, Whitfield and the voice 'swimming on two horses side by side.' Whitfield's voice is not only presented as corporeal, but more dominant than the physical man, as oratory has the power to be. Tull describing the first horse, Whitfield the man, as 'mud splashed' and weathered, while the second, Whitfield the voice, remains triumphant and unblemished. There may be an implicit criticism, since Whitfield is all talk and no action, and does not, for example, have the strength to take responsibility for his paternity of Jewel. Tull closes his inner monologue by describing Cora and the other singing women:

like their voices come out of the air, flowing together and on in the sad, comforting tunes. When they cease it's like they hadn't gone away. It's like they had just disappeared into the air and when we moved we would loose them again out of the air . . . sad and comforting.
(p.83)

Tull elevates the women singing to almost celestial levels, and describes the sense of mysticism when they 'cease'; it is likely that, had he been speaking, he would have said 'stop.' In a sense, internal monologue gives 'voice to the voiceless' and identifies the underlying passions characteristic of all human beings.

The Hamlet, Light in August, the Collective Identity and the Enemy

The Hamlet examines the ability of talk and storytelling to create Frenchman's Bend, an environment with a shared history of culture and rituals, and its subversion by the 'self-serving con artist' Flem Snopes. Flem subverts the more inclusive folk community of Frenchman's Bend by corrupting the 'bragging culture' of Longstreet into the modernised 'economic tradition of which [he]

. . . is the culmination.⁸⁰ His past comes under suspicion in Frenchman's Bend because Flem has no part in their shared history. He is suspected of burning Harris' barn and bootlegging, even though Tull admits to Varner that all he knows of the matter is that Flem was involved 'after a fashion.' Indeed, their only proof is that Harris had Flem arrested on suspicion of arson. His guilt is irrelevant, since gossip marks him as an outsider, its principal subject. Jody Varner points out all that will be necessary to expel Flem will be for the town to believe the rumour, 'then it will be the same thing, whether he actually did it or not . . . Hell fire, he'll have to [leave]! He can't fight it! He don't dare!' Varner treats the search for evidence of Flem's guilt as a formality, something which will make his expulsion easier should it happen to exist, rather than in any way necessary; it is suspicious enough that he left the area of the crime. The fact that, in Ratliff's words, fire follows Flem around 'like dogs follow some folks,' establishes Flem as a character within a constructed narrative, an antagonist, and when Ratliff tells Jody of how Flem called on De Spain after arriving in Frenchman's Bend, Varner immediately cries, 'to the barn! You mean they went right straight and. . .'⁸¹ Varner now believes Flem to be a sinister figure, and Flem's most mundane actions marked with overtones of menace, despite Ratliff's rationalism; he points out the Snopes' had just arrived and would have had no idea where the barn was, much less had reason to burn it. There is some irony in that Varner finds Snopes so threatening. Varner himself is 'chief man of the county,' yet he is nonetheless within the community, while Flem is totally detached from them, the logical extension of capitalist individualism. The threat of the outsider causes his community to fabricate his actions, perhaps in order to prepare for the stranger's violence should it arise. The Snopeses, we learn, are historically associated with conflict, since Ratliff remarks 'John Sartoris his-self shot Ab for trying to steal his clay-bank riding stallion during the war.' (p.16)

The story may well be apocryphal, yet it further emphasises a history of the family spreading discord and dishonesty. According to Ratliff, when De Spain asks after Ab Snopes, Flem replies, 'me and him left at the same time when we see the blaze,' (p.17) yet Ratliff may be supplying his own details, presenting Flem as a villain lying to cover his guilt. The same is true when he describes Ab's decision to move from De Spain's land; 'It looks like me and you ain't going to get along together . . . I'm moving this morning.' And De Spain says, 'What about your contract?' And Ab says, 'I done cancelled it.' (p.17) Since Ratliff did not hear the exchange himself, his fabrications show a respect for

⁸⁰ Olga Vickery, 'ch.11: The Profit and the Loss: *The Hamlet, The Town and The Mansion*' in *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1964), p.168

⁸¹ William Faulkner, *The Hamlet* [1940] (New York: Vintage 1956), p.14 (subsequent references in the text)

the tall-tale tradition of Sut Lovingood, but Faulkner invests *The Hamlet* with more realism than Harris and Ratliff's elaborations have a far stronger influence over their audience; his agenda is the trading of local stories.

Ratliff's gossip reveals similarities to the agrarian Southern mindset and how alien it finds the Northern capitalistic approach. When he tells the story of his dealings with a goat-rancher, Ratliff explains:

A Northerner . . . does things different from us. If a fellow in this country was to set up a goat ranch, he would do it . . . because he had too many goats already. He would just declare his . . . front porch a goat farm and let it go at that. But a Northerner don't do it that way. When he does something, he does it with a organised syndicate and a book of printed rules . . . saying for all men to know by these presents . . . that them twenty-thousand goats or whatever . . . is goats . . . and measures it all down . . . so many acres and so much fence to hold them. Then he writes off to Jackson and gets his diploma . . . and he buys the land first so he can have something to build the fence on, and he builds the fence around it so nothing can't get outen it.(p.79)

W.J. Cash noted that 'to speak of the love of rhetoric . . . is once again to suggest the love of politics. The two, in fact, were inseparable.'⁸² Though Ratliff often seems simply a skilled rhetorician, this passage uses this rhetoric didactically, since he presents the South as pastoral, uncorrupted by the Northern profit motive; from his opening sentence he establishes the Northerner as a symbolic 'otherness.' The Southerner would be from a farming background, and the concrete goods would be his primary concern, while his connection to the land would run far deeper, and any part of it would suffice for farming. It is the absence of the pastoral mindset which sets Flem outside the community, since he is concerned with the individual profit of modern capitalism. His solipsism corrupts certain folk elements such as trading horses, since it is usually 'the speaker . . . [who] has trickster power,'⁸³ which would have made Flem more tolerable to the community.

Flem himself embraces the role of outsider by abstaining from the culture of talk. As a man solely concerned with barter and profit, he places no value in people except as a means of income, and unlike Varner he sees no need to engage with them in order to do business, representing the

⁸² W.J. Cash, 'Of the Man at the Center' in *The Mind of the South* [1941] (New York: Vintage 1991), p.52

⁸³ Winifred Morgan, 'Signifying: The African-American Trickster and the Humor of the Old Southwest' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.221

new, 'Northern' trading rituals. When they meet Varner tries to engage Flem in conversation and introduce him to the 'language community,' and Flem's curt answer 'that so?' shows active disinterest in their culture. Varner tries to convince him of the importance of building relationships with the community, if only because Flem 'will need the good will of the folks he aims to make his money off.'(p.23) Again, Varner is warning that the community can ruin one who chooses not to accept its rituals.

Ratliff outlines the danger of communal rumour, that 'if a fellow's got to choose between a man that is a murderer and one he thinks just maybe is, he'll choose the murderer.'(p.26) The community creates its own narratives, and what people suspect can provoke more vicious rejection than facts. Even Ratliff, a more accepting character, believes in the creation of a community through shared narratives, saying 'you . . . don't know how good a man's voice feels running betwixt his teeth until you have been . . . where folks didn't want to listen and could get up and go away and you couldn't follow them,' (p.79) in other words, where the community is not constructed through shared storytelling. Ratliff enhances his stories through fabrication; for example, he tells his audience the tale of Bayard Sartoris and Buck McCaslin catching Ab Snopes in the woods to '[tie him up to] a tree or something . . . maybe even a double bridle rein and maybe even a heated ramrod . . . though that's just hearsay'(p.29); he will not let his uncertainty of the facts impede the drama. The same is true when he describes Ab's horse-swap, another action which links Ab to the folk community, saying 'Ab looked at the mules again . . . they didn't look extra good and they didn't look extra bad . . . I reckon Pat Stamper knowed he was doomed the very moment he looked up.'(p.37) Ratliff's vernacular provides a distinct representation of Ab's trickery, and Stamper's having 'walked out into what he thought was a spring branch and then found out it was quicksand'(p.37) is the same type of natural imagery and vernacular one might expect from Harris. Ratliff's language evokes how completely Ab has swindled Stamper and also places Ab within the folk community; since Ratliff recounts the event without bitterness, he may have a grudging respect for Ab's horse-trading, just as the reader is drawn to Longstreet's traders. These narratives show dishonesty and exploitation drive the communal history, and Flem is simply a colder extension of such rituals into the profit motive.

Furthermore, the entire Snopes family provide a fruitful well of gossip for the Frenchman's Bend community, evident when Mrs. Littlejohn and Jack Houston discuss the mentally ill Ike Snopes as he wanders through the fields. The community deems it imperative to discuss any oddity or threat, and, when Houston remarks '[it's] all right. I saw him,' we sense they feel the threat must be

under constant scrutiny, for should the community take their eyes off it, it may take the opportunity to attack. Likewise, Ratliff and Bookwright exemplify the dialogic establishment of 'outsider as subject' and 'speakers as constructors of narrative' when discussing the breakdown of Flem and Eula's private relationship, a relationship which can only be presented as intimate in the public eye because of Flem's impotence. With little knowledge, they construct their own 'reality,' and when Eula returns to Frenchman's Bend with the infant Linda, Bookwright makes sure his sister is aware of the gossip. He remarks that he 'never really expected nothing else,' (p.263) because, to paraphrase Bakhtin, they construct the events around them as 'half their own,' suiting the patterns and expectations which inform their gossip and narratives, and create their communal past and present in the mind of the community.

The public's concern regarding the imposition of an outsider emphasises the threat they pose to the community. In Benedict Anderson's words, 'the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion . . . communities can be distinguished . . . in the style in which they are imagined.'⁸⁴ Consider, for example, Lena Grove's entrance to Jefferson in *Light in August*:

While Armstid and Winterbottom were squatting against the shady wall of Winterbottom's stable, they saw her pass in the road. They saw at once that she was young, pregnant, and a stranger. 'I wonder where she got that belly,' Winterbottom said.

'I wonder how far she has brought it afoot,' Armstid said.

'Visiting somebody back down the road, I reckon,' Winterbottom said.

'I reckon not. Or I would have heard. And it ain't nobody up my way either. I would have heard that too . . . '

'She must be visiting around here somewhere,' Winterbottom said.

'I reckon I would have heard about it,' Armstid said. The woman went on. She had not looked back. She went out of sight up the road; swollen, slow, deliberate, unhurried and tireless as

⁸⁴ Benedict Anderson, Introduction to *Imagined Communities* [1983] (Verso: London, New York 2006), p.6

augmenting afternoon itself. She walked out of their talking too; perhaps out of their minds too⁸⁵

Armstid and Winterbottom's first impression of Lena is judgment, largely motivated by a sense of an unfamiliar element in their community. It is likely that an unmarried pregnant woman would have been treated with suspicion, but the fact that she is also outside of the discourses and familiarities that have constructed their community is the most threatening element of all. They first observe her from their porch, what Frederic Jameson would have called one of the 'privileged meeting-places of collective life,'⁸⁶ but there is no attempt to bond, as there is with Flem. And, as befits this culture of talk, their reaction to this unfamiliar element is to gossip and speculate about her motivations; the outsider is the one who provokes the talk and, conversely, is certified as an outsider by the talk. The fact that both men wonder aloud about Lena's pregnancy represents a collective mindset founded on suspicion and gossip, Armstid declaring Lena cannot be visiting friends in Jefferson 'or I would have heard'; in both *As I Lay Dying* and *Light in August*, Jefferson appears a community determined to preserve itself through familiarity with the business of others. Therefore it becomes necessary to know the origin of any new element; if we do not know where someone is from, and the stories of their past which led them to the community, then we have no idea, in a sense, of where they are going, and what benefit or threat they might introduce. The town is constructed through 'veranda-talk, street-corner conversation, courthouse square gossip . . . a verbal community which defines itself through . . . rituals of speech.'⁸⁷ The fact that Lena finally 'walked out of their talking' suggests that in the townspeople's perception, her identity has been somewhat constructed by what they have said about her, and the conclusions they draw.

The same is true of Joe Christmas, but to a far greater extent. Unlike Flem, about whom there were rumours of barn burning, Joe becomes an outsider due to his lack of known history, and with far darker results. Joe is an outsider, and thus source of gossip, largely due to his refusal to participate in it. He is a stranger at the planing mill, and one gossip remarks he bears 'a pretty risky look for a man who wears his face in public . . . he might forget and use it somewhere somebody won't like it.' (p.26) People who refuse to participate in the culture of talk are met with hostility and the threat of violence, and Joe's 'insufferable face' makes him a threat to the 'imagined community.'

⁸⁵ William Faulkner, *Light in August* [1932] (London: Vintage 2005), p.9-10 (subsequent references in the text)

⁸⁶ Frederick Jameson, quoted in Richard Gray, 'ch.4: Of Past and Present Conflicts' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.180

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p.179

Ironically, however, Faulkner says they 'dismissed [Joe], from the talk, anyway' (p.26) thus depriving Joe of any opportunity to enter the community. Despite Joe's silence 'they were all conscious of him,' (p.27) their 'consciousness' of him exacerbated since he has not expressed the communion or humanity he might have had he engaged in dialogue. They have no means to discover his history (of which Joe could tell them little anyway), his parentage or even the area from which he comes, all of which would be important to determine his role in their community.

When the foreman discovers Joe's surname, another worker asks 'is he a foreigner,' and the foreman replies 'did you ever hear of a white man named Christmas?' As Armstid and Winterbottom did Lena, the community constructs an identity for Joe. This indicates both that if Joe's name is not recognised in their region they assume he must be a 'foreigner' and that the community associates 'foreignness' with the idea of the 'racial other'; even if Joe were from another country, he might still be white. Here we see another fiction of 'community,' the association of 'American-ness' with whiteness which allows Faulkner to 'explore and imaginatively reject an outside presence in the South.'⁸⁸ Further fictions are constructed when the men determine Joe's refusal to change his clothes indicates 'the way men in his country worked.' (p.27) Joe is, of course, American, thus their conclusion somewhat mocks their sense of national superiority and their attempts to identify 'foreigners' as alien and savage. At this point the only real threat seems to come from the gossipers themselves. They mutter, 'He'll change clothes tonight. He won't have on them Sunday clothes when he comes to work in the morning.' (p.27) Their words seem marked with menace, and indicate the rejection and persecution which defines Joe's past and present.

Joe's solipsism leaves him unable to contest the gossip and any misconceptions it may spread. When Byron Bunch and Gail Hightower discuss Joanna Burden's death, Byron begins with an anecdote about the drunken Brown talking about:

Christmas with a pistol, and a whole lot more . . . until Christmas come in quick and walked up to him and jerked him out of the chair. And Christmas saying in that quiet voice of his, 'You ought to be careful about drinking so much of this Jefferson hair tonic. It's gone to your head' . . . Holding Brown up with one hand and slapping his face with the other. (p.61)

⁸⁸ Randy Boyagoda, 'ch.4: William Faulkner's "Durn Furriners"' in *Race, Immigration and American Identity in the Fiction of Salman Rushdie, Ralph Ellison and William Faulkner* (Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, New York and London 2008), p.102

Byron reminds us of the danger Joe faces from even the rumour of his mixed ancestry; the slaps he administers to Brown appear not the irrational rage of a lunatic but a calculated threat from a man who understands the social customs and narratives which would define him as an enemy. Byron tells Hightower, 'I didn't know . . . the rest of it. The worst of it . . . when I think now how worried I was on what little I knowed, now when I know the rest of it, it don't seem like I had anything then to worry me at all. All day I have been thinking how easy it would be if I could just turn back to yesterday and not have any more to worry me than I had then.' (p.62) Byron's manner of recounting emphasises the taboo. If his account were simply told by an external narrator, Joe's 'black blood' could have been told in a sentence, but the medium of a character is more successful in allowing for a buildup of suspense emphasising the damning nature of the final revelation, and gives a dark significance to what Daniel Hoffman called the 'delaying tactics of the common folktale,'⁸⁹ in which the denouement is delayed as long as possible to build suspense in the tale. Byron himself is influenced by his communal mindset; his wish never to have heard of Joe's ancestry reveals that, despite being a more compassionate character, Byron feels the threatening presence of the racial 'other' according to the dictums of his society and perhaps feels his own words would be tainted if he spoke of the scandal, which socially would be considered more horrific than the murder itself. Furthermore, it is worth noting that Hightower, another social outsider, is not yet aware of the rumours surrounding Joe; the gossipers establish the outsider, not only by the rumours they spread, but by who is made privy to these rumours. One cannot know the social narrative if one is not in the social sphere; to quote Bakhtin, 'our speech is filled to overflowing with other people's words.'⁹⁰ In this sense, Hightower is placed upon the periphery through the same means as Joe, partly due to his own actions since he chose to withdraw from Jefferson.

The culture of gossip also illustrates the dangers inherent in these 'imagined communities,' since their sustenance relies on talk whether accurate or inaccurate, as do the actions resulting from this talk even when it manifests in violence; the preservation of the community through the expulsion of the outsider is made primary at the expense of facts. Byron's account draws attention to its own inaccuracies, first claiming a travelling countryman was the first to find Joanna's burning house, then correcting himself when he remembers the smoke had already been discovered. Byron

⁸⁹ Theresa M. Towner, 'Al Jackson, Ernest V. Trueblood and 'Mr. Faulkner, a Member in Good Standing of the Ancient and Gentle Profession of Letters' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.40-1

⁹⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel' in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press 1981), p.337

assumes the couple who first discovered the house 'maybe . . . stopped the wagon and they set there in the wagon for awhile, looking at the smoke,' (p.69) perhaps supplying his own details according to how he might have acted, admitting he only 'reckons' their actions. The fact that 'Brown showed up . . . wild, yelling about how it was Christmas that killed her and making his claim on that thousand dollars' (p.71) hardly makes Brown seem a reliable witness; there are none in the novel. Yet Byron never doubts Joe's guilt, and neither does the public once it enters their consciousness. Therefore the culture of gossip appears doubly dangerous, perpetuating the ideology of community versus the outsider, and encouraging the community to fabricate reasons to support blind belief in rumours. Brown realises the necessity to exploit this belief, and attempts to divert the 'rat smell' of his account simply by continuing to talk. He claims he tried to stop Joe selling whiskey, 'talking faster and faster and more and more' (p.73) as if hoping that remaining the dominant discourse will prevent any doubts in the truth of his account; indeed, Byron recognises his attempt at misdirection, that Brown was 'trying to hide Joe Brown behind what he was telling on Christmas.' (p.74) Brown therefore prevents himself from being held in any way accountable, or becoming the focus of the damning gossip, which in this culture is one and the same. When the Sheriff certifies Brown was at the scene of the murder, Brown reveals the testimony he knows will damn Joe irreparably, 'accuse the white man . . . and let the nigger go free. Accuse the white man and let the nigger run.' (p.75) Brown knows that identifying himself and Joe respectively as 'white man' and 'nigger' will appeal to the community's sense of self-preservation. Whatever Brown's guilt, he does not threaten the supremacy of the white community, and Byron says with this last piece of gossip 'he knew he had them.' Brown continues 'I'm talking about Christmas . . . the man that killed that white woman after he had done lived with her in plain sight of this whole town . . . he's got nigger blood in him. I knowed it when I first saw him,' (p.75) re-emphasising Joe as an enemy and elevating Joanna above her outcast identity into the symbol of pure white womanhood tarnished by the shadow of the black rapist. Like Pap Finn, Brown is using the self-advertisement of lamenting his woes to present an image of himself – the wronged white man blamed for a black man's crime – but with none of Twain's comic relief, as it is this statement which forms the catalyst for Joe's manhunt and execution. Brown knows he will exacerbate the rage by reminding them they 'allowed' Joe to live with Joanna for three years as a couple. The community will regard this as a sign of black deception to take advantage of white women, their humiliation at having fallen for the deception making Joe's destruction all the more necessary. The marshal remarks, 'A nigger . . . I always thought there was something funny about that fellow,' (p.76) indicating a desire to distance oneself from the outsider

once he is identified; like Brown, he understands the importance to perpetuate the outsider as the object of persecution.

Once the town has heard Brown's testimony, Joe certainly becomes such an object, more for the possibility of his mixed race than the death of the outcast and reclusive woman. Richard Gray says that 'Lynching . . . can be seen as part of the communal language,'⁹¹ and the community which unites through hatred of an outsider becomes the mob which forms upon discovery of Joanna's body. Her murder provides a fruitful source for the stories and gossip which sustain the Jefferson community, symbolically representing the apparent destruction of one of the community by an outsider, despite their having rejected her. The spectacle creates a unity between this otherwise diverse community; Faulkner describes how the mob ranges from 'single individuals to entire families . . . the casual Yankees and the poor whites and even the Southerners who had lived for a while in the North' (p.216) who would traditionally be mistrusted in a community such as Jefferson, as would the 'casual Yankees' since they have little more history in Jefferson than Joe himself; Joanna was, after all, rejected by the community for being of Yankee ancestry. The fact that this mob 'believed aloud that it was an anonymous negro crime committed not by a negro but by Negro and who knew, believed and hoped that she had been ravished too: at least once before her throat was cut and at least once afterwards' (p.216) shows the fear of black violence runs deeper in the Southern consciousness than any of these differences, the socially shared enemy against whom all whites can be united, not to mention their morbid fascination with the violence itself. Indeed, Faulkner says this 'community' is often latent until the introduction of an enemy; the communal search for 'someone to crucify.' Despite their rage, Faulkner emphasises its ceremonial nature, in that the townspeople feel gratitude to Joanna for the 'Roman Holiday' of mob mentality against the 'black outsider,' and thus determining this violated corpse 'cried out for vengeance.' In Faulkner's words, their fabrications provide the 'nice believing' of the mythic Southern community, with white hegemony and pure women. Indeed, we see the community believes itself wronged by black identity rather than one black person when the deputy remarks that he is less surprised by Joanna's murder than that that it was 'this long before one of them done for her.' (p.218) Richard Gray says 'the voices [of] . . . Jefferson . . . have little time . . . for moral uncertainty . . . a degree of . . . collective assumption, is essential to communication . . . because communities depend on shared meanings.'⁹² White

⁹¹ Richard Gray, 'ch.4: Of Past and Present Conflicts' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.186

⁹² *Ibid.* p.193

hegemony, for example, might depend on the exclusion of black people, and a shared idea that they are a criminal threat prevents the need to incorporate 'otherness' into white society. When searching for witnesses, the sheriff simply commands 'get me a nigger' as if he regards the black community as an active conspiracy with full knowledge of each other's wrongdoings, an outlook perhaps influenced by the fact that the lives of others are of such prominent interest to the white community. Indeed, Faulkner presents the gossip between those who watch the sheriff and the black 'witness' as if it were a shared inner monologue; *'Is that him? Is that the one that did it? Sheriff's got him. Sheriff has already caught him . . . by God if that's him, what are we doing, standing around here? Murdering a white woman the black son of a,'* (p.219) shows the society perpetuates the image of the 'other' so entirely it need not even be spoken between the townspeople in words, introducing the far more accomplished idea of prejudice as a shared consciousness; which is even more dangerous since the witnesses feel compelled to lynch the suspect simply for his fabricated association with the crime. Again, they feel obligated not to destroy Joanna Burden's killer, but the threat to their dominant society; Faulkner closes the passage with another reminder that 'None of them had ever entered the house. When she was alive they would not have allowed their wives to call on her. When they were . . . children (some of their fathers had done it too) they had called after her . . . 'Nigger lover! Nigger lover!'"(p.219) Joanna herself was rejected and loathed by the community, but the hierarchy of outsiders demands the blood of a black man more powerfully than that of a Northern woman, thus Joe's eventual destruction is in relation to social construct, the compulsion to purge the element it perceives to be most threatening, a 'black murderer.'

While the community represents the collective will to purge the outsider, Doc Hines presents the even more disturbing concept of the individual elevating his persecution of the outsider to a divine imperative. Furthermore, Hines, like the townspeople, represents the damaging results of gossip defining the social enemy, since he neither had nor desired any proof of Joe's ancestry. Like Jason Compson's, Hines' speech becomes a means of self-aggrandisement. He defines the moment he murdered his daughter as the moment 'God give old Doc Hines his chance' to purge the stain on his family, boasting his faith gave him the strength to fulfill his charge. Hines perceives a divine organisation so deep that the external world represents a grand pattern against the outsider and that if he simply 'give God his chance,' the Lord will set events in motion for Joe's persecution. Thus Hines regards the racial abuse Joe suffers at the orphanage as 'The little children hollering Nigger! Nigger! At him in the hearing of god and man both, showing God's will' (p.279), while in reality they simply reflect their own racist culture. Like those of Jason or Pap Finn, Hines' supposed dialogues with God

reveal far more of his character than he intends. He claims God urged him to persecute Joe for being a product of the 'sluttishness and bitchery' of his daughter Milly's bearing an 'illegitimate' child. Rationally, however, the dialogues signify the mental justification for murdering his daughter, once again indicating a drive within each consciousness to purge or expel the 'enemy,' in Hines' case 'God's abomination of womanflesh.' (p.280) Furthermore, Hines inadvertently emphasises the doubt over Joe's racial ancestry, and thus the injustice in his persecution, and the danger in even the rumour of mixed-race 'blood.' Byron says Milly told Hines her lover was Mexican, but Hines 'knew somehow that the fellow had nigger blood,'(p.281) despite there being no way he could have confirmed this. In reflection of Bakhtin's idea that one must choose a narrative, Byron simply chooses to believe that 'what [Hines] did couldn't have happened if he hadn't known,' (p.281) since the alternative is to believe Hines is a murderer without even the supposed justification of 'miscegenation.' Yet it is possible Hines' religious convictions caused him to be so horrified by Milly's 'adultery' that he fabricated the only element of her lover which, in Hines' eyes, would make him even more horrific, the possibility of his being mixed race. This rumour not only leads to Joe's persecution and rejection by others, but also Joe's belief that his own self-definition depends on being able to racially classify himself, which influences his violence toward Joanna Burden. Joe reacts violently to her wish he become a teacher in a black school: symbolically, this would acceptance of his supposed 'black identity.' Hines continues to refer to himself in the third person, saying 'Old Doc Hines knowed. He had seen the womansign of God's abomination . . . under [Milly's] clothes,' (p.281) as if he were not recounting his own life, but rather an epic narrative of the righteous triumphing over evil. Hines can be seen as a microcosm of the Jefferson community, who do not so much destroy Joe for his ancestry, or even Joanna's murder, rather the rumours give them the desired 'justification' to destroy the outsider. Furthermore, Byron accepts Hines' belief that he was guided by a divine presence to find Milly and her lover; it was in fact pure chance that Hines found performer and shoot him dead, and could easily have murdered a stranger. Hines claims, 'the Lord. *He* was there' when he killed the lover, ultimately constructing a mythic narrative far more dangerous than Jason Compson's, and removing any guilt in regard to his violent actions. After the murder, Hines claims God told him 'and now I've set My will to working and now I'm gone. There aint enough sin here to keep me busy because what do I care for the fornications of a slut, since that is a part of My purpose too.' (p.287-8) The divine presence in Hines' narrative speaks in language we would expect from Hines himself, and thus is most likely symbolic of Hines' self-imposed crusade against female sexuality, despite Hines belief in the reality of their dialogues.

Identity as Memory – Recreations of the Past and the Self in *Absalom, Absalom!*

Absalom, Absalom! is Faulkner's most prominent example of the storytelling culture given greater development through the internal narrative, using Quentin Compson's stream-of-consciousness to show the influence of storytelling on its listener. Both the storyteller and their audience recreate the events in the narrative to cohere with their own beliefs, and, more importantly, their own agendas, since we have already seen in Chesnut the teller is not passive.⁹³ Nicholls argues that unlike Romanticism, which celebrated the self, the subject of Modernism turned 'a cruelly analytic eye on himself,'⁹⁴ often obsessed with some perceived ideal in the past. As with the perception of the enemy, the subject constructs a vision of the past according to their own prejudices and desires; Nicholls argues that 'the past can only be completed in the present.'⁹⁵ However, this recreation of the past also causes the subject's psyche to become 'possessed in the act of imitation.' In the context of storytelling, 'the past . . . is not simply recalled (as a representation) but may be modified and transformed through its (re)enactment.'⁹⁶ It becomes a past of repetition, and a present that celebrates it re-working and reflects Walter Blair's argument that 'people's folk tales are . . . their autobiography and the clearest mirror of their life.'⁹⁷ *Absalom, Absalom!*, however, emphasises not only the influence of storytelling on the listener, but the listener's willingness to be influenced, to earn a role not only within their community, but in the narratives which construct their historical past; the past is, of course, influential on Quentin Compson, the strongest example of one consumed by these historical narratives. Quentin's obsession may be a means to counteract Nicholls' idea that the 'modern man' is torn between his heightened sensitivity and his 'impotent' inability to act on those sensations. Whatever the reason for reconstruction of the past, Nicholls reasons that 'the origin is now secondary, deferred and made different by its repetition,'⁹⁸ and that as the subject

⁹³ Peter Nicholls outlines in *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* that in Modernist literature, the artist often functions as 'the passive vehicle and conduit for images deriving from 'the great dead days' (*Modernisms: A Literary Guide* Macmillan Publishers Ltd.: Basingstoke, Hampshire 2009) p.165

⁹⁴ Peter Nicholls, 'ch.1: Ironies of the Modern' in *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (Macmillan Publishers Ltd.: Basingstoke, Hampshire 2009), p.18

⁹⁵ Peter Nicholls, 'ch.8: Modernity and the Men of 1914' in *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (Macmillan Publishers Ltd.: Basingstoke, Hampshire 2009), p.175

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* p.174

⁹⁷ Walter Blair, 'Mike Fink in Legend and Story' in *Essays on American Humor: Blair Through the Ages*, Hamlin Hill, ed., (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1993), p.86

⁹⁸ Peter Nicholls, 'ch.8: Modernity and the Men of 1914' in *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (Macmillan Publishers Ltd.: Basingstoke, Hampshire 2009), p.175

constructs their vision of the past, 'two different times are grafted together, each somehow 'supplementing' the other.'⁹⁹

Rosa Coldfield is an example of one who '[resists] history with myth.'¹⁰⁰ Her storytelling exerts hypnotic power over Quentin Compson, initially the ideal audience for her account of the past, and Nicholls' conduit through which the images of the past can be provided with new life.¹⁰¹ Rosa claims she had all her life to watch Thomas Sutpen 'since . . . my life was destined to end . . . forty-three years ago, since anyone who even had as little to call living as I had up to that time would not call what I have had since living.'¹⁰² Her narrative becomes a tale of her destroyed romantic dreams, and she the tragic heroine; in which Sutpen becomes 'the evil's source and head.' Rosa uses this monstrous imagery to construct the past as a gothic romance, with Sutpen the larger than life character famous in the storytelling culture for being created 'in [the teller's] own image to magnify themselves.'¹⁰³ Bakhtin says 'the narrator . . . with [his or her] own discourse, enters into this authorial belief system along with what is actually being told.'¹⁰⁴ Language becomes an active force of self-assertion, often with a specific agenda in mind in the hope of influencing one's listener. In Bakhtin's words it is not 'the object being spoken about which provides the 'arena for discussion,' but rather how the speaker enters the 'alien conceptual horizon of the understanding receiver . . . [forming] dialogical relationships.' Rosa claims to love Charles Bon, for example, despite admitting she saw:

Nothing of his face but that photograph, that shadow . . . why did I not invent, create it . . . if I were God I would invent . . . something . . . which would adorn the barren mirror altars of every plain girl . . . some walking flesh and blood desired by someone else if only in the shadow realm of make-believe (p.147)

⁹⁹ Ibid. p.175

¹⁰⁰ Richard Gray, 'ch.4: Of Past and Present Conflicts' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.213

¹⁰¹ In *The Life of William Faulkner*, Richard Gray outlines how, in Rosa's hands, Sutpen becomes 'A gothic villain, and the story . . . becomes an assault on patriarchal power.'

¹⁰² William Faulkner *Absalom, Absalom!* [1936] (London: Vintage 2005), p.18 (subsequent references in the text)

¹⁰³ Walter Blair, 'Mike Fink in Legend and Story' in *Essays on American Humor: Blair Through the Ages*, Hamlin Hill, ed., (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1993), p.82

¹⁰⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel' in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press 1981), p.314

Bon represents the romanticism she longs for, which has its roots in the Southern myth of ideal womanhood she has been denied by being forced to care for Sutpen's children. Rosa is turning her words into what Bakhtin called 'ideologemes,' channels through which to emphasise her ideology and viewpoint, a '[carrier] of a particular verbal-ideological linguistic belief system, with a particular point of view on the world . . . with particular value judgments and intonations.'¹⁰⁵ She may find respite in the theme of the ideal lover, and once again we see how the idea of storytelling culture can be put to use to ease a sense of repression, just as it was in Chesnut. As such, however, Rosa's accounts are a mixture of the mythic tradition and the personal experience story; the novel has not yet become the entirely mythic reconstruction created by Quentin and Shreve.

Francois Rabelais argued, 'all language is conventional and false, maliciously inadequate to reality . . . truth itself does not seek words; she is afraid to entangle herself in the word, to soil herself in verbal pathos.'¹⁰⁶ Quentin realises Rosa gains self-assertion by explaining how helpless she would have been had she rejected Sutpen, and her refrain 'I don't plead' creates something of a chorus to leave an impression on her listener, allowing her to communicate her hardships without appearing to pity herself. Her description of the South as 'inherently fatalistic' may help her see her mistreatment and disillusionment as part of a grand pattern, and thus out of anyone's control, rather than that Sutpen actually chose to exploit her. As the storyteller, she finally has an outlet to articulate her hardships, and there may be intentional irony in her claim, 'I agreed to marry him. No. I hold no brief for myself.' (p.18) She claims she did not marry Sutpen due to youth or naivety, yet immediately reminds her audience of her stolen childhood; that no child during the Civil War 'had had time or opportunity not only to have been young, but to have heard what being young was like from those who had.' (p.19) Nor, she claims, does she plead 'propinquity,' yet she tells Quentin that most of the men 'whom I would have known ordinarily were dead on lost battlefields.' (p.19) Finally she claims she did not turn to him simply because of her poverty, yet says that as 'an orphan a woman and a pauper, I turned naturally not for protection but for actual food to my only kin.' (p.19) Rosa's challenge that she defies anyone, as 'an orphan of twenty, a young woman without resources,' (p.19) seems to indicate she is, in fact, keen to remind her audience of her helpless position, a valid argument since women were indeed vulnerable during the Reconstruction. She describes herself 'a young woman emerging from a holocaust which had taken parents security and all from her, who had seen all that living meant to her fall into ruins about the feet of a few figures with the shapes of

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p.312

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. p.309

men but with the names and statures of heroes.' (p.19) Her mythologising of Confederate soldiers has some relevance to the folk tradition; Constance Rourke argued folk figures like Davy Crockett or Mike Fink were often recreated in the teller's own image, and here Sutpen joins the tradition of mythological figures. Sutpen also destroyed Rosa's youthful romanticism, perhaps the bitterest aspect of all, since she says before he proposed to her 'I had never imagined . . . that he would look at me, see me,' (p.154) and her sense of validation is destroyed when she learns he only showed interest in her to gain another son. Quite apart from the courtship she had hoped for, his proposal is simply 'you may think I made your sister . . . no very good husband . . . but . . . I shall do no worse at least for you.' (p.164) His words have no romance, or even particular care. However, she emphasises she had no other option and that Sutpen, 'villain dyed though he be,' (p.19) represented the romanticised myth of the Southern gentlemen women were taught to revere. Faulkner emphasises the damage of this myth, and Rosa's belief she had no other option in her empty land, even though Sutpen immediately neglects her. Thus it is significant she calls him an 'ogre'; hers is, after all, a damaged fairytale.

Rosa casts herself as the suppressed heroine of a gothic romance, once again drawing on storytelling archetypes to elevate her life to an epic narrative. She describes Sutpen as 'a fatality and a curse upon our family and God himself were seeing to it that it was performed and discharged to the last drop and dreg,' (p.20) recounting his engulfing influence on her family, but also elevating the man to a dramatic villain. Her narrative is relevant to John T. Irwin's idea of this retelling as 'revenge.' Irwin outlines Freud's idea that this revenge has two aspects, 'repetition and reversal,' gaining a sense of power over past sufferings by making one's own self the figure of power in retelling. Furthermore, Rosa admits she was only a child when Ellen first married Sutpen and constructed much of her memory from the 'overhead talk of adults,' and perhaps every child elevates the world into a folk, mythic level, each adult becoming a larger than life being. Yet her own admission of the gaps in her knowledge is barely relevant to Quentin, since he himself is already beginning to fashion his own images of the past out of the 'musing and decorous wraiths' of Rosa's account, 'the figure of a little girl, in the prim skirts and pantalettes . . . of the dead time.' (p.21)

Quentin seems to have constructed this girl in an ideal image of Southern girlhood according to his ideals; he has no personal experience of the events and so, consciously or not, creates a 'narrative' idealised in the traditional storytelling manner of his region, creating what Bakhtin called the 'image' of the object. Thus Rosa's own inconsistencies are ignored, even though she admits

herself the people of whom she speaks have become 'like the faces in an ogre tale' (p.22) rather than an accurate memory. For example, Rosa claims to remember first seeing Henry and Judith when Ellen came to visit a few years after her marriage, despite admitting:

I was three then, and doubtless I had seen them before; I must have. But I don't remember it. I do not even remember having seen Ellen before that Sunday . . . the sister whom I had never laid eyes on, who before I was born had vanished into the stronghold of an ogre or djinn. (p.23)

Her language is that of a child's memories imbuing Sutpen with monstrous qualities, showing how completely he dominates her consciousness even after his death. In fact, she seems to regard him as the Devil, defining the collective raising of Henry and Judith as a battle between the two parents for the children's souls.

Furthermore, like Jason Compson, Rosa unintentionally reveals her own prejudices. She seems to regard black people as bestial and violent, saying Sutpen fought his slaves 'not as white men fight, with rules and weapons, but as negroes fight to hurt one another quick and bad' (p.29) as if black people were unrestrained and lawless, without what Rosa regards as the civilising influences she associates with white dignity. She describes the 'black beasts' as 'both naked to the waist and gouging at one another's eyes as if they should not only have been the same color, but should have been covered in fur too.'(p.29) Her words once again reflect folk culture, since Rourke says many of the backwoodsmen who tamed the land like Sutpen did became, in retrospect, 'like ogres in medieval fairytale.'¹⁰⁷

Just as Bakhtin argues that any narrative object, 'is always entangled in someone else's discourse about it . . . an object of dispute that is conceptualized and evaluated variously.'¹⁰⁸ Mr. Compson, whom David Minter calls a 'weak, nihilistic alcoholic,' also reinvents the past in his account. And while Rosa creates a 'gothic thriller, Compson creates a 'classical drama which is forever verging on satire,'¹⁰⁹ fully and unscrupulously aware of his own re-invention; he, too, is within the storytelling culture and corrupts the 'tall-tale' to suit his own agenda, just as Flem Snopes

¹⁰⁷ Constance Rourke, 'ch.2: The Gamecock of the Wilderness' in *American Humor: A Study of the National Character* [1931] (New York Review Books: New York 2004), p.41

¹⁰⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel' in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press 1981), p.330

¹⁰⁹ Olga Vickery, 'ch.6: The Idols of the South: *Absalom, Absalom!*' in *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1964), p.87

corrupted folk trading. Richard Gray argues Compson is using his re-telling to explain and justify his own failures. Compson argues it is 'fate' which leads to Rosa's need to return to Ellen and Sutpen, and if we construct a world in which fate organises our actions, we are not accountable, and cannot be held responsible for our failings; Mr. Compson's nihilism may have some effect on his son's eventual suicide. In his mind, Rosa had a 'doomed and frustrated youth' (p.71) because for him, all romantic dreams are hopeless. As he tells Quentin, women are simply a 'delicate equilibrium of periodical filth' (p.108) and it is as pointless for men to idealise them as it is for them to idealise their own lives. For example, Compson always 'liked to believe that Sutpen intended to name Clytie, Cassandra' (p.62) because the imagery of fatalism and mythology reflects his own argument that actions are beyond our control. Indeed, Compson says the two male 'mainstays' of the Compson family, Henry and Bon, were scattered out of the family through 'fateful mischance.' If Fate broke up the family, the dissolution cannot be blamed on its patriarch, and Compson admits he finds this fiction attractive since it excuses him. Compson gives epic, fatalist significance to the events which led to Bon's death, claiming that even as they left Sutpen's Hundred, Henry must have realised he was fated to kill Bon, but his recreation is the most corrupted since he is using the tradition to excuse his own faults. He also makes assumptions of how Henry would have reacted after Sutpen told Henry about Bon's mistress, saying

[Henry] must have known that what his father told him . . . was true. He must have said to himself . . . while he and Bon rode side by side through the iron dark . . . *I will believe. I will. I will. Even if it is so, even if what my father told me is true and which, in spite of myself, I cannot keep from knowing is true, I will still believe.*(p.91)

Compson also fabricates Judith's mindset on the night, since it appears necessary his narrative be concerned with all its 'characters.' He says she never suspected there was any conflict between Bon and her father or had any interest in the conversation between father and son. Richard Gray argues, 'Mr. Compson is a disillusioned idealist, and one of the things he has . . . become disillusioned with is women – or rather, Woman.'¹¹⁰ Once again storytelling provides the ideal 'revenge on reality' and allows Compson to construct his ideal, passive vision of womanhood in his construction of Judith, because this fantasy acts as a counter to the disappointing versions he feels he has encountered in life. He argues, for example, that since Coldfield did not give Rosa the fabric to

¹¹⁰ Richard Gray, 'Out of the South: the fiction of William Faulkner' in *Writing the South* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge and London 1997), p.90

make a wedding dress for Judith, 'I believe she stole it. She must have.' (p.77) His certainty once again signifies his lost idealism; if women are not ideal, they must be the opposite extreme, with a 'natural affinity for brigandage.' (p.78)

Bon is even more a *tabula rasa*, 'apparently complete, without background or past or childhood' (p.93) a cipher to be constructed as the narrator sees fit, 'shadowy, almost substanceless.'(p.93) Compson admits Bon interests him the most and his curiosity leads him to create a 'character' Charles Bon to supplement the person, and an admittedly mythic one, like 'a hero out of some adolescent Arabian Nights.'(p.96) His words place this narrative within a greater folkloric tradition, including myths and folklore from the Middle East. This may be another synthesis between the traditional black and white storytelling cultures, since Compson is drawing on a folk tradition for his own advantage just as Julius did. To Ellen and Judith, Bon remained 'shadowy, a myth, a phantom' around whom they constructed a narrative identity as Judith's ideal suitor. Compson accuses Judith of making Bon's 'image hers through possession'(p.95); ironically, laying such claim to Bon's character is exactly what Compson does himself. He constructs Bon as a European Romantic; once again influenced by his lost ideals, and imagines Henry first encounters Bon 'riding perhaps through the grove at the university . . . in the slightly frenchified cloak . . . or perhaps (I like to think this) . . . reclining in a flowered, almost feminized gown . . . with some tangible effluvium of knowledge . . . of actions done and . . . pleasures exhausted.'(p.95) Compson also creates an 'archetypal fatalist,'¹¹¹ reflective of his own disaffected ethical code and the 'larger than life' folk culture.'

Furthermore, Compson may be imposing his own ethics on the story; again, these are not his experiences, and he can manipulate them as frivolously as he likes. He argues that despite Henry's attempts to preserve Judith's virginity, Henry 'may have been conscious that his . . . pride in his sister's virginity was a false quantity . . . and so must depend on its loss, its absence, to have existed at all.'(p.96) Mr. Compson himself scorns the Southern idea of preserving the purity of womanhood, and discourages Quentin from preserving it in his sister Caddy, so may be using Henry as a symbol to emphasise the futility of Quentin's ideals. He continues to draw attention to the artificiality of his account, perhaps trying to emphasise the futility of seeking the truth to his son, admitting 'You cannot even imagine [Bon] and Judith alone together. Try to do it and the nearest you can come is a

¹¹¹ John T. Irwin, *Doubling and Incest, Repetition and Revenge: A Speculative Reading of Faulkner* (The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore and London 1975), p.61

projection of them while the two actual people . . . [are] separate and elsewhere.’(p.97) Therefore we cannot trust his assumption that Bon would have had no interest in Judith whatsoever. We as readers have no idea whether Bon was Sutpen’s son nor had a plan to seduce Judith, but we must follow Bakhtin’s command to ‘choose a narrative’, which Compson admits to be based upon the evidence of ‘a few mouth-to-mouth tales . . . in which men and women who once lived and breathed are now merely initials or nicknames . . . incomprehensible . . . which sound to us like Sanskrit or Chocktaw.’ (p.100-1) Compson admits that in the characters he has envisioned ‘they are there, yet something is missing . . . you bring them together in the proportions called for, but nothing happens,’ (p.101) and thus the teller uses the materials of the story to communicate their own worldview. Indeed, Compson circles back to remind us he believed the ‘other woman,’ Bon’s mixed-race mistress, to be the only reason for Bon’s rejection by Sutpen and death at Henry’s hands. Compson himself admits nobody truly knew the reason for Henry’s departure, which is beneficial to him since he can continue to shape the events to his own agenda. And he fabricates one final image of romantic love, this time between Bon and Henry. Compson believes his Romantic conception of Bon loved Henry ‘I believe in a deeper sense . . . seeing perhaps in the sister merely the shadow.’ (p.108) Compson argues it is this connection which represents the most enduring love in the narrative, but if Bon truly had planned incest with Judith it is likely he did not love either of his supposed siblings; rather, he saw them as instruments of his revenge. Thus to Mr. Compson, Bon and Henry’s story is the most engaging, and he may be arguing that only men can have real devotion between them; women are inherently untrustworthy. In this way his retelling is far less sympathetic than Rosa’s, for while she is cathartically expressing her own pain, Compson is exploiting her history for his own arguments and thus disrespecting the pain of her past.

Mr. Compson also takes a didactic tone; as has been mentioned, he may be using the story to criticise Quentin’s ideals. He points out to Quentin that the idea of women’s purity is ridiculous since according to ‘Bon’ it is only because ‘we – the thousand, the white men . . . made the law that one-eighth of a specified kind of blood shall outweigh seven-eighths of another kind.’ (p.116) The white men create these ‘mixed races’ and then fear miscegenation because they themselves know how such a thing first began – it is an idea which terrifies Quentin. Since these are his words, his agenda may be to mock such notions of purity and show his son their futility; Compson is too nihilistic to care for real social analysis, although it is noteworthy that men like Bon who take mixed-race people as mistresses pay them more respect than those who simply see them as property.

Richard Gray says that Quentin and Shreve's account is in some ways the best example of the past as a 'living presence capable of growth.' They perhaps employ storytelling in its purest sense, since besides the reader, their recreation has no audience and thus none to manipulate. Irwin argues it is significant that Quentin's narrative is that of a son rising against his father. He reasons 'Quentin cannot seize his father's authority since there is no authority to seize,'¹¹² therefore if Quentin can present a 'history' in which the son is responsible for the father's downfall, he can vicariously live through this character. Mr. Compson remarks at one point that when we try to reconstruct the motives of those in the past 'we find ourselves reduced to the belief . . . that they stemmed from . . . the old virtues.'(p.121) In a similar way, Quentin and Shreve reconstruct the past with bearing on folk themes, which within a folk culture constitute the deepest virtues. Shreve is unable even to remember that Rosa and Quentin are not related; he continually calls her 'Aunt Rosa,' which may also be mocking of the Southern rhetoric; the entire narrative is rather a joke, since he sees no historical significance. He refers to Sutpen as a demon, just as Rosa did, but his tone seems ironic, such as when he describes Sutpen as 'this Faustus, this Beelzebub,' using folk culture frivolously since Sutpen could not be both, as the two characters are folkloric opposites. They have extended the Southern storytelling culture into a more expansive, mythic one. Shreve is mocking the larger than life character that evolves through storytelling, since Northerners and Canadians are not so affected by Southern myths, while Quentin believes he can actually see 'the ragged and starving troops . . . the glaring eyes in which burned some indomitable desperation'(p.189) as they discuss the Civil War, because it was through these Confederate troops that, in his mind, the South came to fall, again elevating history to mythic proportions. Shreve, on the other hand, says of Mr. Coldfield's starving himself that it would have been unnecessary 'if he hadn't made General Lee and Jeff Davis mad,'(p.177) reducing the Civil War to petty squabbles.

Mr. Compson's account is influential on Quentin and Shreve's construction. Quentin himself thinks '*I have heard too much . . . had to listen too much, too long,*'(p.207) realising he is full of fractured narratives in which '*maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished.*'(p.261) Compson describes the arrival of Bon's mistress and Charles Etienne Saint-Valery like 'a garden scene by the Irish poet, Wilde . . . a woman created of by and for darkness . . . in a soft flowing gown . . . of slumberous and fatal insatiation, of passionate and inexorable hunger of the flesh.' (p.193) The references to poetry emphasise Compson is creating this romantic image in a somewhat patronising

¹¹²Ibid.p.110

tone, since he describes the black woman as a symbol of carnality, yet somehow manages to cohere her supposed 'imperfections' with the image of Woman he might have had before he became disillusioned. Furthermore, he describes Charles as 'returned (not home again; returned),' again introducing folktale elements, that of the 'lost son,' which influences Quentin's own eventual construction of the story.

The Sutpen of Quentin and Shreve's story claims to have 'realized that to accomplish my design I should need . . . money in considerable quantities,' (p.243) and thus goes to the West Indies creating another folk narrative, the 'rags to riches' story, and their version of Sutpen even refers to himself as 'green . . . countrified.' (p.242) However, Quentin says Sutpen's trouble was 'innocence,' that even while fighting in the Haitian war 'his innocence still functioned and he . . . did not know what fear was.'(p.250) This innocence, however, may again be Quentin's own image, since it is in fact he who is searching for the perceived lost purity of the South and his sister Caddy. The gaps in their knowledge may make it necessary to supply the 'old virtues' of the folk tradition, re-emphasising its perpetual influence. Irwin argues Quentin is drawn to Bon because Bon has the nerve to become the 'brother seducer, which Quentin does not. 'Tormented by his inability to commit incest with his sister,'¹¹³ Quentin regards this incest as the only way 'his masculinity had ever been potent enough to constitute a threat to the father.'¹¹⁴ As a result, Richard Gray says both Bon and Henry represent 'dark reflections of [Quentin], since the two are . . . the self-proclaimed protector and the would-be violator of a sister's 'honour.'¹¹⁵ Quentin says Sutpen felt that failing to found his dynasty would betray 'all the men and women that had died to make him . . . all the dead ones waiting and watching'(p.220) because Quentin feels influenced by all the narratives of his past. Faulkner even refers to Quentin as a 'barracks' filled with 'ghosts,' emphasising the tempestuous nature of his obsessions through military imagery, but also their insubstantiality to all but Quentin himself. Quentin gives Sutpen a sense of responsibility to the 'codes' he feels are prescribed by Southern history, realising that the past:

is never once but like ripples maybe on water after the pebble sinks, the ripples moving on, spreading, the pool attached by a narrow umbilical water-cord to the next pool . . . maybe

¹¹³ *ibid.*p.37

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*p.49

¹¹⁵ Richard Gray, 'ch.4: Of Past and Present Conflicts' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.219

Father and I are both Shreve, maybe it took Father and me both to make Shreve or Shreve and me both to make Father or . . . Thomas Sutpen to make all of us. (p.262)

Again, Quentin cannot treat the storytelling culture frivolously like his father. His claim to be 'created' by his father shows he feels a direct connection to the constructed past; he is both inside and outside the folk tradition, absorbing folk ideas into his narrative, but too obsessed with them to treat them as a game. He crystallises the irony in our sense of identification with the past which exists only as constant reconstruction to reflect the teller's preoccupations. And since Quentin's key preoccupation is Henry and Bon, the Sutpen of his tale says his design would require 'incidentally . . . a wife' because female characters hold even less significance for him than Mr. Compson, since Quentin finds them too threatening to address in any detail; they admit this is 'no tale about women.' Furthermore, Quentin describes Sutpen as telling this story in an attempt to explain his life 'to fate itself.' His language, echoing the fatalist tropes of his father, shows the influence Compson's account has on his son, yet Quentin does not realise Compson's self-serving use of fate. Rather, he uses the theme to further create his folk epic in which, in Irwin's words 'the dark, feminine Bon is rejected by his father.'¹¹⁶

The idea of Bon as 'feminine' further illustrates his function as Quentin's projection, since Quentin fears his own lack of 'masculinity.' It is no coincidence that Grandfather Compson supposedly claims men learn 'dread and fear of females . . . drawn in with the primary mammalian milk,' (p.265) a narrative expression of Quentin's own fears. Shreve, on the other hand, continues to provide a mocking counterpart, since his aversion to women is far more dismissive and closer to Mr. Compson's: '*They're all bitches.*' Furthermore, it is ironic that Quentin says Sutpen would not call Bon's return 'retribution, no sins of the father come home to roost,' (p.267) since not only does the language further evoke a revenge narrative, but they seem unaware they themselves are creating such a narrative. Quentin says Sutpen must have told Henry that Bon was his brother to orchestrate Henry and Bon's turning on each other. Fatalist elements, of course, give even greater significance to the fratricide theme, and offer their perceived justification for why it captivates their attention, why Quentin thinks '*I shall have to never listen to anything else but this again forever.*'(p.277) They construct that when Bon returned, Sutpen 'must have felt and heard the design – house, position, posterity and all – come down like it had been built out of smoke . . . not even leaving any debris,'

¹¹⁶ John T. Irwin, *Doubling and Incest, Repetition and Revenge: A Speculative Reading of Faulkner* (The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore and London 1975), p.93

(p.267) further emphasising the mythic elements of their account; Quentin compares Sutpen's sense of failure as akin to when 'Rome vanished and Jericho crumbled.' They mythicise the entire story, rather than just Sutpen himself. Yet even after Sutpen's death, after '*Wash Jones has fixed old Sutpen at last,*' (p.287) they circle back to the night Henry left Sutpen's Hundred, reviving Sutpen once more because he is significant to Henry and Bon, making his image far more Romantic than the one who met an undignified death for seducing a fifteen year old. Shreve states 'so the old man sent the nigger for Henry,' (p.293) beginning their fratricide tale from the beginning in which Sutpen serves as a necessary catalyst; he goes as far as to tell Henry that Bon always knew he was related to Henry and Judith. It is necessary the incest be as calculated as possible to reflect Quentin's obsessions 'locked in an incestuous, suicidal struggle with his dark twin, the story.'¹¹⁷ They continue their revenge narrative, assuming Eulalia Bon must have been 'grooming [Bon] . . . herself f . . . [saying] 'He is your father. He cast you and me aside and denied you his name. Now go.' (p.297) Their image of her 'shaping and tempering Bon' reflects that they are, in fact, constructing Bon in such a way themselves. Indeed, Shreve's remark 'let me play a while now' shows that he, at least, sees the narrative as a game and has no emotional investment. Shreve admits that he does not have the same ideals as Quentin, nor is he from the same narrative tradition, and is instead content to indulge in 'strained clowning' with 'the rag-tag and bob-ends of old tales and talking.'(p.303) They even invent their own character, a lawyer, to organise Bon's 'revenge,' which may indicate they do not think a mixed-race woman or child would have the faculties to execute such a 'plan' without the help of a white man: 'the lawyer knew that [Bon's] mother was up to something but . . . his mother didn't know . . . that he lawyer was up to something.'(p.307) As Shreve admits, in storytelling 'there are some things that just have to be whether they are or not.' (p.322) They require 'something else' besides Bon himself, and introduce a plot device who sends Eulalia fake reports ensuring her they are growing closer to Sutpen. They seem of the opinion a woman's 'irrationality' must be appeased even if through dishonesty, and Bon is simply 'so much rich rotting dirt . . . to [plow] . . . and[harvest]' (p.306); there is, of course, dramatic irony in their description of Bon, since they can 'plant' whatever ideas they want about the Bon of their narrative. Quentin initially constructs the lawyer as having described the 'bigamy threat' towards Judith as 'credible,' before changing it to 'certain,' reflecting the depth of Quentin's obsession with this topic. The lawyer crystallises the fact that there is no need for Quentin and Shreve to search for 'accuracy.' It is not 'their experiences,' but their individual

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* p.20

recreation does indeed make it 'their story,' and puts them within the tradition of inherent recreation.

Since Rosa Coldfield was telling the story of her own life, there was no need to construct Bon's inner psyche. However, Quentin and Shreve supply the Modernist inner consciousness when Henry and Bon first meet, and Bon's realisation, '*he has my brow my skull my hands*' (p.314) humanises him for the first time, whereas Rosa and Compson constructed him with detachment. He therefore becomes the 'lost son' with his own voice, desires and history. When Shreve says they are going to 'talk about love,' it is the love between Henry and Bon which they create; Bon has 'not once thought of [Judith],' the threatening otherness of womanhood, since she functions as a catalyst for the fratricide, the real 'lost love.' Conversely, Shreve describes Bon's desire for Judith as '[passing] a cup of lemon sherbert on a tray and . . . [thinking] that would be easy.' (p.322) Their language again diminishes her to an object, of no real consequence, and also the catalyst for the failure of Henry and Bon's 'romance;' Quentin admits he himself would ultimately 'hate the man whose . . . every action would say . . . I have . . . touched parts of your sister's body that you will never . . . touch.' (p.328)

Ultimately, Shreve and Quentin envision themselves in the narrative, 'not two but four of them riding the two horses through the dark . . . Charles-Shreve and Quentin-Henry.' (p.334) Quentin reasons it was only the discovery of Bon's mixed-race which drove Henry to try and prevent the incest: '*it's the miscegenation, not the incest, which you can't bear,*' (p.356) which, of course, reflects Quentin's own feelings. Shreve emphasises Henry's acceptance of the incest would be to accept all he had been taught to 'rebel against on principle.' Thus Henry's final decision, '*Don't try to explain it. Just do it*' shows the strength of the love between them, that Henry would allow Bon to sleep with his sister. However, Henry's attempt to justify the incest by citing precedent in kings and queens, emphasise two of Quentin's obsessions, nobility and incest. Quentin is most likely using the story to place his own incestuous feelings within a noble tradition to provide them with perceived justification, and, of course, make himself the protagonist in the tradition of the personal experience narrative; folk culture is not passive, nor do storytellers intend it to be so.

Finally, however, this recreation becomes the only available means for Quentin to know the past. Possessed by the story, he visits the Sutpen house to discover Henry, now a dying man with a 'wasted yellow face,' (p.373) only able to repeat his own name and the reason for his return: to die. Any search for the phantom of objectivity is futile, and this certifies the power of storytelling, in which constructed characters take on far more substance than their physical, fallible counterparts.

Furthermore, the effects on Quentin's psyche and his subsequent recreations represent the strongest and most chaotic extension of the 'inner landscape' of characters like Jason or Dewey Dell, and Faulkner's strongest development of folk culture into 'folk consciousness.'

Chapter Two

The Trickster in the Novels of William Faulkner

The Trickster of the Old Southwest – The White Confidence Man and the Black Survivalist Trickster

Following the examination of Charles Chesnutt's influence on folk writing, this chapter demonstrates how Faulkner's writing exemplifies Winifred Morgan's argument the American folk tradition contains a synthesis between black and white American culture. Morgan argued the black and white traditions 'listened' to each other, showing the existence of a 'folk memory' sustained through interaction. This synthesis can be seen in the figure of the trickster, whom Ed Piacentino sees as 'one of the most prominent [points of intersection between . . . Southwestern humor and . . . African American humor].'¹¹⁸ Like the traders of Longstreet's 'The Horse-Swap,' white tricksters use trickery for what Edwin T. Arnold calls the 'joy of deception.' These 'bold-faced' tricksters traditionally functioned as figures of fun, not least to themselves, taking a 'merry joy in linguistic excess.'¹¹⁹ In contrast, however, Piacentino observes black trickery grew 'out of the need to survive and get along,' and while 'southwestern tricksters struggle to win; African-American tricksters struggle to survive.'¹²⁰ In contrast to the white tricksters whose interests are self-gain, the archetypal black trickster uses deception to subvert the downtrodden situation of black people and it is harder for readers to 'laugh at and with them.'¹²¹ While both tricksters used trickery to their advantage, 'old southwest tricksters depended upon physical strength and brags, African American tricksters depend primarily on their wiles,'¹²² and it was necessary they wear 'a mask of anti-intellectuality to disguise their underlying duplicitous or manipulative intentions.'¹²³ There is inherent social commentary in the necessity that a black trickster be deceptive or manipulative. Southern society was structured against black people, so their resource and cunning could help them survive in white society,

¹¹⁸ Ed Piacentino, 'Intersecting Paths: The Humor of the Old Southwest as Intertext' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.22

¹¹⁹ Winifred Morgan, 'Signifying: The African-American Trickster and the Humor of the Old Southwest' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.211

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* p.212

¹²¹ *Ibid.* p.210

¹²² *Ibid.* p.213-4

¹²³ Ed Piacentino, 'Intersecting Paths: The Humor of the Old Southwest as Intertext,' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.11

rather than using their wiles for 'malice, revenge, self gain, or sheer fun.'¹²⁴ Like storytelling, trickery was one of the only resources black people, particularly slaves, had at their disposal for self-assertion. However, in practice, the motives of tricksters of both races often subvert the stereotype, with black tricksters trying to gain and white to survive, further emphasise Morgan's argument for the 'inter-textual link between [black and white folk traditions].'¹²⁵ The trickster lineage, from the Southwestern humorists to Faulkner, supports and subverts this archetype, since Flem Snopes not only represents a darker, more ruthless incarnation of the white trickster, but also the heights, and depths, which such a figure can attain in the modern business world. This chapter demonstrates that Faulkner's use of social commentary develops the trickster into a three-dimensional product of the changing social systems, and adds a moral element to this folk archetype. He also punctures the racial stereotypes, making the black trickster more autonomous and self serving rather than simply being a downtrodden figure, and enlarges the sphere the trickster can inhabit, exemplifying it is one of the only means of autonomy for socially marginalised figures such as women.

The 'Roaring' Tricksters of the Southwestern Humorists

Olga Vickery noted the tendency in Southern society to make the horse trader into a 'folk hero.' Though the trickster was exploitative, trade represented a series of rituals, and W.J Cash argued such a ritual was epitomised in that 'typical slicker of the old backwoods, the horse-trader.'¹²⁶ Vickery describes horse-trading as a 'game,' and the deception practiced commended for its 'shrewdness.' In traditional white humour, 'tricksters are limited only by their imaginations – and thus not at all,'¹²⁷ and there are strong links to the Southern culture of bragging and talk, especially when necessary to prove oneself the more successful trader. Even Longstreet's traders are keen boasters, Yellow-Blossom immediately telling the refined narrator that he is

'a *leetle*, jist a *leetle*, of the best man at a horse-swap that ever trod shoe leather.'

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* p.11

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* p.22

¹²⁶ W.J. Cash, 'ch.1: Of Time and Frontiers' in *The Mind of the South* [1941] (New York: Vintage 1991), p.18

¹²⁷ Winifred Morgan, 'Signifying: The African-American Trickster and the Humor of the Old Southwest' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.210

I began to feel my situation a little awkward, when I was relieved by a man somewhat advanced in years . . . this drew the rider's attention, and he turned his attention from me to the stranger.¹²⁸

Longstreet, as always, is presenting folk culture from a detached and somewhat disapproving perspective, admitting discomfort in the presence of such a man. The reader, however, is drawn to Blossom's bragging and vernacular, and becomes part of the ritual just as a Southern onlooker would. Blossom understands the attention his presence commands, and is so 'bold-faced about [his]. . . confidence games that readers laugh at and with [him].'¹²⁹ His speech is in stark contrast to Longstreet's observer, who, when asked if he 'ever [saw] the *Yellow Blossom* from Jasper' replies with the staid 'no . . . but I have often heard of him.' Again Longstreet deliberately uses a refined author to place his intentions outside of folk culture and cast a critical eye on it, yet ironically shows the prominence of the horse-trader. Blossom's skill has earned him local fame, and thus even Longstreet's narrator admits the trader becomes something of a folk legend – the South is truly for 'whoever had any notable capacity for shrewd bargaining and for capitalizing upon the overheated imaginations of his fellows.'¹³⁰

As invitation to Longstreet's narrator to enter the horse swap, Blossom offers the following:

Fetch up your nag, my old cock; you're just the lark I wanted to get hold of. I am perhaps a *leetle*, just a *leetle*, of the best man at a horse-swap that ever stole *cracklins* out of his mammy's fat gourd. Where's your *hoss*. . . Bullet can pick up miles on his feet, and. . . he can keep at it as long as the sun can shine without resting. (p.24)

Blossom's boast that he would steal from his own mother shows his commitment to trickery supercedes any other ties, familial or otherwise, and has been ingrained since birth. Once again, spectacle and self-aggrandisement are inherent within the trade, evident through his boasts about Bullet. Blossom's powerful vernacular reflects the 'larger than life' folk culture, and the object to trade is somewhat redundant. What matters is the trader's ability to linguistically beguile the other

¹²⁸ Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, 'The Horse Swap' in *Georgia Scenes, Characters, Incidents & c., in the First Half Century of the Republic* [1875] (Bibliobazaar: Marston Gate, Great Britain 2009), p.24 (subsequent references in the text)

¹²⁹ Winifred Morgan, 'Signifying: The African-American Trickster and the Humor of the Old Southwest' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.210

¹³⁰ W.J. Cash, 'ch.2: Of Returning Tensions – And The Years The Cuckoo Claimed' in *The Mind of the South* [1941] (New York: Vintage 1991), p.265

into trading the goods, and impress observers with his skill. Indeed, when Peter Ketch presents his horse Kit and offers a trade, Blossom cries, 'Do you bring such a horse as that to trade for Bullet? Oh I see you're no notion of trading.' (p.27) Once again the 'game' requires the trickster to verbally elevate themselves, command the audience's attention and belittle their opponent. In response, Ketch argues Kit to be 'the scariest horse . . . you ever saw,' (p.27) since if Blossom's horse has been described as durable and dependable, his can be larger than life in a different way, savage and monstrous.

The rituals continue; Ketch even reveals some of his horse's flaws, telling Blossom Kit is 'blind as a bat' to give him a false sense that there will be no more deception. They continue to treat the trade almost as a duel. Blossom encourages Ketch to begin the trading, to which Ketch replies 'you made the banter, now make your pass'; there is etiquette to be observed. Though each seeks to outdo the other they wish them to have an opportunity for bragging and bargaining, and the one who bragged loudest earns the right to bid first, reminding us these rituals exist as a shared folk memory amongst bidders and observers. Both even attempt to subvert the trade and accept money for their horse rather than depriving their opponent of their animal, since each has claimed their own is worthy. It is a bluff, of course, each knowing the other will refuse, not wanting to corrupt the culture of trickery with monetary gain. Having traded Bullet, however, Blossom warns Ketch, 'lift up the blanket easy from Bullet's back, for he's a mighty tender-backed horse.' (p.29) Bullet, it transpires, has a six-inch sore on his back, and Longstreet uses his refined narrator to pass judgment on Blossom, saying the 'brute who had been riding [Bullet] . . . in that situation deserved the halter.' (p.30) Despite illustrating the lyrical vibrancy of the Southern traders, Longstreet finally uses his narrator to judge them rather than celebrate them, thus assuring his more genteel readers they are correct to regard such men with contempt.

George Washington Harris extends the 'game' of trickery to an even more anarchic level. Unlike Longstreet, Harris did not come from wealth and was thus concerned with 'the deflation of the powerful or pretentious.'¹³¹ Often, the only way for the powerless to subvert their social superiors was by conning or trickery, and Southern humour celebrated the 'perceived underdog . . .

¹³¹ Ruth D. Weston, 'Barry Hannah's 'High Lonesome' Humor: New Voices for Old Grotesqueries' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.179

who triumphs over the blowhard by beating him at his own game.¹³² and Piacentino points out Sut often ‘dupes and humiliates hypocrites.’ In ‘Parson John Bullen’s Lizards,’ Bullen tries to expel Sut from the community, offering a reward for his capture ‘dead ur alive.’ Sut, however, is thrilled, and, like Longstreet’s traders, brags that ‘there’s none of ‘em fast enough to ketch me.’¹³³ He revels in the ‘sheer fun of trickery’ of which Morgan spoke, and sees the calls for his exile as evidence of winning the game; so much so that when George jokes there has been ‘a great deal’ of talk of Sut’s infamy in George’s own hometown, Sut takes it as a matter of course that George is being serious and that all the surrounding environment celebrate his ‘comic violence and degeneracy.’¹³⁴ Indeed, Sut is surprised people in his own town are calling for his exile, since his only crime was to ‘frustrate a few lizards,’ which to his mind would be perfectly within his rights in a culture of trickery, and since Bullen has called for his exile Sut sees no reason not to ‘keep a-payin him until one or t’other of our toes points up.’ (p.82) When the sanctimonious parson sees Sut in his congregation and tells him it is to his benefit to have come, Sut thinks ‘it woulda been well for *you* if I hadn’t come.’(p.83) Sut revels in the chaos he plans to put in motion, as he does the ‘shoutin and screamin’ once Bullen realises Sut has released the lizards into his clothing, ‘a-cuttin up more shines nor a cockroach on a hot skillet.’ (p.86) The imagery emphasises the comedy of the re-telling, yet also, ironically, Sut seems to identify with the person he has tricked. He calls himself a ‘durned fool’ and feels Bullen is ‘sorta my stripe’; even an outcast trickster has some sense of a folk community, rather than being entirely detached from their targets.

While Sut ‘usually gets what he wants . . . by . . . executing tactics of deception,’¹³⁵ he is not always successful. In the story ‘Blown Up With Soda,’ Sicily Burns rejects Sut’s advances by offering him a ‘new sensation,’ and pours ‘fizzling powders’ into a tumbler. Blinded by lust, Sut assumes they are ‘love-powders,’ providing Sicily with the credulous foil he himself exploits. Sut recreates the experience in powerful folk diction:

¹³² Ed Piacentino, ‘From Tap Root to Branch: The Humor of William Price Fox’ in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.143

¹³³ George Washington Harris, ‘Parson John Bullen’s Lizards’ in *Sut Lovingood* (New York: Grove Press 1954), p.80

¹³⁴ Richard Gray, ‘ch.2: inventing americas: the making of american literature, 1800-1865’ in *A History of American Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 2004), p.129

¹³⁵ Ed Piacentino, ‘Intersecting Paths: The Humor of the Old Southwest as Intertext,’ in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.7

I'd got the idea under my hair that it were *love powders*, and I'd swallered the devil red-hot from home a-thinkin that. Love powders *from her* . . . I thought I'd swallered a threshin-machine in full blast with a couple of bull-dogs . . . fightin . . . and I felt somethin comin up my swaller monstrous like a high-pressure steamboat. I could hear it a-snortin and sizzin . . . *Ketched agin, by the great golly*, thought I. (p.40-1)

Again, the vibrant vernacular and animal imagery is similar to Longstreet's horse-traders, but in Harris the vernacular trickster has taken prominence in the story. Sut devotes far too much vernacular celebration to his account not to respect Sicily's trickery a little, admitting 'she's pow'ful on doctorin' . . . she cured my puppy-love with one dose.' (p.44) Thus the trickster culture takes precedence, with a sense of communion with fellow con artists.

It is Mark Twain, however, who 'extends the concept of the con artist'¹³⁶ by providing a conscience through Huck's observations of the Duke and Dauphin.¹³⁷ Indeed, Huck himself subverts trickery by using it to a moral purpose, though ironically he is not aware of this. As Huck and Jim sail into Cairo, a boat stops them searching for 'five niggers run off . . . is your man black or white?'¹³⁸ After deliberation, Huck replies 'he's white' and lies about his companion having smallpox to prevent them checking the raft. Thus Huck has entirely subverted the white trickster archetype and, indeed, the black, since he has acted for the interest and survival of another.

Like Longstreet's traders, Twain's Duke and Dauphin are 'skilled in the art of flimflam.'¹³⁹ Their very pseudonyms show this, since when Huck meets the two poor whites, one complains 'I brought myself down . . . by rights I am a duke!' (p.117-8) The other, not to be outdone, 'confides' that he, in turn, is the 'wanderin', exiled . . . sufferin' rightful King of France.' (p.119) In the fashion of those who watched the horse-swaps, Huck is taken in at first and Twain is most likely mocking the credulous Southern audience. However, again Twain subverts the stereotype, and Huck says 'it didn't take me long to make up my mind that these . . . low-down humbugs [was] . . . frauds.' His

¹³⁶ Edwin T. Arnold, 'Cormac McCarthy's Frontier Humor' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.204

¹³⁷ Richard Gray says that Twain's is a world in which 'everyone plays a social function . . . sometimes using it to exploit others.' (*A History of American Literature*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 2004) p.254

¹³⁸ Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* [1884] (Harper Press: London 2010), p.88 (subsequent references in text)

¹³⁹ Sarah Gordon, 'Not Such High-Falutin' Company: Flannery O'Connor's Southern Folk' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.79

cognisance and judgment of the trickery sets him apart from the Southern audience willing to be taken in, and it is here that the moral transition begins, and continues in Faulkner, from reckless tricksters acting as they please to a framework in which the reader sees the consequences of the trickery and are encouraged to question the ethics of the trickster. However, when the residents of an Arkansas house find themselves swindled by the men's 'Royal Nonesuch' show, whose title draws attention to the fallacy of the swindler's 'titles,' one man remarks, 'we are sold . . . but we don't want to be the laughing-stock of this whole town . . . What we want . . . is to talk this show up, and sell the *rest* of the town! Then we'll all be in the same boat.' (p.144) The culture of talk has provided a platform for the tricksters, and the residents do not want to be known as the only victims of the swindle. In response, the Duke cries 'Greenhorns, flatheads! I knew the first house would keep mum and let the rest of the town get roped in.' (p.145) This cognisance is, of course, how tricksters have been able to take advantage of the Southern environment in the first place: 'the society confiding in con-men often reveals an inherent moral flaw in itself.'¹⁴⁰

Morgan says that in white trickster tales, the locals have a 'naivety,' 'openness to manipulation' and a sense of being 'in' on the joke. The African-American tradition, however, traditionally 'charts the domination of white over black but also the small advantages . . . blacks are able to negotiate within the framework of that domination.'¹⁴¹ In Chesnut's conjure stories, 'conjure figures . . . as a form of power available to the powerless.'¹⁴² Thus the figure of the conjuror fulfills the role of subversive black trickster and '[takes] on a new life as a means of resistance.'¹⁴³ Julius tells the story 'Mars Jeems's Nightmare,' in response to John and Annie's threat to fire Tom, their inefficient houseboy. In the tale, the slave Solomon is whipped by his owner Jeems for courting a female slave, and the girl is sold to another plantation. Solomon responds by seeking help from Aunt Peggy, the local conjure woman. Just as Twain uses Huck's deception for good, Chesnut subverts both archetypes by using trickery for the benefit of others; Peggy herself admits the spell will do Jeems 'good, but he'll have a monst'us bad dream fus'. Thus we see that the need to survive within a downtrodden folk community, rather than to gain, creates solidarity between the tricksters rather

¹⁴⁰ Winifred Morgan, 'Signifying: The African-American Trickster and the Humor of the Old Southwest' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.211

¹⁴¹ Richard Gray, 'ch.3: reconstructing the past, reimagining the future: the development of American literature 1865-1900' in *A History of American Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 2004), p.280

¹⁴² Richard H. Brodhead, Introduction to *The Conjure Woman and Other Conjure Tales* [1899] (Duke University Press: Durham and London 1993), p.9

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* p.9

than competition. Peggy conjures Jeems into a black slave, thus the trickster upsets the established oppressive order, and again Chesnutt uses folk themes to a political purpose, subverting the power structure if only in fantasy. As a slave, Jeems rebels and receives ‘mo’ lashin’s en cussin’s . . . dan any fo’ yuthers on de plantation.’¹⁴⁴ Ironically, Peggy, like the white tricksters, takes some pleasure in her trick, and asks after the new slave ‘battin’ her eyes’ and ‘straight’nin up,’ excited to hear the results of her conjure. But when Solomon tells her the slave is to be sold, she tells him he should have told her sooner, that ‘w’en you is foolin’ wid a cunjuh ‘oman like me, you got ter min’ yo’ P’s en Q’s er dey’ll be trouble’ (p.64); unlike most slaves, Peggy can exercise influence over the affairs of the plantation. There is dark irony here, in that Peggy is fictional; the black tradition has no horse-traders or Sut Lovingood’s, but rather subversive mythical figures to ease the pain of their oppression. However, Julius himself is using the story to his advantage, and that of his people, which traditionally, for black people, is only possible when ‘the speaker’s threats are coded in images.’¹⁴⁵ Perhaps enlightened by the theme of how easily the powerful might become powerless, John and Annie decide not to fire Tom.

Subversions of the Black and White Archetype, and the Fear of Intimacy: *Go Down, Moses* and *Light in August*

Although Faulkner employed a ‘homely and sobersided frontier humor’¹⁴⁶ in his fiction, he, like Chesnutt, subverts the trickster archetypes. Richard Gray argues that ‘[*Go Down, Moses* promotes] a deeper examination of the relationship between the black and white races’¹⁴⁷ and, subsequently, moves tricksters even further away from the stereotypes. After all, many of Faulkner’s characters are mixed-race, immediately defying such simplistic classifications. The very inclusion of mixed-race characters means Faulkner’s tricksters, and the motivation behind their actions, cannot be regarded as quite so ‘black and white,’ and some examination of his subversion of the stereotype is in order.

¹⁴⁴ Charles Chesnutt, ‘Mars Jeems’ Nightmare’ in *The Conjure Woman and Other Conjure Tales* [1899] (Duke University Press: Durham and London 1993), p.62 (subsequent references in the text)

¹⁴⁵ Winifred Morgan, ‘Signifying: The African-American Trickster and the Humor of the Old Southwest’ in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor* Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.221

¹⁴⁶ Ed Piacentino, ‘Intersecting Paths: The Humor of the Old Southwest as Intertext,’ in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.11

¹⁴⁷ Richard Gray, ‘ch.5: Public Faces and Private Places’ in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.272

Faulkner's 'The Fire and the Hearth' reflects Morgan's argument that the trickster is an effective tool to examine 'cultural anxiety.' In this case, it is the anxiety between black and white people, further complicated by mixed-race characters such as Lucas Beauchamp.¹⁴⁸ The story opens by outlining Lucas Beauchamp's intentions to 'take care' of George Wilkins by hiding an illegal whisky still on the Edmonds plantation. Indeed, Lucas, 'never . . . extricated from . . . tricks'¹⁴⁹ regards such an activity as 'business,' using trickery actively for his own self-interest as, stereotypically, would apply to a white trickster to gain a profit; Lucas is trying to prevent George Wilkins marrying Lucas' daughter, moving onto his land and upsetting Lucas' moonshine business. We are reminded that once trickery becomes financial, the plantation will be surrounded by sheriffs. The onset of economic self-interest subsumes the sense of trickery as a game in which all participants gain an equal benefit, or loss, and eradicates the ability to simply characterise tricksters by simple racial definitions. Indeed, Faulkner refers to Lucas' trickery as 'fun,' but immediately reminds us he must act 'secretly . . . for no man needed to tell him what Zack Edmonds . . . would do . . . if they ever found it out.'¹⁵⁰ Faulkner develops the trickster by introducing tension between the archetypes. Lucas may act according to white trickster stereotypes, but socially he is dispossessed in his own family because of his mixed race, and like Uncle Julius cannot claim real economic power; 'in the eyes of the world he descended not from McCaslins but from McCaslin slaves.'¹⁵¹ Ironically, subverting the trickster archetype does not subvert the existing power structure; instead Faulkner creates a new form of liminal trickster altogether. Lucas' real craving is not money, but the respect he would be due if people knew how Edmonds had, in Lucas' mind, swindled him. As with Chesnutt, such subversion would not be necessary if black people, and mixed race, were not so dispossessed.¹⁵² Lucas is finally driven to enter McCaslin's house with a razor, a far and violent cry from the braggarts and lascivious tricksters of Southwestern humor, who upset the stable environment for fun; his actions culminate in his shooting Roth Edmonds, albeit only to have the gun misfire. Lucas admits, however, that had he killed Roth he would have waited for the 'rope' or even the 'coal oil,' showing his dedication to vindicating his honour, to which his trickery is of pivotal importance, honour being something of a

¹⁴⁸ Olga Vickery points out that 'it is because [Lucas] is able to fuse the white and black blood with their divergent myths and rituals that he becomes self-progenitive.' (*The Novels of William Faulkner* p.128)

¹⁴⁹ Richard Gray, 'ch.5: Public Faces and Private Places' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.278

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p.28

¹⁵¹ William Faulkner, 'The Fire and the Hearth' in *Go Down, Moses* [1942] (London: Vintage 1996), p.29 (subsequent references in the text)

¹⁵² Richard Gray says that 'Lucas, the betrayed son and brother . . . [becomes] Lucas, the crafty and inscrutable trickster.' (*The Life of William Faulkner* p.278)

luxury traditionally available to white tricksters. Lucas' concern for honour shows Faulkner's characters have a certain amount of self-assertion and dignity, and since Lucas is not simply concerned with survival, he can ask himself what he does want out of life. Indeed, he has no scruples about letting others be punished for the profit incentives he himself keeps, and informs Zack Edmonds of George's illegal still. Lucas takes malicious pride in the prospect of George's arrest, gleefully reminding himself that George won't find 'female company' in jail, and showing Faulkner's black tricksters quite capable of the cutthroat attitude attributed to whites. However, when his daughter Nat unearths his hidden still and displays it in front of their house, Lucas becomes desperate, crying to destroy the still with an axe, and again we gain insight into Lucas' principles. He might have been willing to be hanged for killing Roth and vindicating his honour, but not simply for the discovery of his hidden still.

Like Twain, Faulkner also uses the figure of the travelling salesman. This figure, like the Duke and Dauphin, is happy to exploit the greed of others. Unlike the unambiguous Lucas, the salesman fits comfortably within the stereotype of 'white trickster, simply concerned with profit. His whisky business exposed, Lucas becomes desperate to find the gold he believes to be hidden under the McCaslin land, and the salesman offers to sell him a 'divining machine' to uncover the gold. Again, we see the continuing shift in trickery and deception from folk ritual to financial agenda, further compounded by the fact that Lucas offers to trade his mule for the metal detector. The salesman reflects Vickery's ideas about the corruption of the Southern culture, that, 'at its best [trade] . . . provides an opportunity for exercising an intellectual skill against a worthy opponent for . . . the sheer pleasure of the game. At its worst [it] . . . is used . . . to amass wealth and to acquire power over other men.'¹⁵³ Lucas is not only corrupting the folk ritual of horse-swapping, but symbolically, by swapping his mule for a means to find gold, is swapping the old folk culture and traditions for the new capitalistic age. Indeed, he worships the machine, rhapsodising 'how rich I'd be if I just knowed what hit knows.' (p.68) The box is, of course, a swindle, a 'three-hundred-and-twenty-five-dollar talking box . . . that don't seem . . . [able] to say anything but no.' (p.70)

The box emphasises the risks of the new economic agenda of the changing world; within its structure one loses far more than in trading and swapping, in which the objects traded are often of equal value, or lack thereof. In this changing environment, the simplistic definitions of tricksters are

¹⁵³ Olga Vickery, 'ch.11: The Profit and the Loss: *The Hamlet, The Town and The Mansion*' in *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1964), p.168

no longer sufficient, since everyone must find a means of gaining capital to exist in this new system; whites, too, must find a way to survive rather than simply besting others in trade for the sheer fun of it. Furthermore, once Lucas finds a small amount with the detector, the salesman remarks ‘you found? This machine don’t belong to you, old man.’ (p.71) For the salesman does not recognise the trade of the mule, but only a monetary trade. Legally Lucas does not own the detector or any of its profits, and the folk trader has no place in the new world; the salesman represents the logical extension of Lucas’ own traditionally ‘white’ concern with profit. Lucas is left with simply ‘an abrupt boiling over of an accumulation of floutings and outrages covering not only his span but his father’s lifetime too, back into the time of his grandfather.’ (p.78) Again this not only shows Lucas’ desire to get what is ‘his,’ but that this present denial is simply the latest in his life of dispossession, since Roth refuses his half-brother the inheritance because of his ‘black blood’; it is clear, as Brooks says, that ‘Lucas has a real lust for power . . . he wants the money as a symbol of [that] power.’¹⁵⁴

Joe Christmas, too, upsets the stereotypes. He is even more subversive in that, unlike Lucas, his ‘mixed race’ is not even determinate: ‘in Joe’s case, the black/white opposition . . . is non operative.’¹⁵⁵ Rather, since Joe refuses to ‘choose a race,’ he remains ‘the antagonist in all situations.’¹⁵⁶ The reader first encounters Joe as a suspected bootlegger, selling to a few anonymous customers. His illegal activities would seem to fulfill the white trickster parameters of using deception to make money, since Joe is ostensibly a ‘white’ man. However, the rumour of his mixed-race, which he and others take for granted, again complicates the issue. In the eyes of Southern society, Joe is a black man who ‘dared the law to make money,’ which, of course, will be far more dangerous for him than it would be a white trickster, whose life would most likely not be in danger even if they were resented by the community.

Morgan reminds us that tricksters are ‘liminal characters, living between groups and never quite belonging to either.’¹⁵⁷ Once again, however, Faulkner develops this archetype even further, and in more human terms, by making much of Joe’s deception the result of a fear of intimacy, which

¹⁵⁴ Cleanth Brooks, ‘ch.12: The Story of the McCaslins (Go Down, Moses)’ in *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1990), p.253

¹⁵⁵ Richard Gray, ‘ch.4: Of Past and Present Conflicts’ in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.184

¹⁵⁶ Olga Vickery, ‘ch.5: The Shadow and the Mirror: *Light in August*’ in *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1964), p.69

¹⁵⁷ Winifred Morgan, ‘Signifying: The African-American Trickster and the Humor of the Old Southwest’ in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor* Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.212

gives him a deeper psychological depth and vulnerability. Joe remembers that, when he was a child, Mrs. McEachern had mended his clothes, and rather than be in debt to a woman, 'with his pocket knife and the cold and bloodless deliberation of a surgeon he would cut off the buttons which she had just replaced.'¹⁵⁸ His bloodlessness and lack of passion show a detachment from kindness and intimacy, since the concepts are still alien to him. It is the 'soft kindness of woman . . . that he abominates'¹⁵⁹ and refuses to engage with emotionally. Once again, Faulkner introduces the new 'silent trickster' who 'by nature and choice . . . [exists] on the margins,'¹⁶⁰ rather than immersing themselves in the folk community.

Joe's sense of being unable to connect with women, and thus the need to deceive or evade them, may have its roots childhood. It was at this point he was expelled from his orphanage for witnessing the dietician's affair, his first sexual observation. The dietician in turn assumes the child 'not only intended to tell, but he deferred doing it deliberately in order to make her suffer more' (p.94); in a culture accustomed to dishonesty and manipulation, people assume such sentiments even in a child. Indeed, she tries to initiate Joe into the modern monetary framework, offering him a dollar to keep quiet about the affair, showing how money is beginning to infiltrate all levels of assumed trickery; she even promises him a dollar a month, as if giving his part in her dishonesty a monthly salary. Finally, she informs the orphanage mistress of Joe's mixed race, knowing 'they'll send him to the nigger orphanage . . . they will have to' (p.99); sexuality and women are both contributing factors in the genesis of Joe's life as an outcast. Indeed, Joe's fear of intimacy precedes even this, with the girl Alice whom Joe allows to 'mother him a little.' Perhaps, for this reason, she takes on a non-sexual significance in Joe's life, a woman who 'was not and never would be his enemy.' (p.104) Thus when she is taken by new foster parents, his sense of loss is all the more powerful, and it is perhaps here he begins to fear expressing intimacy or love for the opposite sex, left with the certainty from childhood that it can only end in abandonment, and be a tarnished version of this perceived ideal.

Joe rejects any emotional intimacy from women during his teenage and adult life, and sees deception as a valuable weapon to prevent reaching an emotional kinship with them. When

¹⁵⁸ William Faulkner, *Light in August* [1932] (London: Vintage 2005), p.82 (subsequent references in the text)

¹⁵⁹ Cleanth Brooks, 'ch.4: The Community and the Pariah: (Light in August)' in *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1990), p.65

¹⁶⁰ Winifred Morgan, 'Signifying: The African-American Trickster and the Humor of the Old Southwest' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor* Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.211

McEachern whips him for failing to learn his catechism, Joe is stoic throughout the beating: 'he did not flinch, no quiver passed over his face.' (p.114) Again the trickster is characterised by silence, representing a new sense of detachment and self-reliance. As further punishment, McEachern starves him; in the masculine sphere, however, Joe understands the punishment to be 'impersonal,' both he and McEachern accepting it as 'natural and inescapable fact.' Yet when Mrs. McEachern brings him a tray of food, Joe rejects her, first verbally – 'I aint hungry' - and then physically:

While she watched him he rose from the bed and took the tray . . . and turned it upside down, dumping the dishes and the food and all onto the floor. Then he returned to the bed, carrying the empty tray as though it were a monstrosity and her the bearer . . . then she left the room . . . an hour later . . . he . . . went and knelt . . . above the outraged food . . . ate, like a savage, like a dog. (p.117-8)

It is not the food he rejects, but the sense of being beholden to a woman for it. He would rather fool Mrs. McEachern that he has rejected her, and with her the 'feminine' sphere of civility, and eat animalistic and isolated. In Joe's case, however, readers may feel somewhat sympathetic since he has certainly been led to expect rejection; Brooks notes '[Joe] is cut off from ties of any sort, and he learns to suspect and resent any appeal to sentiment or tenderness.'¹⁶¹

Joe continues to show 'white trickster' characteristics by taking pleasure in his trickery and deception. For example, when McEachern interrogates him about the disappearance of Joe's heifer, already knowing Joe has sold it to buy a suit, Joe replies 'I reckon she is down at the creek.' (p.122) There is a lack of trust between him and his foster father, and his impulse is to be deceptive even when he knows his lies will be discovered, simply to maintain emotional distance from McEachern. Indeed, he takes pleasure in the thought of telling Mrs. McEachern, 'he says he has nursed a blasphemer and an ingrate. I dare you to tell him . . . that he has nursed a nigger beneath his own roof.' (p.127) Joe knows the darkest trick he could play would, ironically, be to tell what he believes to be the truth about himself, yet the pleasure he feels in this knowledge is not frivolous in the manner of Sut Lovingood. It is instead a realisation that the secret of his supposed ancestry is one of the few powers he has, the means to manipulate others perception of him, or shock them with the revelation of what he believes to be his identity. Indeed, Joe has developed a year's practice hiding a coil of rope with which to escape at night without McEachern's knowledge. His escapes are, one

¹⁶¹ Cleanth Brooks, 'ch.4: The Community and the Pariah: (Light in August)' in *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1990), p.56

could argue, for personal gain, but Joe's repressed life has driven him to such deceptive action. Once again this subverts the stereotype, since even those simply rumoured to be 'black' must use trickery to counter suppressive situations. There is not a sense of 'winning' or 'surviving' here, more the necessity of deception simply to function independently. Yet Joe cannot suppress his malice toward his 'bastard son of a bitch' of a stepfather and hopes McEachern will follow him. This is ironic, since if McEachern were to do so, Joe's deception would be redundant; but it gives a darker development to Longstreet's traders, who rely on an audience, since Joe wishes his act to be a direct defiance, that McEachern would follow him or try to stop him. Faulkner has developed the reliance on an audience beyond bragging and spectacle into a desperate need by a suppressed adolescent to subvert his patriarch. When Joe accompanies McEachern to town in the hopes of meeting Bobbie, a local waitress, he seems almost disappointed McEachern goes straight to her café, meaning 'he did not need to escape, though he would have, even by violence perhaps.' (p.138) Joe seems always inclined toward the deceptive option because his life has already taught him the danger he would be in were he to confide his supposed secret. Society has somewhat caused his need to be deceptive. Again, the use of trickery for one's own safety is traditionally linked with the black trickster, and the fact that Joe must act according to these dictums emphasises the elasticity of such simplistic definitions.

Indeed, the Southern society is so accustomed to trickery that Joe is even rejected when he tries to be honest. When he enters a café to square his debt for coffee and pie purchased the day before, Max, the owner, refuses him, saying 'I don't know what [your] . . . racket is. But [you] can't work it here.' (p.139) Once again Faulkner has developed the stereotype, since the Southwestern humorists presented the trickster too frivolously to consider that their actions might be to the detriment of one trying to be honest.

Joe's relationship with the waitress Bobbie makes deception necessary, since McEachern would condemn him for 'lechery'; again this is somewhat for self-preservation than personal gain. However, he continues his detachment; even though he hides the rope he uses to slip out in the same hole Mrs. McEachern hides her stored money, he resists the temptation to show her 'the implement of his sin . . . having got the idea . . . from her,' (p.144) because he knows he would want to help him hide it. Ostensibly, he fears she would arouse McEachern's suspicion, but we have already seen Joe takes some revelry in knowing McEachern might suspect him. It is possible he deceives Mrs. McEachern because he does not want to form intimacy with the 'female influence' again, even if only in the concealment of a trick. Indeed, he begins to steal money from her hoard, as

if to spite her further; Joe's bitterness is even stronger towards those who might try to help him than those who persecute him. After attacking McEachern with a chair, Joe returns home and steals the money in front of his foster mother, being sure to offer one final statement to establish distance between them: he tells her 'I didn't ask you for it . . . because I was afraid you would give it to me. I just took it. Don't forget that.' (p.157) He cannot leave without reminding her he would rather deceive her than develop a relationship with her, and once again he wants those he deceives to be aware that he has tricked them, a traditionally 'white' celebration of one's trickery. The irony is that once he meets Bobbie with the money, she rejects him, and tries to turn him in to the police, further emphasising to Joe that intimacy will only leave him open to dishonesty and betrayal.

Joe feels him and Joanna Burden relate to each other like 'strangers.' Vickery points out that, having been disillusioned with Bobbie, Joe 'visualizes . . . a return to the natural world where the only . . . meaningful relationship is sexual'¹⁶² rather than emotional. Furthermore, Joe sees the sexual relationship itself as a fantasy of control and skullduggery, imagining himself entering Joanna's house for each tryst 'like a thief or robber . . . to despoil her virginity each time anew.' (p.176) Once again, putting the relationship within the context of theft or rape maintains the context of deception and prevents the need to be open with his partner in any way. Rather, their developing relationship leaves him feeling bitter, anxious to 'blow' and 'show the bitch' she cannot have emotional control over him.

As with Mrs. McEachern, Joe's rejection of women manifests in the rejection of food. When he arrives home to see Joanna has prepared dinner for him, his only thought is that it is '*set out for the nigger. For the nigger.*' (p.179) Indeed, as he hurls the food against the wall, he thinks '*this is fun. Why didn't I think of this before?*' (p.179) Finally he is taking some pleasure in his acts of trickery, but the pleasure is far too violent to fully reflect the southwestern traders. Rather, Joe 'is forever rejecting the food offered him because of his abnormal sensitivity to the thoughts and attitudes of the giver.'¹⁶³ Indeed, as his life begins to become more domestic, working during the day while Joanna keeps the house, Joe finds himself yearning for 'the savage and lonely street which he had chosen of his own will, thinking *this is not my life. I don't belong here.*' (p.194) Though he might finally have found peace of a kind, his identity as an outsider is by now far too ingrained, and thus

¹⁶²Olga Vickery, 'ch.5: The Shadow and the Mirror: *Light in August*' in *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1964), p.72

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* p.81

'Joe seeks peace that is distinctly escapist.'¹⁶⁴ Once again he uses deception as a means to keep himself removed from a woman, to have a secret entirely 'his,' this time by beginning to sell whisky in secret. As with Mrs. McEachern and the rope, Joe admits to himself, 'very likely she would not have objected . . . but . . . he was doomed to conceal always something from the women who surrounded him.' (p.196-7) Again , we see a psychological dimension in Faulkner which would not have been available to Longstreet or Harris, and even more developed than Twain or Chesnutt. Certainly it develops Joe from being regarded as simply fitting the stereotypes of either the black or white trickster tradition. However, Joe does regard intimacy in 'practical, material' terms, a commodity perhaps to be used and exploited much like the horse-traders regarded their animals, just as he betrays Joanna with other women 'bought for a price,' to counteract the loss of autonomy and power he feels in Joanna's pseudo-romanticism.

As I Lay Dying: The Female Trickster

In *Light in August*, we see Faulkner develops, if not outright rejects, the racial trickster archetype, and he does the same in *As I Lay Dying* with regard to gender. Addie Bundren's monologue is, of course, 'true to the carnival spirit of the book as a whole,'¹⁶⁵ yet, in her dying wish to be buried in her Jefferson family plot, Cleanth Brooks argues Addie is also 'deliberately punishing . . . her family by playing a horrible joke on them.'¹⁶⁶

Anse Bundren himself is somewhat deceptive, lying to his family about his reasons for going to Jefferson. He says of Addie, 'she's counted on [being buried in Jefferson] . . . She'll want to start right away. I know her . . . I promised her.'¹⁶⁷ He is in fact heading to Jefferson from self-interest, in order to purchase a new set of teeth, and his wife's death provides a convenient excuse. Addie, however, has managed to deceive her entire family and the gossips of Jefferson. Cora Tull, for example, praises Darl for being the closest to Addie in character, for being the only of the Bundrens 'who had any natural affection,' suggesting, by extension, that Addie was the same way. Likewise, the spectacle of Addie's corpse being paraded through Jefferson manipulates the sympathy of her onlookers. When the couple Samson and Rachel see the grisly spectacle, Rachel describes it as an

¹⁶⁴ David Minter, 'Recognitions' in *William Faulkner: His Life and Work* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, Maryland 1980), p.131

¹⁶⁵ Richard Gray, 'ch.3: Rewriting the Homeplace' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.161

¹⁶⁶ Cleanth Brooks, 'ch.8: Odyssey of the Bundrens (*As I Lay Dying*)' in *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1990), p.151

¹⁶⁷ William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* [1930] (London: Vintage 2004), p.14 (subsequent references in the text)

'outrage' and lambasts 'all the men in the world' (p.105) for '[torturing women] alive and [flouting] . . . us dead, dragging us up and down the country.' (P.105) Thus in death Addie has managed to make herself the focus of sympathy, Anse a pariah, manipulating the community; '[Addie's] body becomes of inordinate importance to her . . . as a token of her final repudiation of Anse.'¹⁶⁸ Yet Addie has done so through the stream-of-consciousness rather than folk blustery, a channel largely restricted for women. It is only in death that Addie can truly speak her mind, and she goes on to elaborate the loss of self she felt in life. Indeed, we could see Addie's articulation of her life as a kind of post-mortem self-gain, in the fashion of the traditional white trickster; '[Addie's] body will die on its own terms: it will not . . . allow her family rest – until it has been delivered to its chosen resting place.'¹⁶⁹

It transpires that in life, Addie determined to undermine Anse's will, particularly in regard to Jewel, the physical manifestation of her affair with Reverend Whitfield. Thus while Jewel is secretly working to buy the horse (his own symbol of independence from Anse, since he purchases it without financial aid from his father), Addie feeds Jewel in secret and persuades Dewey Dell to do his milking. In contrast to the male trickster, categorised by rejection of food and companionship, Addie, confined in life to the familial sphere, uses her domestic role to aid her child's deception just as Mrs McEachern tried to aid Joe, though with a far more direct objective. However, like Chesnutt's Aunt Peggy, there is at least a degree less self-interest in Addie's trickery than in the white male tradition, and it is ironic that even Darl assumes Addie is 'hating herself for the deceit,' when it is in fact giving her a sense of purpose.

If Addie has intended this journey to spite her family, then she does so at the expense of her own body. When the Bundrens cross the decaying bridge, Addie's coffin finally falls into the water. The depth of the effect her request may be having on her children becomes apparent, particularly Vardaman. His cries 'where is ma' once again signify Faulkner's compassionate development of the trickster tradition by showing its effect on the targets, often too young or too vulnerable to accept such deception as simply a 'game.' The manipulation of the children's love is clear too, as Jewel and Cash 'lunge and splash' to rescue their mother's body.

Addie's section further illustrates that deceit has formed the foundation of her life, beginning in her early job as a schoolteacher:

¹⁶⁸ Cleanth Brooks, 'ch.8: Odyssey of the Bundrens (As I Lay Dying)' in *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1990), p.149

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* p.149

In the afternoon when school was out and the last one had left with his dirty little snuffling nose . . . I would go down the hill to the spring where I could be quiet and hate them . . . when I would have to look at them day after day, each with his or her secret and selfish thought . . . I would look forward to the times when they faulted, so I could whip them. When the switch fell I could feel it upon my flesh; when it welted and ridged it was my blood that ran, and I would think with each blow . . . now you are aware of me! (p.157)

Addie's trickery masks an inner darkness. Her claim to be able to sense each 'secret and selfish thought' she believes her pupils feel towards her is far more likely to be a projection of her own contempt for them. As with Joe Christmas, the trickery and brutality constitute self-assertion, Addie thinking the whippings cause the children to be 'aware' of her. Once again, of course, her true feelings are kept secret, locked in Addie's mind rather than being a 'spectacle,' the only way to endure what she sees as the burden of her loneliness. Ironically, Addie hoped the romanticism she first perceived in Anse would free her from this loneliness, when she believed 'living was terrible and . . . [love] was the answer to it.'(p.159)

Addie herself states aversion to the archetypal trickster's beguiling use of language, complaining that 'words are no good; words don't even fit what they are trying to say at . . . that only through the blows of my switch could my blood and their blood flow as one stream.' (p.159-60) Faulkner has once again used the inner consciousness to develop the trickster's language culture, and made silence as deceptive as language. Addie's hatred of words may originate from her disappointment that Anse did not fulfill the romantic fantasies she had been raised to associate with the word 'love.' She says that in the past she herself felt 'as though he had tricked me, hidden within a word . . . but then I realized that I had been tricked by words older than Anse or love . . . and that my revenge would be that he would never know I was taking revenge.' (p.161) Addie mistrusts words and remembers how she loved the 'dark voicelessness' of the night times. She represents the new trickster not only through her gender, but through her attachment to the inner, private world, with no need for the 'forlorn echo of the dead word.' (p.163)

This is not to say, however, that privately Addie does not celebrate her role as much as her predecessors. During her affair with Whitfield she revels in his meeting her 'dressed in sin,' subverting the demands of his public office, 'the sin the more utter and terrible since he was the instrument ordained by God . . . more beautiful since the garment he had exchanged for sin was sanctified.' (p.163) Addie's celebratory attitude is even more significant since Whitfield, the male half

of Addie's deception, is too cowardly to publicly admit to being Jewel's father, whereas in Addie's eyes, 'sin may be a step towards salvation.'¹⁷⁰

The Hamlet, the Trickster as Spectacle, and the Capitalist Agenda

In the tradition of Mark Twain, Faulkner 'uses the confidence man as an essential ingredient of [his] comedy.'¹⁷¹ However, just as he developed the trickster through developments of the inner consciousness in *As I Lay Dying*, so he does with the modern profit motive in *The Hamlet*.¹⁷² Despite the tendency in Southern communities to mistrust the outsider, on Flem's arrival Ratliff speaks of him in a 'lazy, equable voice,' since to him, all elements of Frenchman's Bend have their place in its greater structure, even a stranger. As the novel develops, Ratliff is often able to refrain from judging Flem, '[viewing] the world with a good measure of detachment and . . . joy in observing the behavior of human beings and the parade of human folly.'¹⁷³ Jody Varner, on the other hand, finds Flem's history intimidating, and, though he senses the economic threat Flem may pose, is unable to 'have him arrested for barn-burning for fear he'll set my barn afire.'¹⁷⁴ Until now, the Varners have been the economic power within the community, but have also been recognised as part of that community, the old world patriarchs. In contrast to their constancy, Flem represents the new age, the 'pure, graceless acquisitiveness'¹⁷⁵ of modern capitalism, and he tells Varner 'I been getting along with fifteen or twenty landlords since I started farming. When I can't get along with them, I leave.' (p.21) On his own admission, Flem is rootless, and so cannot be considered or tolerated as part of the community. Richard Gray notes he simply sees the inhabitants of Frenchman's Bend as 'victims of necessity'¹⁷⁶ to further his self interest, and Varner and Flem's opposing views on business become evident in their conversation topics:

¹⁷⁰ Olga Vickery, 'ch.4: The Dimensions of Consciousness: *As I Lay Dying*' in *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1964), p.54

¹⁷¹ Sarah Gordon, 'Not such High-Falutin' Company: Flannery O'Connor's Southern Folk' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor* Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.79

¹⁷² Richard Gray describes Frenchman's Bend as 'a place on the brink of alteration, waiting for the logic of its prior economic and social alterations to be continued; it is, in this sense, waiting for the arrival of Flem Snopes.' (*The Life of William Faulkner* p.256)

¹⁷³ Cleanth Brooks, 'ch.9: Faulkner's Savage Arcadia: Frenchman's Bend (The Hamlet)' in *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1990), p.172

¹⁷⁴ William Faulkner, *The Hamlet* [1940] (New York: Vintage 1956), p.20 (subsequent references in the text)

¹⁷⁵ Cleanth Brooks, 'ch.9: Faulkner's Savage Arcadia: Frenchman's Bend (The Hamlet)' in *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1990), p.181

¹⁷⁶ Richard Gray, 'ch.5: Public Faces and Private Places' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.266

'Say [a fellow] wanted to take up some other line. . .he will need the good will of the folks he aims to make his money off to do it. And what better way –'

'You run a store, don't you?' the other said.

'-better way-' Varner said. Then he stopped. 'What?' (p.23)

Varner tries to advise Flem on the ethics of business in the community, telling Flem he will need to gain the trust of the villagers, even if only to beguile and exploit them. Yet Flem cuts him off with the curt enquiry about Varner's store, a possible starting point for Flem's profits. To Flem, the community is immaterial, all that concerns him are the available channels of making money, and he is unwilling to say more than the absolute minimum to ingratiate himself within them.

Like Longstreet, Faulkner uses the horse trade as a prevalent folk custom in Frenchman's Bend, and, once again, the dishonesty inherent in the practice is accepted as part of social custom. Ratliff tells tale of how, at eight years old, he saw how Pat Stamper 'eliminated [Ab Snopes] . . . from horse-trading.' (p.29) Pat Stamper himself has become a 'legend' in Frenchman's Bend due to his skill in trading; the residents do not resent the trickster, but rather actively admire him provided he acts according to their terms and rituals; Stamper is regarded as 'something of a conjuror and a magician'¹⁷⁷ for his skill. Ratliff even recounts being cheated by Stamper with amusement, since you don't get 'stung very bad' when you simply trade horse for horse, rather, Ab and Stamper are concerned with a game of 'one-upmanship.' Ratliff tells of how Ab, respectful of the trading culture, swapped Beasley Kemp 'a straight stock and a old wore-out sourghum mill . . . for the horse' (p.31) Unbeknownst to Ab, however, Pat Stamper has owned the horse before Kemp, drawing Ab into what Ratliff calls the 'Pat Stamper sickness' of shrewd trickery. It is not until a town journey, however, that Ab and Ratliff realise how severely damaged the horse is, when it begins to toss its head 'like it had been touched with a hot poker.' (p.33) The horse, it transpires, was originally owned by Pat Stamper, who traded in to Herman Short for a mule and a buggy, while Short in turn gave it to Kemp for eight dollars. Thus Stamper has been the progenitor of the con and has been able, in folk fashion, to avoid losing out financially. Indeed, Ab feels bitterness towards Stamper because of Kemp having lost his money on the worthless horse; while the tricksters may dupe each other in trade, there is some solidarity against the man who would soil the custom with money. In Ratliff's words,

¹⁷⁷Cleath Brooks, 'ch.9: Faulkner's Savage Arcadia: Frenchman's Bend (The Hamlet)' in *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1990), p.182

'when a man swaps horse for horse, that's one thing . . . but when cash money starts changing hands. . .it's like when a burglar breaks into your house . . . it makes you twice as mad.' (p.34) The imagery of the burglar emphasises that the introduction of capitalism develops the cheating from fun and ritual into direct, calculated robbery. Yet, in turn, Ratliff says they have been inducted into the monetary culture, since he and Ab plan not only to trade the horse back, but somehow also retrieve Beasley's eight dollars. This becomes a moral quest to vindicate the 'honor and pride of the science and pride of horse-trading' (p.34) against a capitalistic outsider.

Ab himself, however, is equally shrewd, and five years later enters town on an unruly horse, begging Stamper to do him the kindness of trading. Ratliff has respect for this trade, even if it is ultimately intended for revenge:

That was the right system: [for Ab] to rush right up and say he had to trade instead of waiting for Pat to persuade him . . . Ab wasn't trying to beat Pat too bad. He just wanted to recover that eight dollars . . . doing it not for profit but for honor . . . Ab was so busy fooling Pat that Pat never had to fool Ab at all . . . Ab standing there with that look on his face . . . realising now that he had got in deeper than he aimed to . . . and then Pat Stamper showed how come he was Pat Stamper . . . he fooled Ab exactly as one first-class burglar would fool another . . . purely and simply refusing to tell him where the safe was at. (p.36)

Ratliff recognises Ab followed the 'rules of engagement' of trading by appearing keen to trade with Stamper; there is no place in Frenchman's Bend for a timid trader. Ab also earns Ratliff's respect through his willingness to take risks for the sake of his trickery; Ab's intention in the game he just wants to recover his own money. Yet Stamper subverts the trick, and refuses to trade unless they trade their entire team rather than individual horses, dictating the trade on his own terms and taking advantage of Ab's determination to beat him one way or another. Stamper realises Ab knows how 'deep' he now is into the trade, that he cannot back out for the sake of preserving his pride. In this way, Ratliff says with respect, 'Pat Stamper showed how come he was Pat Stamper.' The most accomplished trader in Frenchman's Bend is skilled in beguiling others into doggedly persevering, exploiting the culture of talk to manipulate others' need to preserve their own honour; in Stamper's own words, 'I [will] . . . trade for anything that walks, providing I can trade my way.' Though he does not realise Ab is trying to trade him the same unruly horse, he refuses to trade unless both men trade their entire teams including Ab's mule, which is the animal he truly wants. There is a sense of practicality to the trade, since neither man wants the horse, but it is the object on offer, so Stamper

is trying to make the trade profitable. Indeed, there is a transition into the profit motive; Stamper is trading his mules in a group, on his own admission to earn 'three times as much' as he would selling them individually. He has essentially admitted he aims to take a financial toll on Ab, but also knows it does not matter. Like the Duke and Dauphin, the trickster knows how to exploit their target, in this case Ab's greed.

Sure enough, when Ab considers the mules, 'neither one of them looked quite as good as . . . [his] mule, but the two of them together looked . . . better than just one mule of anybody's . . . and so he was doomed.' (p.37) Stamper's technique of simply 'saying no long enough' has worked, and Ab takes the entire team. It is not until they are driving them Ratliff notices their 'jerky way of starting off . . . jerking into the collar and then jerking back . . . Stamper had just told us they was a matched team; he never said they had ever worked together as a matched team.' (p.38) Though not as brash as Longstreet's traders, Stamper has used language as a tool to beguile his mark, but through omission rather than loud advertisement of the horse's attributes. They prove to be unruly, and break away 'swurging up the hill . . . with the wagon on two wheels.'(p.38) Even when Ab tries to pay for his old team and horse from Stamper, it is futile, as Stamper informs him he has already sold it, and has entirely gained the upper hand and Ratliff observes Ab is now 'desperate.' Stamper, of course, exploits this desperation, offering him a horse. Ab makes no attempt to bargain, immediately asking what price Stamper will take for it, despite the horse being 'hog fat.' In a scene similar to Longstreet, when Ab attempts to counter Stamper's trickery by riding the horse, it immediately attempts to throw him. Indeed, perhaps in a muted celebration of his own trickery, Stamper tells Ab, 'that horse will surprise you,' and, as Ratliff recounts, so it did, although he laughs in retrospect, feeling no bitterness at having lost out in a folk custom as old as the horse-swap. There is, indeed, some humour in the trick, not least for the reader:

Ab was layin out in the wagon bed . . . with the rain popping him in the face . . . and me . . . watching that shiny black horse turning into a bay horse . . . 'The horse!' I hollered. 'He's changing color! . . . and Ab's eys popping and a bay horse standing in the traces where [we] . . . had gone to sleep looking at a black one . . . he put his hand out . . . just barely touched it . . . and next I knowed that horse was plunging and swurging. (p.40)

The horse is the same one they had first swapped to Beasley Kemp, and Stamper has added insult to injury by locking them into the trade and selling them back their own horse. Indeed, this childhood experience has left Ratliff with some affection for Ab in adulthood. He sees a balance in

their both having been fooled and, years later, still encourages Ab Snopes to drink with him. There is a sense of brotherhood as long as the community is sustained through 'a plurality of transactions that are all, at basis, verbal and economic.'¹⁷⁸

Richard Gray argues that, in a sense, '[Flem] is, quite simply, another radical step in the continually unfolding history of the community; an agent of transformation that comes from within.'¹⁷⁹ Rather than necessarily introducing new materials of trickery into Frenchman's Bend, he is 'distinct from the community because he pushes communal practices . . . further and more fiercely than others,'¹⁸⁰ while also expressing certain traditional elements.¹⁸¹ In *The Hamlet*, at least, Flem simply represents a cold commitment to modern economics, subverting forms of trade the community has taken for granted; he is the 'strange beast upon their range.' In one of their first meetings, for example, Will Varner orders Flem, who is working in Jody's store, to bring him a 'plug' of tobacco. Varner, the Frenchman's Bend patriarch, is related to the storeowner and used to being given goods free of charge as communal practice. He assumes his usual position of 'jawing' on the porch when Flem remarks coldly, 'you ain't paid for [the tobacco] yet,' sharp, curt linguistics in direct contrast to Varner. Richard Gray says that 'as Flem destabilizes the narratives in which the locals of Frenchman's Bend seek to imprison him, so he resists and revises the customary methods of economic exchange.'¹⁸² He has no real 'narrative' of his own other than business, a system which influences and rearranges the community to its own ends. Flem's advent gradually erodes the communal nature of economics, with 'customers who had traded [in Jody's store] for years, mostly serving themselves . . . now having to deal for each trivial item with a man . . . who apparently never looked directly or long enough at any face to remember the name which went with it, yet who never made any mistakes . . . pertaining to money.' (p.56) In the new world there is no need for traders to sustain relationships, since people will give you their money out of necessity once you are the only purveyor of goods. Yet this, too, is deception. In I.O. Snopes' words, 'competition is the life of trade,' and Flem is cunning and secretive with his trickery rather than being open. This is necessary in the modern economic world, when money is at stake rather than goods, and Flem successfully turns the

¹⁷⁸ Richard Gray, 'ch.5: Public Faces and Private Places' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.254

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p.255

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p.269

¹⁸¹ David Minter notes that 'while the residents of Frenchman's Bend find Flem appalling, they also find him refreshing.' (*William Faulkner: His Life and Work* p.180)

¹⁸² Richard Gray, ch.5: Public Faces and Private Places' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.257

community against each other. Indeed, Ratliff senses this corruption despite necessarily becoming a part of it, and as he calculates his 'profit' for selling a herd of goats, each mouthful of food he eats becomes 'heavy and tasteless as dirt,' as if he has been placed under a curse.

It has been established, then, that 'Flem has no emotions and no imagination because economics has none.'¹⁸³ Nor does he care for family ties, despite the expansiveness of his relations. Mink is arrested for Jack Houston's murder because his shots are overheard, an impassioned mistake Flem would never have made. Flem refuses to have anything to do with the case, or aid Mink in any way, which represents the darkest extension of his silence. To do so would be bad for his business, and once again we see the severance of family and compassion as Flem pushes the town's economic tradition to its furthest potential. Mink's motives for the killing are honour and pride, the desire to show Houston '*this is what happens to men who impound Mink Snopes's cattle.*' (p.218) His crime is not justified, but his emotions at least award him more humanity than Flem. They have no place, however, in the bleak new world to which Flem belongs, and ultimately Mink's passion is to his disadvantage when he is betrayed by Lump Snopes, and left bound to be arrested for Houston's murder.

While Flem may not follow the folk ethics of trade, he nonetheless uses the rituals of the folk community to his advantage, and like his father takes part in the horse swap. This is the concern of much of the final section of the novel, emphasising the importance of folk ritual and its development. Indeed, this may briefly win him some acceptance in the folk community. When they first see the ponies, Quick remarks, 'howdy Flem . . . starting you a circus?' (p.271) He is mocking Flem a little, but his use of the term 'circus' emphasises the spectacular element of Flem's new venture, and, of course, spectacle is one of the elements of trickery with which these men can identify. Flem, of course, does not brag about his horses as Yellow-Blossom might, simply greeting his onlookers with a curt 'gentlemen,' and moving on. His reticence is in stark contrast to his companion trader, Buck Hipps, who immediately strikes up conversation with Varner and Quick. Ratliff, however, is once again ambivalent to the prospect of the trade, simply offering the folk wisdom that whatever Flem's intentions might be, 'a fellow can dodge a Snopes if he just starts lively enough.' (p.276) To Ratliff, the trickster is merely an elemental part of their community. Indeed, Ratliff once again provides the voice of reason:

¹⁸³ Richard Gray, 'ch.3: Rewriting the Homeplace' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.170

All right. You folks can buy them critters if you want to. But me, I'd just as soon buy a tiger or a rattlesnake. And if Flem Snopes offered me either one of them, I would be afraid to touch it for fear it would turn out to be a painted dog or a piece of garden hose when I went up to take possession of it. (p.279)

Ratliff's choice of imagery reminds us he has been tricked by a Snopes in a horse swap before through deception and disguise. In other words, Flem is able to exploit the town because they are also concerned with acquisition, albeit to a lesser extent. Indeed, a crowd continues to gather around the horses, once again keen to see the latest act in the 'Snopes circus'; Flem cannot entirely avoid his trickery being spectacle in a community like Frenchman's Bend, however hard he might try. Nonetheless, the gossip about the ponies serves to remind the reader of Flem's outsider status, self-perpetuated, since though they might see the surface of Flem's intentions and the goods he trades, one onlooker remarks, 'the first man Flem would tell his business to would be the man that was left after the last man died.' (p.279-80) Flem's self-serving nature keeps him at a distance, and the community cannot trust the trickster if they do not understand how and why he tricks. The Southwestern tricksters, admittedly, enacted a certain camouflage of their intentions, but this was misdirection through their colourful speech. Flem is less respectable because he tricks through omission, telling them nothing about the goods at hand, not even respecting his targets enough to try to beguile them. In contrast, the Texan with whom Flem trades fulfills the role of colourful linguist just as Buck Hipps did, creating a folk rhythm to his cries as they usher the horses, 'Get in there, you banjo-faced jack rabbits . . . what do you think that barn is – a law court maybe?' (p.281) bragging of his goods in the humorist style, saying 'There aint a pony there that ain't woth fifteen dollars. Young, sound . . . guaranteed to outlast four ordinary horses; you couldn't kill one of them with a axle-tree.' (p.286) His voice is described as 'harsh, ready, forensic,' and once again he understands the science of trading and communicates with onlookers and gives them a sense of being 'in on the joke.' Such action would be unthinkable to a 'rapacious . . . self-serving con-artist'¹⁸⁴ like Flem, whose ethics are 'concerned with a ledger rather than people.'¹⁸⁵ Thus the Texan is accepted even when the horses he trades 'explode in to mad tossing shapes like a downrush of flames.' It is also noteworthy that Faulkner provides no narrative voice to judge this trader; even when an onlooker cries 'hang that

¹⁸⁴ Dawn Trouard, 'From Texas With Love: Welty's Collateral Snopeses' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor* Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.86

¹⁸⁵ Olga Vickery, 'ch.11: The Profit and the Loss: *The Hamlet, The Town and The Mansion*' in *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1964), p.170

durn fellow yonder,' the other replies 'you mean Flem Snopes,' the original owner of the horses. Again, the roads lead back to Flem, the 'swindling king'¹⁸⁶ of Frenchman's Bend, 'capable of outwitting the devil himself.'¹⁸⁷

Once they realise the horses are connected with Flem's 'impure' manner of trading, the men of the Bend refuse to trade for them until Flem is there in person. Even in his absence, people are unsure about trading Flem's property, as if they feel they stand more of a chance of outwitting him if they can keep an eye on his actions; his absence is just as threatening as his silence. Even Flem's relatives do not trust his motives, and Eck Snopes says 'I wouldn't buy anything I was afraid to walk up and touch.' (p.285) Faulkner emphasises they regard capitalism as a disease contained in the ponies' very skin, rather than an innate element of the process of modern trading. Their uncertainty regarding Flem does not stop the Texan, however, who continues to brag, not of the horses' strength or wildness, but their obedience and efficiency to work, since in this economic system, the horse's greatest attribute would be its fitness to earn money for its owner:

'Work them like hell all day . . . lay them over the head with a single-tree and. . . every jack rabbit one of them will be . . . tame'

'What need I got for a horse I would need a bear trap to catch?' Eck said . . . the Texan . . . was still breathing harshly but now there was nothing of fatigue or breathlessness in it . . . 'All right' [the Texan said], 'I want to get this auction started . . . I'm going to give you that horse . . . provided you will start bidding on the next one.' (p.289)

Even after Eck Snopes refuses the trade, the Texan understands the importance of maintaining the rhythm of talk and spectacle at a more constant pace than his opponent. In this way, he hopes to influence their trade and the opinion of his onlookers, even offering to give Eck the first horse for free providing he continues the trade. Just as Longstreet's traders were partially open about their horse's flaws to give their opponent a sense of understanding and control, the Texan uses the profit motive to influence his opponents, making them feel they have won regardless of the outcome since they have gained a free horse. Ironically, however, he has simply ensured they will continue to spend money. Indeed, he continues to beguile them linguistically, and, when Eck offers a

¹⁸⁶ Dawn Trouard, 'From Texas With Love: Welty's Collateral Snopeses' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor* Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.86

¹⁸⁷ Olga Vickery, 'ch.11: The Profit and the Loss: *The Hamlet, The Town and The Mansion*' in *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1964), p.179

dollar for the horse cries 'a dollar . . . one dollar? Did I actually hear that?' The Texan creates a spectacle for the crowd, but also manipulates Eck, who will not want to appear the less daring trader with his offer.

Furthermore, Faulkner once again treats those involved in the trade with more sensitivity and depth. Armstid's wife, for example, tries to stop him bidding on the horses, another development, since there were no women involved in the Southwestern trading. She tells the Texan, 'if you take that five dollars I earned my chaps a-weaving for one of them things, it'll be a curse on you and yours.' Armstid, however, is deaf to her pleas and bids five dollars. Once again, the introduction of money takes a greater cost not only on the bidders but their families, since they are not simply Longstreet's detached caricatures. Faulkner shows us the profit, but also the loss, the irony that Mrs. Armstid earns the money which Armstid bids, but has no control over how it is spent. And once the trade is made, there is no sense of community or supportiveness, emphasised by Flem's appearance from nowhere as if he were an essence drawn to any occurrence of self-interested trade. Flem '[stands] there in his small yet definite isolation,' (p.293) as Armstid takes the horse he has bought with a 'mad look in his eyes,' determined once again to best the trader in profit. And, like Flem, the Texan is unwilling to exceed what is absolutely necessary in trade, and certainly does not do anything for the benefit of his opponent. When Armstid asks if the Texan will help him catch the horse he has just purchased, the Texan replies, 'it ain't my horse.' He signifies that Flem is not simply an anomaly in trading culture, but rather represents a social transition from the insular culture of Frenchman's Bend, in which they provide each other with credit and negotiate trade out of respect to their shared history, to the colder and more precise environment in which once the cash has changed hands, one has no obligation to another, not even something as simple as verbal acknowledgement. Indeed, nobody helps Armstid to catch his horse, rather the villagers enjoy the spectacle of his failure to do so; except for Flem, who still stands apart in his 'isolation,' seeming entirely disengaged from the process, since to join in the mockery would be to enter a cultural ritual and form a connection.

Once Armstid fails to mount the horse, the Texan offers to dissolve the trade, but Armstid insists on maintaining his purchase. Had they simply been swapping goods, there might have been room for negotiation, but when using money there is urgency the trade be recognised, even when Flem has agreed to reimburse the money. But such a social understanding of ritual is already becoming irrelevant, symbolised by the Texan leaving soon after the trade '[to] look-see them

northern towns. Washington and New York and Baltimore.’ (p.298) The North, of course, symbolises the new era of international trade and business ethics, making the Southern culture of insular trade unsustainable. Once again, the horses prove to be unruly, breaking away and stampeding through Mrs. Littlejohn’s washing and a mule wagon. They are somewhat humorous in the upset they cause, reminiscent of Harris’ ‘Mrs. Yardley’s Quilting in which the unruly horse runs ‘plain over Missis Yardley from ahind, stomped one hind foot through the quilt.’¹⁸⁸ Flem, however, takes no pleasure in the spectacle, rather it is a direct result of actions undertaken for profit; once again we sympathise with his targets because of Flem’s impersonality, his belief that they are simply resources to exploit through the ‘Texas disease’ he has introduced to their environment. The imagery emphasises Flem as a malignant, contaminating influence, although of course he does not contaminate an entirely innocent community, since he would not have been able to exploit the villagers had they not had avaricious natures to begin with. As Richard Gray points out, ‘Flem Snopes becomes the scapegoat, the object of blame for the callous indifference of an economic system that he did not introduce, and still less controls’¹⁸⁹; he may introduce ‘a ruthless new move in the game: but he does not try to alter the basic rules, nor does he have to.’¹⁹⁰

As the men of the bend discuss the event the following night, Ratliff is inclined to laugh at the results of the trade, until Lump remarks ‘if Flem had knowed how quick you fellows was going to snap them horses up, he’d a probably bought some tigers.’ (p.310) Once again, the humour vanishes from the account once Ratliff discovers Flem is at the root cause of the upset; Flem not only corrupts the ritual of trade but also of talk and gossip. The men Flem cheated are far too bitter at having lost their money to gossip with either Lump or Ratliff, and Eck Snopes remarks, ‘you never bought no horse from Flem . . . so maybe it aint none of your business, and maybe you better just leave it.’ (p.310-11) Flem has not only eroded intimacy between other traders and himself, but within the general community, since they will have to become far more individualistic to subsist in the new trading environment he has created; Flem is a malignant erosion of the culture of talk itself, and all facets of the life it sustains.

¹⁸⁸ George Washington Harris, ‘Mrs. Yardley’s Quilting’ in *Sut Lovingood* (New York: Grove Press 1954), p.181

¹⁸⁹ Richard Gray, ‘ch.5: Public Faces and Private Places’ in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.254

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p.269

By the end of the novel these systems are all-pervading. Eck tells Ratliff 'you can't beat him,' and Ratliff, sensing the cultural turn, replies 'I reckon not.' Ratliff realises it is not only the nature of Flem Snopes that corrupts Frenchman's Bend, but the 'folks that can't wait to bare their backsides to [him].' (p.321) It is the greed of these communities that allows these tricksters to flourish, just as they did the Duke and Dauphin. This is why 'Frenchman's Bend is impotent to deal with Flem, because it too has a double standard of judgment. Though the villagers repudiate him as a person . . . [they] admire his shrewdness . . . and above all his success.'¹⁹¹

Cleanth Brooks remarks that even Ratliff takes 'takes a kind of pride in Flem's prodigious character' as he would a 'six-legged calf.'¹⁹² Nor is Ratliff immune to the promises of money, evident when he hears the rumours of the Confederate gold hidden under the land Flem has bought. Even the strongest representatives of the folk community have an interest in personal gain and so can make the transition to modernity as its influence in their community becomes stronger, and tricksters like Flem are aware of how to exploit their self-interest. Thus Ratliff joins Armstid and Bookwright by night to secretly dig the ground of Flem's property; Flem has exploited not only their greed, but the sense of prestige they would feel at outwitting the most successful trickster. Ratliff's greed is, admittedly, not the most unrestrained, as it is he who reasons once they know the locations of the coins that they should wait another night to dig them up, to which Armstid replies, 'tomorrow night, hell!' and has to be restrained from digging the earth by both of his companions. Ratliff, however, realises that they must dig carefully because they 'can't afford to leave no marks for [Flem] to find when he comes back.' (p.340) He is the most cognisant of the influence Flem has within Frenchman's Bend, though it is possible that the high regard in which the trickster is held within Southern towns has led them to somewhat elevate Flem to be more dangerous than he is. Flem's notoriety is exacerbated by the fact that the villagers know very little about him; his silence and mystery is his power. All he has done, in fact, is exploited an old folktale, that of the hidden Confederate gold, to his own advantage. Flem himself takes no part in the swapping of tales, but does regard them as a useful economic tool. Once again it is Armstid who proves the most avaricious, even turning on Ratliff with his shovel 'raised like an axe' when Ratliff encourages him to slow down his digging. Likewise, Ratliff ends up struggling with Bookwright over a shovel, before he checks

¹⁹¹ Olga Vickery, 'ch.11: The Profit and the Loss: *The Hamlet, The Town and The Mansion*' in *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1964), p.174

¹⁹² Cleanth Brooks, 'ch.9: Faulkner's Savage Arcadia: Frenchman's Bend (The Hamlet)' in *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1990), p.172

himself with the horrified observation, 'look at what even the money a man aint got yet will do to him.' (p.343) When they find the bag of coins, both Armstid and Bookwright try to grab it for themselves, showing the selfishness which has allowed Flem to exploit them in the first place; only Ratliff protests, urging them to remember they are 'partners alike.' They are not, of course, because in this environment no one truly is, they are just 'sets of blood lusting for trash.' (p.346)

Ratliff has an equally rational response to the discovery of the gold coins, and in fact begins to realise how to manoeuvre within the new economic system. Armstid, in his greed, is keen to begin spending his share immediately, until Ratliff asks how he will explain the sudden acquisition of pre-Civil war currency. Ratliff is also the one with the presence of mind to realise that, while they dug, they were being watched; by Flem, of course. Thus he decides the only way to trick Flem is on Flem's own economic terms, that is, to buy the land from him. The folk community, once corrupted by economic goals, has no choice but to continue to work within that system to achieve their maximum gain. Flem has exploited their greed to make this necessary, and we can see 'they are hoping to live off the past, while Flem has his eyes set . . . on the future.'¹⁹³ Indeed, even now Armstid refuses to put his share back in the box, despite its being to his benefit, and Ratliff recognises even if he has not been tricked, his values have been reformed, remarking, 'I used to think I was too smart to be caught . . . but I don't know now.' (p.349) There is some dramatic irony in that Flem's influence over the community is now so absolute that, in order to conceal the reason for his buying the old Frenchman place, Ratliff claims to be buying the land to start a goat ranch, an action he himself originally mocked as a symbol of Northern corruption.

Ultimately, of course, the rumours of money are a ruse; Flem has buried modern coins rather than Confederate gold, worth far less than the amount they paid for the land. The trick, it transpires, was not even directed at them personally. Ratliff realises Flem simply knew 'he couldn't possibly dig over two weeks before somebody saw him' (p.361) and became suspicious about the land. Again, trickery is utilised for the cold purpose of financial gain, rather than the more respectable aim of besting a particular opponent. Flem is almost a detached automaton, unwilling to form relationships with others even for the purpose of getting the better of them. Once again the onlookers and gossips emphasise Flem's skill at trickery and manipulation, saying 'couldn't nobody but Flem Snopes have

¹⁹³ Richard Gray, 'ch.5: Public Faces and Private Places' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.270

fooled Ratliff.’ (p.365) The ‘swindling king of Yoknapatawpha’¹⁹⁴ has not fooled an ‘innocent victim . . . [this is a case] of victim and trickster who . . . resemble each other too much,’¹⁹⁵ asserting Flem’s dominance.¹⁹⁶ Richard Gray, however, notes this is somewhat softened in that Ratliff ‘actively enjoys a piece of trickery,’¹⁹⁷ while Vickery notes ‘it is only when Ratliff discovers that they have been duped that he recovers his perspective and with it his sense of humor. The crippled Armstid, however, refuses to be turned from his . . . obsession.’¹⁹⁸ It is to Armstid that Flem speaks his final words as he watches him still desperately digging for the money after Ratliff has philosophically given up. Flem’s words, ‘come up,’ serve as a warning against one’s own greed: improve yourself, rather than being concerned enough with wealth that you are so ‘crippled’ and easy to exploit.

The Capitalist Consumption of Folk Culture: *The Town*

Richard Gray therefore notes that *The Hamlet* develops the trickster archetype into a world where ‘there is no delight in the actual process of bargaining and swapping, since *all* that matters is the result of the deal.’¹⁹⁹ *The Town* extends this developing profit motive even further, and Gray outlines its transition from ‘small town satire to small town tragedy.’²⁰⁰ Unlike Frenchman’s Bend, Jefferson is not a place of folk ritual. Charles Mallison’s opening observation that the water tower Flem constructs is ‘not a monument but a footprint’ emphasises it is only the first indication of how far Flem plans to extend his influence and his silence; as he gains further exalted positions in the town, those he exploits will never meet him face to face. Conversely, Ratliff has moved to Jefferson as well, to serve as an opposition. Ratliff is a reminder of the old folk order, and of Flem’s skill, since he represents a connection between Flem’s two environments. Gavin Stevens criticises Ratliff for allowing his greed to get the better of him in Frenchman’s Bend, falling for ‘one of the oldest tricks in

¹⁹⁴ Dawn Trouard, ‘From Texas With Love: Welty’s Collateral Snopeses’ in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor* Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.86

¹⁹⁵ Richard Gray, ‘ch.5: Public Faces and Private Places’ in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.269

¹⁹⁶ Cleanth Brooks argues that with this trick, Flem has defeated Ratliff, the ‘countrified St. George, the sole hope against this cold-blooded dragon,’ elevating the two men’s value systems into a mythic struggle. (*William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* p.174)

¹⁹⁷ Richard Gray, ‘ch.5: Public Faces and Private Places’ in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.269

¹⁹⁸ Olga Vickery, ‘ch.11: The Profit and the Loss: *The Hamlet, The Town and The Mansion*’ in *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1964), p.176

¹⁹⁹ Richard Gray, ‘ch.5: Public Faces and Private Places’ in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.258

²⁰⁰ Richard Gray, ‘ch.6: The Way Home’ in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.337

the world, and you fell for it. Not Henry Armstid: you,²⁰¹ emphasising that the developing business world is eroding people's good sense.

Richard Gray argues that by *The Town*, Flem has evolved from a local swindler into an archetype, the 'male will to power made flesh.'²⁰² Flem's environment once again contains people whose greed or bitterness he can exploit to his advantage, beginning with his stealing brass from the water tower, a far more direct form of dishonesty and deception than his previous tricks. Flem continues to sow dissent between two of his workers, Tom Tom and Turl, by claiming Turl covets Tom Tom's job, and plans to steal the brass and frame Tom Tom for the crime, gaining the position for himself. Flem again beguiles the confidence of others, persuading Tom Tom to hide the iron while Flem gathers evidence of Turl trying to steal it. By now, Flem's trickery is calculated and vindictive, manipulating Turl into thinking Tom Tom is trying to frame him, and, that if Turl doesn't comply with Flem's wishes, he has no way to prove his innocence and faces prison. Flem continues to manipulate Turl's situation, convincing him to deliver Flem the brass to clear his name. Once again we see the self-interested capitalism of the rich encouraging conflict amongst the poor which they can use to their own advantage, and the shift in the trickster culture seems definite; Flem knows Turl is desperate, and has been out of work forty years. The trickster is less respectable, since they are exploiting the vulnerable rather than the dishonest. In the same fashion, Flem encourages Turl to begin sleeping with Tom Tom's wife while the latter is working the boilers, which of course becomes a matter of public gossip. Thus the trickster creates violence, albeit indirectly, since Tom Tom dresses as his wife and lies with a butcher knife to catch Turl in the act; by this point, Richard Gray says, 'morally, Flem Snopes is terrifying'²⁰³ and willing to risk anyone else to further his self-interest. The dark results of trickery and dishonesty continue when Tom Tom abducts Turl, so bitterly determined to have his revenge he carries him through the trees without stopping, continuing his violence by grabbing his captors head and wrenching it like a 'runaway bareback mule.' Once again the tricksters behave anarchically toward their enemies rather than with any sense of rules or decorum. It is not until they are calm enough to talk that they realise 'Tom Tom's home [was] violated not by Tomey's Turl but by Flem Snopes: Turl's life and limbs put into frantic jeopardy not by Tom Tom but by Flem

²⁰¹ William Faulkner, *The Town* [1957] (New York: Vintage 1961), p.8 (subsequent references in the text)

²⁰² Richard Gray, 'ch.6: The Way Home' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.341

²⁰³ Richard Gray, 'ch.4: Of Past and Present Conflicts' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.179

Snopes.' (p.28) Flem most likely took the missing brass himself to sell privately; in Jefferson, Flem extends his trickery into a series of experiments regarding what he could steal 'profitably' and what he could not, successfully enough that Gavin Stevens admits they will never know how much brass Flem has stolen.

As they did Frenchman's Bend, the Snopeses begin to infiltrate all levels of Jefferson. In Ratliff's words Flem has begun 'farming Snopeses,' and only Ratliff is fully aware of the danger this may pose. For example, Eckrum Snopes, the only one who attempts to live honestly, is a threat to the Snopeses' 'slow and invincible rapacity.' (p.33) Thus, in a significant reflection of his elevated status in his new community, Flem fires Eck from the café in which he works. As the the head of the 'Snopes economy,' Flem now has the power in Jefferson, and there is no need for him to be underhanded; he can simply directly eliminate threats to his self-interest. In his characteristically 'purple' language, Gavin Stevens describes the Snopes 'invasion' as 'outrageous and portentous and terrifying,' (p.36) enough to cause the destruction of Frenchman's Bend. In Jefferson, the Snopeses are no longer simply the logical bridge between folk and modern culture, which was somewhat accepted, but are looked upon as 'colonies of rats or termites.' Stevens admits the town realised 'we would never defend Jefferson from Snopeses, let us then give, relinquish Jefferson to Snopeses.'(p.44) Once again, the imagery evokes conflict between the trickster and the environment. While Frenchman's Bend accepts the conman as part of the folk community, the modern urban environment, whose businesses stand to lose far more from a man like Flem, cannot regard his actions with tolerance or respect. However, Stevens recognises that since Flem has 'complete command' of the public sphere in Jefferson, the townspeople have no choice but to yield to him even though Flem plays no active part in public relations himself; Ratliff's remark that Mink Snopes is 'the only out and out mean Snopes' indicates he still regards Flem with a certain degree of tolerance. As with Chesnutt and Twain, Faulkner develops the trickster to make a point about the Southern society. The corrupt environment again allows the trickster to thrive, both through its interest in protecting businessmen and its racism; Gavin Stevens is told the word of 'two nigras' is not enough to convict Flem Snopes for stealing the brass. Ironically, the legal system allows the trickster to thrive through its technicalities, just as the old towns did with their wish to exploit each other. Flem has told Tom-Tom and Turl to hide the brass in the water tower; should the authorities drain the water tower to find the brass, it proves it 'is not just once more in the possession of the city: it aint never been out of it.' (p.86) Once again, there is no need for Flem to break the rules, simply to search for weakness in the already existing systems and use them to his advantage. Such weaknesses are even easier to find in

Jefferson, since they have a modern system of recorded laws, what Ratliff would see as the Northern system of 'papers,' and unless Flem's deception can be recorded he cannot be proved accountable. The dissent he sows between Tom-Tom and Turl shows that those who seek power within capitalism are able to create a 'sink or swim' environment to which a community's inhabitants, and tricksters, must adapt or become victims of its indifferent nature.

Jefferson therefore realises that, in Stevens' words, 'we've all bought Snopeses here, whether we wanted to or not.' (p.95) He argues that, like the Duke and Dauphin, the Snopes would have no power if people refused them. In an environment like Jefferson, however, a man is defined by the service he provides, another somewhat Northern development, and if there is demand for his service, people have little choice but to purchase it. The fact that people are compelled to take Flem's service seems less sporting than in the folk culture, when everyone understood the trickster's social role and could choose whether to deal with him, or dare themselves to beat him. Even Ratliff realises that the only response to the Snopeses 'abolish them' before they consume and exploit every facet of Jefferson. Stevens' modern views lead Ratliff to see the future Flem represents for Jefferson, in which everyone will be seeking financial gain at everyone else's expense. Once again, however, Ratliff does not realise this is a transition occurring all over the developing South, in which people are seeking 'success by means of the single rule . . . and sacred oath of never to tell anybody how.' (p.107) Stevens' response, that 'if a herd of tigers suddenly appears . . . wouldn't it be a heap better to have them shut up on a mule-pen where we could at least watch them,' (p.102) emphasises that he understands the Snopeses are not an anomaly, just a microcosm of the profit motive becoming prominent in the entire country. He understands there is no environment better to survey the Snopeses than in Jefferson's culture of gossip where they can be watched like 'an invasion of snakes or wildcats . . . [necessary because] nobody . . . seemed to recognise the danger' (p.106) as they cover Jefferson like 'an influx of . . . varmints.' The imagery evokes most of the Snopeses as part of the natural order, with only Flem as the singular, rapacious capitalist, and thus the one who cannot be tolerated, or, conversely, cooperate with his family members.

Montgomery Ward Snopes, for example, poses a minor economic threat with his 'fresh new entertainment room,' (p.114) that is, pornography store, an offence worthy of imprisonment. Flem, too, is aware of the importance of apparent propriety in order to exploit the environment; the 'Snopes industry,' must work within the structure of the business world if only to exploit it. In yet another indication of his detachment from society, family ties mean nothing to Flem, except as a

threat to his individual advancement. Once again, his own dishonest environment provides a perfect means for him to thrive, and when he discovers Byron Snopes has been stealing from the bank belonging to Manfred De Spain, 'in order to save the good name of the bank which his father had helped to found, Manfred . . . had to allow Flem Snopes to become vice president of it.' (p.140) Flem has taken advantage not only of the deceit of others, but the habits of Southern families who wish to remain untarnished in the public eye, and thus the Southern obsession with familial history itself. As has been mentioned, Flem has no regard for such things; rather his familial failings often prove advantageous to him. The trickster is now in the position of social power, becoming in the process a far less sympathetic figure than the 'underdogs' such as Julius or Sut Lovingood. Flem almost explicitly advertises his bank to be untrustworthy, transferring his own account to the Jefferson bank, his own business rival. In other words, he is secure enough in his manipulation of the town to put his own faith in the past, while they, perhaps still concerned with developing modern business world, will invest in the new bank even if it is suspicious. Again, Flem has made his mark on the town through action, not words. Stevens assumes Flem's mistrust of his own bank will lead to his downfall once it becomes public knowledge, but Ratliff reasons differently, saying Flem would not cheat the system since 'he aint just got respect for money: he's got active . . . reverence for it. The last thing he would ever do is hurt that bank.' (p.142) Flem would not upset the system which gives him the means to exploit people and make his money, making him even more insidious to Ratliff, who refers to Flem as a 'bigger varmint . . . with . . . more poison [it its] teeth' (p.143) than he was in Frenchman's Bend. Again the folk diction is important, contributing to give a clearer picture of how Ratliff believes Flem has contaminated the culture of Southern trading, and, because the townspeople cannot understand him, they cannot anticipate his actions. Flem is symbolic of the changing culture, and they do not know which part of their folk communities will erode next. Even Gavin Stevens is shocked when Flem becomes the head of the bank, the climax of his ascension into financial power. Despite recognising Flem's nature, Stevens may reveal that he still sees Flem as within the folk community, admitting shock that Flem obtained this position. Ratliff, however, simply recognises it is the latest logical step in Flem's ascendance, since greed is what has driven him from the start. Reputation and background are now nothing, only the future prospect of gaining revenue and controlling his family, since he is now solely responsible for their loans, their financial possibilities. They are all branded with his 'hoodoo mark,' once again as if Flem were some dark magician: the truth is even more disturbing, that the rules of business allow him this power. Ratliff argues Jefferson does not need a bank, understanding the control Flem will hold over the

townspeople. While, in Frenchman's Bend, Flem had to rely on people's greed, and the honour they would gain by beating him in trade, in Jefferson the establishment of a banking system makes personal relations irrelevant, since people will be financially dependent on his service. The trickster is no longer on the margins of society, but above it, a silent, almost omniscient presence.

Flem continues to ruthlessly eliminate familial competition. Montgomery Ward Snopes assumes his pornography shop is immune from prosecution; the revelation of the identity of his customers would cause a scandal. Like Flem, he can exploit the tradition of Southern propriety and the small town gossip which can damn its subjects. Rather than have his pictures destroyed, and thus lose the future cash he could make, Montgomery Ward agrees to leave Jefferson and sell them elsewhere. In Frenchman's Bend, this offer might have worked, but in Jefferson the controversy is too great. Montgomery is locked up, left to wait for Flem's financial aid just as Mink was, and since Charles Mallison notes Flem did not defend Mink for his murder charge, 'why should he balk at getting rid of another one with just a dirty postcard.' (p.166) Once again, Flem is less respectable when severing his family relations in favour of 'good business' than he might were he engaging in the paradoxical 'honest trickery.' It is Montgomery's own ineptitude at hiding his illegal activity which gives Flem the advantage to begin with, and Ratliff remarks, 'if Montgomery Ward had been named Flem, then pictures wouldn't a never seen Jefferson, let alone vice versa.'(p.170) Flem is not simply indifferent, as he was with Mink, but actively tries to purge Montgomery, once again going about his trickery through inaction. When he tries to engage the services of Gavin Stevens, Stevens, assuming Flem to be trying to help Montgomery evade the law, says that he, Stevens, wishes to see Montgomery jailed. Flem, however, replies that this is exactly why he has hired him. Flem hopes that Stevens will help jail his potential economic rival, and of course, when a lesser trickster contends with the 'swindling king,' he will succumb to the latter's superiority; Flem's dominance is further emphasised by the less successful trickery of his family. Ratliff, however, realises the more disturbing implications; if Flem has turned on his own family, his ruthlessness knows no bounds. While they need not be concerned about Montgomery Ward, their worry is whom else Flem might be able to swindle, since to Flem, 'there aint a man breathing that can't be bought for something.' (p.170-1)

Like Pat Stamper, I.O. Snopes suffers from trading horses with Flem, and again Flem's ruthlessness extends to cheating his own family. After Mannie Hait buys one of I.O.'s mules, which turns out to be unruly and destroys her garden, Flem agrees to buy the mule and save I.O.'s reputation. His condition, however, is that I.O. move back to Frenchman's Bend and never own

another business in Jefferson; Flem eliminates another financial rival. The fact that it is a schoolteacher, of all businesses, shows Flem's determination to keep a stranglehold on Jefferson, giving his family no room for any business venture whatsoever. The tricksters of Southwestern humour were able to co-exist with rivals, but Flem cannot if they are a threat to his economic sovereignty, even in a public service like education; there must be, in Ratliff's words, 'nothing a-tall left in Jefferson but Flem Snopes.'

The concern with rituals and positions becomes even more prominent, since Flem is now concerned not just with money, but with status. Again, Ratliff sees the danger of this, saying:

all of us better be [afraid of Flem] . . . because a feller that jest wants money fer the sake of money . . . here's a few things right at the last that he won't do. But a feller that come . . . up from where he did . . . he discovered that money would buy anything he could or would ever want . . . and then find out . . . that the one thing he would have to have if there was to be any meaning to his life . . . was not only something that jest money couldn't buy, it was something that . . . money . . . couldn't even hurt or harm . . . or alter . . . respectability . . . there ain't nothing he wont do to get it and then keep it. (p.259)

In modern society, money itself is not enough, and Flem's concern for the future causes him to realise this. He must also have 'respectability,' even if this means relinquishing some of his detachment. When Flem withdraws his own money out of the Jefferson bank, the teller asks, 'you mean, the other one aint safe?' (p.269) Flem's actions emphasises the difference in viewpoint between Flem and the townspeople; he understands that no bank is safe, that in the modern economic system any gain is vulnerable. However, he does not encourage his customers to move their money, perhaps undermining the security of his position; they may begin to wonder how safe their investments are, undermining what Stevens calls Flem's 'chosen community.' Since he owns the banks as a conglomerate with Varner and De Spain, Flem is required at least temporarily 'to save the entire bank in order to free his own deposit in it long enough to get the money . . . into safety somewhere.' (p.277) 'Safety' is perhaps the key word, and in contrast to the anarchy seen in Harris. Flem does not wish to destroy De Spain's bank, since to do so would be to harm the economic system he worships, but rather to 'move it still intact out from under de Spain . . . he would never injure money . . . he had too much veneration for it.' (p.278) Flem does not even seem to respect the rituals of trickery enough to upset the environment, he simply wants to bend it to his will, to order and control its stability. His isolation and compleat capitalism even work against him. Flem is not a

trickster within the community, free of the 'clutter' of friendship and its 'creeping sentimental parasitic importunity' (p.279) since emotional connections with his fellows stand in the way of using or exploiting them. Once he is president of the bank, however, his lack of connections becomes counter-intuitive, since business allies are necessary. The dark irony for the modern capitalist trickster is that the very economic system which placed them outside the folk community ultimately has its own a series of rituals by which one must abide, and being entirely self-sufficient is almost impossible. Ironically, in order to dispossess De Spain, Flem must seek the help of Varner, whom he has swindled in the past. The trickster cannot be an isolated figure in a system which relies on economic trade; eventually he must 'eat crow.' The economic system which placed Flem outside the folk community has its own set of somewhat more stringent rules to abide by, which further speaks for a certain freedom within the folk community compared to the systems to which it yields.

Furthermore, modern opportunities such as education constitute the strongest obstacle to Flem's being able to profit from Eula's will, and thus Varner's money. Knowing that if Linda marries she will be entitled to Eula's money, rather than himself, Flem does not dare allow her until after Varner's death. Flem knows Eula will leave him once Linda is married, as does Gavin Stevens. However, rather than encourage Linda to marry, Stevens introduces Linda to possibilities of the world outside of Flem, with a 'constant seduction' of brochures for universities in other states. Flem is not prepared for such an influence to be used against him, since Stevens' ideas involve addressing and attempting to improve Linda as a person, while Flem thinks only in terms of money. There are no concrete goods or social influences he can manipulate to prevent Linda seeking a new life; the modern trickster, while able to manipulate systems, is also fallible and thus constitutes a more human, three-dimensional literary figure.

Nonetheless, the community continues to attempt to learn Flem's way of life, even if they are aware of its unhealthy elements. Again, Ratliff, sensing the social shift Flem represents, continues to try to learn the reticent Flem's worldview while giving him a ride to Frenchman's Bend. Ratliff reasons he does not resent Flem's withdrawal because 'you know silence is valuable because it must be, there's so little of it . . . you think *Here's my chance to find out how an expert uses it.*' (p.297) Ratliff has recognised the links between solipsism and financial success and may be trying to develop a place for himself in the new order, realising the old South is gradually fading in significance. Flem, after all, has no connections, and is now the dominant power in the town. Nonetheless, Gavin Stevens notes 'you cannot go against a community,' (P.312) including the elements which are giving

Linda a new outlook on life. Flem becomes desperate as he senses his loss of control over Linda, so much so that he forbids her to attend university and blackmails Manfred De Spain into selling him the Jefferson bank, or he will reveal Linda's true parentage. Again, Flem manipulates respectability to his advantage and De Spain sells him the bank to avoid the scandal. However, the actions of a trickster take on their darkest significance in the consequences that befall the trickster's victims, and Eula kills herself rather than live with the knowledge of her adultery being part of the Jefferson gossip, signifying 'the final test of Flem's ruthlessness and the signal of his victory,'²⁰⁴ since he will even sacrifice his own wife for the purpose of blackmail. De Spain gives Flem the bank just as Montgomery Ward left Jefferson to avoid scandal. Thus Flem's engulfing influence on Jefferson becomes complete, making him the bank's president and the symbolic pinnacle of the economic system, owning the means to control and order it; he has won his 'game of solitaire' against Jefferson. He now holds every position he aimed to hold, 'things he didn't even know he was going to want until he reached Jefferson, because he didn't even know what they was until then,' (p.347) and because Jefferson evaluates people based on position rather than trading skill, 'nobody could ever steal from him the respectability that being president of one of the two Yoknapatawpha . . . banks carried along with it.' (p.347) Flem, therefore, is no longer part of the competition, but an 'umpire' who can control how others in the town can or cannot advance themselves, creating the underdogs once he has financial control of the community. Flem now has the epitome of the two things he craves, money and detachment.

This chapter shows the richness with which Faulkner subverted and enhanced the more simplistic trickster archetypes, and the complexity this gave his themes, techniques and characters. Addie Bundren shows that the trickster figures serve as a means of resistance for the downtrodden in both races and genders, though their trickery is 'coded in images.' Ultimately, however, Faulkner carried the subversions of the trickster figure to their strongest development through the world of modern capitalism. The blurring of traditional racial trickster boundaries gives these figures a dynamic quality and emphasises the changes in the folk environment; both black and white tricksters – and admittedly Faulkner concerns himself more with the latter – are encompassed within the shifting social dynamic towards the capitalistic world of self-interest. Lucas Beauchamp, for example, uses trickery for personal gain, while Flem Snopes shows the necessary transition in the South from a

²⁰⁴ Olga Vickery, 'ch.11: The Profit and the Loss: *The Hamlet, The Town and The Mansion*' in *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1964), p.185

land of communal bartering towards the need to hold economic prominence in the connecting trade between North and South; the trickster and society must both develop to subsist in modern America.

Chapter Three

The Grotesque in the Novels of William Faulkner

Varieties of the Grotesque – Francois Rabelais, and the Southern Context

In his discussion of Francois Rabelais, Mikhail Bakhtin argues that 'the entire field of realistic literature is strewn with the fragments of grotesque realism,'²⁰⁵ in which the humour is derived at the expense of the human body being 'offered . . . in an extremely exaggerated form.'²⁰⁶ The grotesque traditionally relies on the imperfections of the body being carried to extremes, 'the essential principle . . . of degradation . . . the lowering of all that is . . . ideal, abstract . . . to the material level.'²⁰⁷ Bakhtin says humour is the perfect vehicle for such realism, since 'laughter degrades and materializes'²⁰⁸ and is specifically a key element of Southwestern humour, since writers such as George Washington Harris were concerned with 'low comedy,' 'opposed to all that is finished and polished.'²⁰⁹ Both Rabelais and the humorists draw strongly on the 'background of folk tradition'²¹⁰ in their respective cultures. Indeed, this relevance to the Southern tradition contradicts Bakhtin's belief that the grotesque can only be examined 'in relation to Medieval folk culture and Renaissance literature.'²¹¹ Rather, the grotesque transcends the Anglo-European tradition to the black and white American folk traditions.

G. Schneegans argues that the grotesque involves 'the exaggeration of the inappropriate to incredible and monstrous dimensions,'²¹² which, in Bakhtin's view, ignores both the ambivalence and the folklore sources of the grotesque, and the inherent celebratory or sympathetic style of these genres. Ed Piacentino says the Southwestern humorists also have a 'fascination for the comic possibilities associated with human anatomy,'²¹³ 'the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts,

²⁰⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, Introduction to *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis 1984), p.24

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* p.18

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p.19

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p.20

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p.3

²¹⁰ *Ibid.* p.3

²¹¹ *Ibid.* p.51

²¹² Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Ch.5: The Grotesque Image of the Body and its Sources' in *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis 1984), p.306

²¹³ Ed. Piacentino, 'Intersecting Paths: The Humor of the Old Southwest as Intertext' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.17

the phallus, the potbelly.²¹⁴ Schneegans argument, however, gives no recognition to the development of the genre into the 'psychological grotesque,' in which the subject, while appearing physically normal, suffers debilitating psychological damage due to obsession with the past, or having been 'torn away from the life of society.'²¹⁵ Such psychological abnormality can mark one as a 'grotesque,' separate from 'conception of the complete atomized being,'²¹⁶ as powerfully as the physical abnormalities such as a gaping mouth or bulging eyes. Isolation and rejection by society leaves the characters what Sherwood Anderson called 'emotional cripples,'²¹⁷ since 'unless he can look ahead to the future . . . [man] is not free'²¹⁸ and will instead be incapable of functioning in the present, 'pushed . . . towards the status of an alienated spectator of life.'²¹⁹ Psychological damage due to isolation or obsession with the past develops the literary potential of the grotesque beyond simply a scale running from 'physical portraiture . . . [to] ludicrous caricature.'²²⁰ Ultimately, whether through psychological damage or physical exaggeration, the development of Southern writing emphasised Wolfgang Kayser's argument that 'the grotesque is the alienated world.'²²¹ Where their work differs, however, is with regard to their presentation of their 'grotesques,' with who is regarded as such and why. The way each author presents the 'grotesque' influences the degree of understanding and sympathy they elicit from their readers, debunking Piacentino's own argument that 'grotesque portraiture . . . deflates any human dignity . . . characters may have.'²²²

The Grotesque in the Work of the Southwestern Humorists

The development of the grotesque in Southwestern humour begins, in the work of such writers as Longstreet, from a point at which 'the satirist whose laughter is negative places himself

²¹⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, Introduction to *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis 1984), p.26

²¹⁵ Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Ch.5: The Grotesque Image of the Body and its Sources' in *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis 1984), p.321

²¹⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, Introduction to *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis 1984), p.24

²¹⁷ Malcolm Cowley, Introduction to *Winesburg, Ohio*, Sherwood Anderson [1919] (Penguin Books 1976), p.15

²¹⁸ Cleanth Brooks, 'ch.15: Man, Time and Eternity (The Sound and the Fury) in *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1990), p.329

²¹⁹ Richard Gray, 'ch.4: Of Past and Present Conflicts' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.178

²²⁰ Ed. Piacentino, 'Intersecting Paths: The Humor of the Old Southwest as Intertext' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.19

²²¹ Quoted in Mikhail Bakhtin, Introduction to *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis 1984), p.47

²²² Ed Piacentino, 'From Tap-Root to Branch: The Humor of William Price Fox' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.151

above the object of his mockery . . . [and] is opposed to it.²²³ Sylvia J. Cook observes that, in its early writers, Southwestern humour had ‘an aesthetic delight in . . . improprieties . . . [but] contrasted the violence, vitality and vulgarity . . . with other modes of conduct,’²²⁴ that is, the world of the refined and established to emphasise disapproval for outsiders. Longstreet reflects Schneegans’ idea that ‘the grotesque should only be used as a means to criticise it, to deliver a moral blow.’²²⁵ Indeed, Longstreet’s work has encouraged critical debate between ‘those who see him celebrating and those who see him loathing his uninhibited and vulgar subjects.’²²⁶ Richard Gray, too, argues Longstreet ‘provides the summit, the convenient vantage point from which we look down . . . over the ‘barbarism and cruelty’ of natural man.’²²⁷

Longstreet would seem to contradict Bakhtin’s idea that the grotesque is used with ‘no moral condemnation.’²²⁸ Rather, Longstreet is fully aware he is describing ‘those physical elements that ‘nice people’ do not talk about,’²²⁹ and criticises them just as he does the wild behaviour of the frontier. In his story ‘The Fight,’ Longstreet’s narrator attempts to couch two violent frontiersmen in his own vernacular, as if trying to control them, saying they never failed to find a reason to fight ‘by the most natural . . . deductions *a priori*,’²³⁰ elevated diction which adds a philosophical dimension to the violence. Just so, the narrator seems threatened by the complexion of the character Ransy Sniffle, describing it as ‘quite out of the order of nature . . . [with] shoulders . . . fleshless and elevated . . . and his arms, hands, fingers and feet were lengthened out of all proportion to the length of his frame.’ (p.54) The narrator’s language emphasises unease with the appearance of the impoverished within both the narrator and Longstreet himself, and a desire to keep it at a distance, a specimen to be studied. Furthermore, Sniffle is given no voice himself at this point, as if he truly were

²²³ Mikhail Bakhtin, Introduction to *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis 1984), p.12

²²⁴ Sylvia J. Cook, ‘Camp Meetings, Comedy, and Erskine Caldwell: From the Preposterous to the Absurd’ in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.69

²²⁵ Ibid.p.45

²²⁶ Ibid.p.53

²²⁷ Richard Gray, ‘Holding the Line in the Old South’ in *Writing the South* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge and London 1997), p.71

²²⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, ‘Ch.5: The Grotesque Image of the Body and its Sources’ in *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis 1984), p.313

²²⁹ Michael Dunne and Sarah Lewis Dunne, ‘Intertextual Rednecks: Griffith, Gardner, Wilson, Clower and Foxworthy’ in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.255

²³⁰ Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, ‘The Fight’ in *Georgia Scenes, Characters, Incidents & c., in the First Half Century of the Republic* [1875] (Bibliobazaar: Marston Gate, Great Britain 2009), p.54 (subsequent references in the text)

a 'thing'; the narrator says Sniffle could 'not, with propriety, be said to have any [flesh].' (p.55) The attention drawn to propriety once more shows the narrator is trying to place Sniffle in a context which he understands, and emphasise he does not fit the narrator's classical idea of aesthetics; the physical grotesque, after all, are 'hideous, from . . . the aesthetics of the ready-made and completed.'²³¹ Longstreet cannot even allow the fighters to be entirely divorced from propriety, and while they are happy to brag to each other, when two women begin to chastise each other for being 'impudent huzzies,' Longstreet's fighter Billy tells the woman, if her husband is with her, 'I'll *lick* him till he . . . [teaches] you better manners, you sassy heifer. . . .' (p.56) Manners dictate the women, at least, must be genteel, and for all their bravado, Longstreet's frontiersmen are well aware of the social codes that supposedly exclude them. They continue to shock the narrator, however, and when Billy's opponent Bob loses his right ear, the narrator mourns the 'hideous spectacle,' and the loss of his 'fine features'; it is not so much the violence itself which is shocking as the damage to a perceived ideal. Likewise, as the fight closes we are told 'language cannot describe' the obscene language and violence with which its onlookers greeted its end, but really the narrator is using linguistic omission to prevent himself being 'sullied' by describing the events in detail; Longstreet provides an artificial resolution to the violence, as Billy apologises for insulting Bob's wife, and the two resolve to be friends. Such actions, Longstreet says, will banish 'barbarism and cruelty from the frontier,' providing his readers with reassurance their 'bland lives need not be unduly disturbed by what . . . [they] have just witnessed,²³² and the 'anarchy of the backwoods [is] . . . caught safely within the . . . framework of pastoralism.'²³³

However, Bakhtin argues that 'the importance of abusive language is essential to the understanding of . . . the grotesque,'²³⁴ and thus Longstreet's detachment cannot use the folk community to its fullest literary potential without celebrating it. Indeed, vulgarity can endow the text with more comic potential, since 'the principal of laughter . . . on which[the] grotesque is based . . . destroys . . . seriousness and . . . frees human consciousness for new potentialities,'²³⁵ generally

²³¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, Introduction to *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis 1984), p.25

²³² Richard Gray, 'Holding the Line in the Old South' in *Writing the South* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge and London 1997), p.69

²³³ Richard Gray, 'ch.2: inventing americas: the making of american literature, 1800-1865' in *A History of American Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 2004), p.127

²³⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, Introduction to *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis 1984), p.27

²³⁵ *ibid.*p.49

concerned with 'exaggeration, hyperbolism [and] excessiveness' to create a 'positive and rich universe.' Likewise, in the Southern context, the 'grotesque body . . . [is] offered up to the god of Southern laughter,'²³⁶ but in an intimate, celebratory sense. George Washington Harris, for example, used Sut Lovingood to bring 'the world of the underclass, the language of grotesquerie'²³⁷ to the forefront. Like Longstreet, Harris provides a witness to Sut's grotesquery, the credulous George, yet there is none of Longstreet's disgust at Sut's ravaged appearance. George describes him as a 'queer-looking, long-legged, short-bodied . . . hog-eyed, funny sort of a genius.'²³⁸ Sut himself tells the story of him and his 'daddy' disposing of the corpse of a frozen horse so stiff 'we had to wait nigh onto seventeen days for him to thaw afore we could skin him,' (p.5) and when one 'rat-faced' youth argues he has heard skinning is the incorrect way to dispose of a horse, cries 'the hell you did . . . set back just 'bout two years, for at the rate you'se a-climbin you stands a pow'ful chance to die with your shoes on.'(p.5) The physically grotesque simply enters the rhythm of Sut's lyrical bragging, and those who attempt to contradict or marginalise him are mocked or ignored. The grotesque continues to be used for comic purposes, such as when Sut's father is attacked by hornets while disguised as a horse. Sut himself seems to find the spectacle amusing; he says they covered his father 'as quick as you could cover a sick pup with a saddle blanket,' (p.8) and compares his father's swollen bald head to a 'peeled onion.'(p.10) Again, Sut makes a comic spectacle out of the suffering of others, with no sentimental narrator to draw attention to the pain his father would have suffered. The style changes from detached disapproval to outright callousness and '[degrades] their subject into flesh.'²³⁹ Conversely, however, Sut seems to respect his father for his suffering, and when a bystander asks the identity of the man covered in stings, Sut cries 'stranger, that man is my dad!' (p.12) Whether Longstreet agrees with the narrator, he does provide him as a tool to distance himself from the physically imperfect, while Sut asserts his connection to the bizarre or physically damaged, having brought the grotesque to the centre of the action himself.

²³⁶ Ed. Piacentino, 'Intersecting Paths: The Humor of the Old Southwest as Intertext' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.19

²³⁷ Edward A. Shannon, 'Talkin' World Revolution: Woody Guthrie's 'Seeds of Man' As Socialist Parable' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.112

²³⁸ George Washington Harris, 'Sut Lovingood's Daddy, Acting Horse' in *Sut Lovingood* (New York: Grove Press 1954), p.3 (subsequent references in text)

²³⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, Introduction to *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis 1984), p.20

Erskine Caldwell, the 'modern Southern literary heir to old Southwestern humor,'²⁴⁰ is representative of the grotesque in which 'specific social phenomena are berated [and] . . . venality [is] . . . treated with extreme exaggeration.'²⁴¹ Indeed, Louis Rubin argues it is impossible to feel any sympathy for Caldwell's characters despite his attempt to use the grotesque to illustrate their poverty, since 'the reader cannot reconcile the comedy at . . . [the Lester's] expense with the desired sympathy for them . . . when . . . we are invited to laugh at them for their degeneracy.'²⁴² Frank W. Shelton says 'Caldwell, like . . . Longstreet, is essentially looking down on his characters from above,'²⁴³ in what Piacentino called 'comic journalism' which '[mocked] a warped creation.'²⁴⁴ The characters, Shelton argues, are 'so grotesque that the reader must laugh at them, if nervously and half-unwillingly.'²⁴⁵ Even more than Harris, however, it was in Caldwell that 'frontier freakishness . . . moved from the periphery to the center.'²⁴⁶ He would, it seems, support Bakhtin's argument for folk humour being 'ambivalent' and unsympathetic in its descriptions.

Caldwell begins *Tobacco Road* with apparent grotesque social commentary on the depravities or sexual unconventionalities which accompany the Lester's poverty, since Lov Benson's wife is the Lester's youngest daughter, Pearl, who 'was only twelve years old . . . when he had married her.'²⁴⁷ Pearl seems traumatised by the experience, having been unable to speak since the wedding, and hides from Lov when he returns from work. Here we perhaps see the human factor in the grotesque despite Rubin's claims that Caldwell's characters defy sympathy. Lov, however, is incapable of understanding the reasons for Pearl's condition, and reacts with violence and abuse, kicking her and pouring water over her. Though Caldwell reports this coldly, almost like an anthropologist, the reader is not detached enough to be entirely out of sympathy. They can, for example, infer the significance of Jeeter's remark 'Pearl ain't nothing but a little gal.' (p.4) She is not

²⁴⁰ Ed Piacentino, 'Intersecting Paths: The Humor of the Old Southwest as Intertext,' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.13

²⁴¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Ch.5: The Grotesque Image of the Body and its Sources' in *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis 1984), p.305

²⁴² Frank W. Shelton, 'George Washington Harris and Harry Crews' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.124

²⁴³ *Ibid.* p.124

²⁴⁴ Sylvia J. Cook, 'Camp Meetings, Comedy, and Erskine Caldwell: From the Preposterous to the Absurd' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.65

²⁴⁵ Frank W. Shelton, 'George Washington Harris and Harry Crews' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.124

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p.70

²⁴⁷ Erskine Caldwell, *Tobacco Road* [1932] (University of Georgia Press: Athens and London 1995), p.2 (subsequent references in the text)

emotionally developed enough to be ready for marriage, and Caldwell casts a critical, if detached, eye on these practices. Pearl refuses to sleep in the same bed as Lov, instead sleeping on the floor of their room. Lov, once again unable to understand the damage her underage marriage has caused, thinks only of dominating her, of 'taking some plow-lines and tying Pearl to the bed . . . to make her act as he thought a wife should,' (p.5) that is, gratifying his sexual wishes. The imagery of suppressing or controlling the woman is a less developed sign of a theme which is significant in Faulkner's writing, the male being threatened by female sexuality, and feeling an urge to control it. Edward A Shannon notes Caldwell's 'sexual frankness,' further linking 'folk culture . . . and grotesque realism.'²⁴⁸

Caldwell uses his characters to a specific purpose of social commentary, and they somewhat fulfill Jan Whitt's definition of the grotesque as 'one-dimensional and representative of a single trait or belief.'²⁴⁹ Certainly Caldwell's male characters share Lov's suppressive and insensitive views toward women. In her criticism that 'little girls like Pearl don't know how to live married lives like we grown-up women do,' (p.48) Sister Bessie inadvertently states the root of the problem; there is no reason why 'little girls' should, but the impoverished Tobacco Road is one in which 'men . . . all want to marry girls around eleven or twelve.' (p.52) Jeeter admits Ada, his own wife, was twelve when they married; he simply dismisses Pearl as 'queer' and tells Lov to take control by ordering her to sleep with him. Neither man considers why Pearl, a child, may fear sleeping with Lov, yet, while the reader may not sympathise, we realise Caldwell is drawing attention to the lack of compassion which can result from poverty and a lack of education. Sister Bessie, too, remarks 'Pearl just ain't old enough to know better' (p.49) without fully understanding the significance of her words; Pearl was forced to marry before being psychologically or physically prepared.

Indeed, after his crops are blighted with turnip worms, there is an element of social commentary in Jeeter's remarks:

What God made turnip worms for, I can't make out . . . He . . . has got it in good and heavy for a poor man . . . some of these days [God'll] . . . bust loose with a heap of bounty and all us poor folks will have all we want to eat and plenty to clothe us with . . . It can't always keep getting worse and worse.(p.9-10)

²⁴⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Ch.5: The Grotesque Image of the Body and its Sources' in *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis 1984), p.315

²⁴⁹ Jan Whitt, 'American Life Is Rich in Lunacy: The Unsettling Social Comedy of The Beverly Hillbillies' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.235

Again Caldwell uses his characters to a social purpose and for dramatic irony, since the Depression continued to degrade and dispossess poor whites. He subverts his own message by showing those degraded have no sympathy for the degradation of others; Lov says he would have married Ellie-May had it not been for her hare-lip, but 'I knowed I couldn't sleep . . . knowing how [that face] looked in daylight.' (p.11) They are, however, too accustomed to grotesque or bizarre behaviour to pay it any real attention or sympathy, and thus nobody notices Mother Lester as she crawls in starvation towards Lov's turnip sack, once again utilising 'bodies . . . [as] the fundamental vehicle for the grotesque.'²⁵⁰ Furthermore, Jeeter's own selfishness has somewhat influenced Ellie-May's plight, since 'having an operation performed on Ellie-May's lip was . . . [something] Jeeter had been waiting for fifteen years to do.' (p.60) Thus we see the physical grotesque has the potential to be altered even in impoverished circumstances, but once again the character's plight is perpetuated through the complacency of others. Nor does Caldwell attempt to encourage empathy in his writing, reporting the events in a detached, journalistic tone. The reader, however, pities the fact that mockery has made Ellie-May accept cruelty as her due, and that she assumes Jeeter's promises of an operation are simply another way to mock her. She has, Caldwell informs the reader, already been expelled from the local school 'because the other boys and girls laughed at her harelip so much they could not study their lessons.' (p.62)

Caldwell does outline that the Lesters' poverty is the result of external social influences; they were reduced to 'painful poverty' after the sharecropper Captain John abandoned the farm, leaving Jeeter to fend for himself. Indeed, Jeeter somewhat perpetuates his own situation through 'an inherited love of the land . . . that all his disastrous experiences with farming had failed to take away.' (p.68) The land was once his family's old plantation, and thus we see elements of the psychological grotesque, the refusal to give up the past, even if it would mean the possibility of moving on to work in the mills and help the Lester's financially. Instead, he refuses his mother food despite her being afflicted by pellagra, in the hope of hastening her death and sparing the Lesters a mouth to feed. His neglect subjects her to further degradation, since she is forced to survive on roots and grass from the fields. Bessie, too, becomes a source of mockery due to her 'two cavernous round nostrils.' Dude mocks them for their resemblance to a 'double-barreled shotgun,' placing Bessie within the grotesque tradition in which 'the nose and the mouth play the most important part in the grotesque

²⁵⁰ Ed Piacentino, 'Intersecting Paths: The Humor of the Old Southwest as Intertext,' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.19

image of the body.²⁵¹ Sylvia J. Cook accuses Caldwell of being simply 'extravagant and grotesque'; yet her claim does not seem entirely justified, since we recognise Bessie's humiliation and pain in her body language as she 'turned white . . . hung her head in an effort to hide her exposed nostrils . . . put a hand over her face' (p.84) despite the author's deadpan tone.

Bessie also emphasises the spectacle the grotesque represents for Southern society, as can be seen when she attempts to buy a car:

Presently a salesman walked over to her and asked her if she wanted anything. He noticed that there was something unusual about her nose the moment he first saw her.

'I came to buy a new Ford,' she said.

The salesman was so busy looking down into her nostrils that he asked her to repeat what she had said.

'I came to buy a new Ford.'

'Have you got any money? . . . He glanced around to see if any of the other men were in the room. He wanted them to take a good look at Bessie's nose . . . It was hard to believe from her appearance that she had as much as a penny. (p.88)

The salesman is so transfixed by her nostrils that he asks her to repeat what she has said. Society has evolved a heightened sensitivity to the physically deformed, even in people who are otherwise not particularly socially exalted themselves. Furthermore, the salesman's assumption Bessie will have no money emphasises another supposition, that the grotesque of appearance will have links to poverty. The salesman hopes that others will notice Bessie's deformity; mockery of the outsider becomes a social ritual, evident when he calls another shopkeeper over with the words 'I got a real sight to show you.' (p.89) A collective appreciation of the 'sight' of the physical grotesque strengthens the stability of the community, since they all share an absence of physical deformity, as well as asserting the observer's own normalcy. Conversely, the salesman shows no regard for Bessie's humiliation since he does not consider her fully human. After she leaves they continue to mock her, asking how she keeps the rain from entering her nostrils. Gossip is a sustaining element of Southern communities, and the men may feel it a duty to express shock at the outsider immediately

²⁵¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Ch.5: The Grotesque Image of the Body and its Sources' in *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis 1984), p.316

after her departure, as if on cue or obligation. The reader, however, is privy to Bessie's reaction when she immediately asks Dude to drive off and spare her the mockery and pain.

Caldwell continues the trope of bizarre sexual behaviour to emphasise his characters' depravity. Once again this has its genesis in their poverty, since 'three beds had always held the Lesters, even when there were . . . eight or nine of them there,' (p.124-5) both for necessity and warmth. However, Bessie and Dude are sharing a bed, and Caldwell shows little narrative sympathy when Jeeter insists on sleeping between the couple instead of the floor; Dude says he 'ain't got no business' being between them. It is crudely ironic that when Jeeter's actions are interrupted by a lawman wishing for information, he remarks, 'These city folks has got the queerest ways.' (p.146) Caldwell continues to present the Lesters as a 'human comedy' or a freak show and hardly argues that Lov's sexual proclivities in wishing to tie Pearl to the bed are unique to his generation, since Jeeter admits wanting to sleep with Dude and Bessie for the 'longest time.' Caldwell perhaps epitomises Bakhtin's idea that 'laughter combined with bitterness which takes the grotesque form acquires the traits of mockery and cynicism, and finally becomes satanic.'²⁵²

Ed Piacentino points out that 'little scholarship has been directed towards . . . connections between . . . [the grotesque] and African-American writing.'²⁵³ Though Charles Chesnutt also uses the grotesque to elaborate the plight of the downtrodden, he does not use it for a 'purely satirical function.'²⁵⁴ Though his tales of conjure carry with them what Bakhtin called the 'extreme' and the 'fantastic' they contain 'not only physical but psychological distortion,'²⁵⁵ imbuing the fantastical events with far more depth. Indeed, Chesnutt foreshadows Piacentino's observation that Faulkner often uses the grotesque to make 'some philosophical or figurative statement.'²⁵⁶ Louis D. Rubin argues Caldwell's message is often undermined by 'low comedy.' Chesnutt, however, uses the psychological grotesque to elicit a powerful emotional response from his readers by presenting the

²⁵² Mikhail Bakhtin, Introduction to *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis 1984), p.51

²⁵³ Ed Piacentino, 'Intersecting Paths: The Humor of the Old Southwest as Intertext,' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.20

²⁵⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, Introduction to *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis 1984), p.44

²⁵⁵ Ruth D. Weston, 'Barry Hannah's 'High Lonesome' Humor: New Voices For Old Grotesqueries' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.178

²⁵⁶ Ed Piacentino, 'From Tap Root to Branch: The Humor of William Price Fox' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.151

'punitively damaged identity'²⁵⁷ of the slaves, with Uncle Julius' tales representing the 'damaged selfhood slavery helped him compose.' (p.18)

The story 'Dave's Neckliss' represents 'Chesnutt's darkest assessment of the power of official orders.' (p.18) It begins when Julius is reduced to tears whilst eating a piece of ham, which evokes memories of Dave, a former slave of the plantation. We see the influence of the psychological grotesque; even John sees past his own limited perceptions to recognise Julius as 'the curious psychological spectacle of a mind enslaved long after the shackles had been struck off.'²⁵⁸ Julius represents what Richard Gray called the 'Southern aberration of obsession'²⁵⁹ with a painful past; superficially, John appears to sympathise, yet still assumes Julius to have only the 'most elementary ideas of love, friendship, patriotism and religion,' (p.125) the irony, of course, being that these latter two would be institutions forced on Julius through slavery. This is, however, one of Julius' most psychological, least fantastic stories, concerned with the folk memory of pain.

Julius tells how Dave was framed for the theft of a ham by Wiley, a slave who envied Dave the affections of his lover Dilsey. As punishment, their master, Dugal, turns the slaves over to the crueler overseer Walker. Walker, in turn, forces Dave to wear the ham fastened around his neck with wire, physically making him a humiliating oddity; the grotesque becomes a spectacle and a warning. Dave first receives the rejection and anger of his fellow slaves who are punished for his supposed actions, and then from Dilsey who refuses to believe his protestations of innocence and 'doan wanten talk to no nigger . . . w'at gwine roun' wid sich a lookin' thing ez dat hung roun' his neck.' (p.130) This rejection completes Dave's sense of loss; comedy at the grotesque's expense becomes sympathy that one deemed physically abhorrent is rejected even by those they previously loved. Dave is still forced to perform his duties; Chesnutt once again uses the grotesque to emphasise the exploitation of his people, as the ham becomes 'de las' thing he seed at night, en de fus' thing he seed in de mawnin',' (p.130) as inescapable as the constant system of bondage under which Julius lives. Dave is even mocked by the other slaves. In a synthesis of the two stereotypes, the physical develops into the psychological as Dave begins to lose his mind through isolation and humiliation, 'talkin' ter hisself . . .

²⁵⁷ Richard H. Brodhead, quoted in the Introduction to *The Conjure Woman and Other Conjure Tales* [1899] (Duke University Press: Durham and London 1993), p.18 (subsequent references in text)

²⁵⁸ Charles Chesnutt, 'Dave's Neckliss' in *The Conjure Woman and Other Conjure Tales* [1899] (Duke University Press: Durham and London 1993), p.124 (subsequent references in the text)

²⁵⁹ Ruth D. Weston, 'Barry Hannah's 'High Lonesome' Humor: New Voices for Old Grotesqueries' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.178

laffin' fit ter kill 'bout nuffin . . . [saying] he had 'skivered . . . a place in de swamp whar dey wuz . . . lan' covered wid ham-trees.' (p.131) Despite Dave's laughter, we are given an intimate portrayal of his breakdown and the feelings of the 'grotesque' rather than objectifying them from a distance; even the 'ham-trees' are not comic, but invoke pity for Dave's damaged psyche. Even after the ham is removed, Dave's humiliation has penetrated his psyche so entirely he supplements it by tying 'a lighter-knot ter a string . . . en w'en nobody wuzn' lookin' he'd . . . hang it roun' his neck . . . it appeared lack Dave done gone clean out'n his mine,' (p.131) the humour again suppressed by the realisation that the system itself has the power to cause this degree of damage. Likewise, Dave's belief he is 'turnin' ter a ham' (p.132) is symbolic of the loss of self and identity of the slave system, of an oppressed man engulfed by 'the subhumanity an official degradation system assigns to him.' (p.18) Even when his innocence is discovered, the mental anguish has penetrated Dave too deeply, and Julius discovers 'a pile er bark burnin' in [the smokehouse] . . . hangin' fum one er der rafters, wuz Dave . . . [he] had hung hisself up in de smoke-'ouse fer ter kyo' (p.134) and strangled and burnt to death. This final image of horror allows the image of psychological damage to move the grotesque beyond the realm of humour.

The Grotesque as a Form of Spectacle: *The Hamlet* and *As I Lay Dying*

In *The Hamlet*, Ike Snopes love for the cow shows another aspect of the grotesque which Milton Rickels called a 'clash of incompatibles'²⁶⁰ and demonstrates that Faulkner does indeed '[exploit] the human body for comical purposes.'²⁶¹ Like Harris, Faulkner 'created . . . eccentric comic characters, notorious for their incongruous behaviour . . . [and] saw the comedic potential of exploiting spectacle by showcasing outrageous material.'²⁶² He uses Ike Snopes to mock the pastoral romance and as such his language presents Ike '[conducting] the cow with all the gallantry with which a knight might conduct his lady.'²⁶³ However, Faulkner does not simply exhibit Ike as a freak, but rather a creature of 'pure adoration . . . without inhibitions, responsibilities, or self consciousness.'²⁶⁴ Yet even Ratliff reacts to the sight of him with 'suffocation, a sickness, nausea,'²⁶⁵

²⁶⁰ Quoted in Ed Piacentino, 'Intersecting Paths: The Humor of the Old Southwest as Intertext,' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.19

²⁶¹ Ed Piacentino, 'Intersecting Paths: The Humor of the Old Southwest as Intertext,' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.20

²⁶² Ed Piacentino, 'From Tap-Root to Branch: The Humor of William Price Fox' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.150

²⁶³ Cleanth Brooks, 'ch.9: Faulkner's Savage Arcadia: Frenchman's Bend (The Hamlet)' in *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1990), p.180

²⁶⁴ Ibid.p.190

reminding us it is largely those within society who determine the outsider. The residents of Frenchman's Bend have forced Ike to wear a block round his neck, similar to Dave's ham, to alert them to his presence with no regard for his suffering, as if Ike bore the mark of the beast. Of course, the sound of the block attracts even more attention to Ike, dehumanising him into a sideshow freak, a 'Gorgon-face. . . man was not intended to look at. . . .' (p.85)

Though the events are told in the third person, the narrator is not entirely detached, and when Ike is referred to as 'the creature,' Faulkner has adopted Ratliff's perspective observing him. Thus he develops the presentation of the 'grotesque' by emphasising the importance of the role of perspective in determining the outsider, and the visceral reactions the grotesque causes in onlookers 'forced into riotous proximity with other, grotesque human subjects.'²⁶⁶ Faulkner's description of Ike's 'hanging mouth and pointed faun's ears' (p.86) shows that, in his revulsion, Ratliff views Ike as something animalistic. Faulkner may be using both Eula and Ike to subvert the pastoral romance; he compares Eula to 'honey in sunlight and bursting grapes' (p.95) and uses similar romantic imagery as Ike regards the cow as 'spring's concentrated climax, by it crowned, garlanded.' (p.168) Ike discovers a 'seemingly unlimited world in pursuit of his beloved'²⁶⁷ which Faulkner uses for 'mock-heroic'²⁶⁸ purposes, before switching the perspective to Ike's observers, as Mrs. Littlejohn notes his 'empty eyes striving at her, picking his feet up . . . like a cat standing on something hot.' (p.169) Both the animal imagery and the emptiness of his eyes emphasise Littlejohn's perception, and the split between the public and private world, since Ike's affair is simply a bizarre spectacle for the town; indeed, as he falls on his way to meet the cow and rises from the water 'bellowing,' he seems rather like the cow himself. Faulkner further subverts the purity of Ike's love by the cow's 'steady, terrified bellowing,' disturbed by Ike's actions just as a human might be by unwanted advances; again the grotesque is used to satirise the romantic style. The same is true when Ike supposedly tells the cow 'this violent violation of her maiden's delicacy is no shame.' (p.174) Of course, Ike, who is a mute, does not say this, but Faulkner is using the grotesque to mock the Southern ideal of female purity (as he does to a far darker extent in *The Sound and the Fury*). He further mocks the mythicising of

²⁶⁵ William Faulkner, *The Hamlet* [1940] (New York: Vintage 1956), p.85 (subsequent references in the text)

²⁶⁶ Richard Gray, 'ch.3: Rewriting the Homeplace' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.154

²⁶⁷ Olga Vickery, 'ch.11: The Profit and the Loss: *The Hamlet, The Town and The Mansion*' in *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1964), p.177

²⁶⁸ Richard Gray, 'ch.5: Public Faces and Private Places' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.262

women when he compares the cow to 'Troy's Helen' and 'Juno,' or the romantic meal when Ike shares the cow's feed, an intimate moment to Ike, but one which would disgust an observer.

Yet once again Faulkner shifts the perception when Houston discovers the 'couple.' The romantic imagery is abandoned and Ike becomes 'a thick squatting shape . . . clumsily washing her legs.' Houston's perspective presents Ike as 'the incongruous and grotesque in human behaviour,'²⁶⁹ and Faulkner continues to mockingly present the cow as a 'promiscuous' woman when Houston tells her, 'get on home you damn whore.' (p.175) Yet Faulkner also emphasises the cow's attempts at resistance. Ike speaks romantic nothings to her 'braced against the pull of the rope' (p.179) as she struggles for release, he 'implacable and compelling while she tugs . . . shaking her head against . . . the rope and bellowing,' (p.179) the romantic imagery interspersed with the imagery of rape. This dual perspective makes the grotesque even more effective by raising the question of which view takes precedence, the warped romanticism or the onlooker's recognition of the damage caused. If the former is true, their discomfort with Ike is entirely unwarranted, but since Faulkner describes the cow's panic, he appears to be presenting the scene with some sympathy for the horror of the onlookers; whether he realises it or not, Ike is abusing the cow. Faulkner expresses some sympathy, and certainly humanises his 'grotesques.' However, he still presents their behaviour as abnormal, though without the mocking tone that might present the scene as nothing more than comedy. Even the narrator himself becomes more detached and points out the fallacy of the relationship, describing the garland of flowers Ike creates as an 'abortive diadem,' (p.184) which disintegrates even as he tries to adorn the cow, and which she subsequently eats. Faulkner finishes however, in a completion of romantic mockery with the image of Ike and the cow lying down together as 'mammalian attar.'

Jack Houston, however, provides another perspective regarding Ike's behaviour, and Ike's representation moves from the courtly lover to simply 'the idiot.' Those who regard the grotesque feel contaminated by its presence, and the very sight of the feed Ike has spilled during his 'meal' with the cow fills Houston with a 'panting rage and thirst for blood.' (p.191) Once again Faulkner switches the narration to emphasise the observer's consciousness, and a sense that their wish to purge the grotesque is acceptable because, in the mind, the damaged outsider is simply an object without the acuteness to feel suffering. When Houston attempts to 'drive the creature away,' (p.194) Faulkner is

²⁶⁹ Ruth D. Weston, 'Barry Hannah's 'High Lonesome' Humor: New Voices for Old Grotesqueries' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.175

using the voice of the narrator to reflect Houston's perceptions; forcing the reader to recognise the callousness of such an outlook. Ratliff, too, is transfixed by Ike, knowing 'he did not want to see it, yet . . . he was going to look' (p.196); the grotesque continues to provide an uneasy fascination for the Southern culture of gossip and spectacle; one onlooker remarks to Ratliff, 'I notice you come to have your look too.' By providing insight into the perception of onlookers, Faulkner articulates their discomfort, and Ratliff sees 'himself looking out of [Ike's] . . . blasted and tongueless face,' (p.196); urge to purge the grotesque is not due to its difference, but to how society sees a reflection of itself. Thus there is no regard for Ike's pain, since to show him sympathy would admit recognition of his humanity and diminish the gap between him and his observers. I.O. and Whitfield have no scruples about feeding Ike a piece of meat from the cow in order to 'cure' him, without regard for the pain Ike would feel at eating his beloved. To their mind, Ike is no more able to understand pain than he is love, which further emphasises that 'degradation, whether parodical or of some other type, is characteristic of . . . folk humor.'²⁷⁰

Such degradation of the physical body is even more extreme, and darkly comedic, in *As I Lay Dying*, which continues the theme of 'the absurd and their relationship to . . . decorum and propriety.'²⁷¹ Addie Bundren's decaying corpse is likewise an image 'entirely different from the ready-made, completed being'²⁷² and in a darker sense, emphasises the 'risible possibilities of the grotesque'²⁷³ in a similar fashion to *The Hamlet*. David Minter describes the novel as 'often comic . . . and frequently grotesque.'²⁷⁴ Richard Gray, too, recognises that 'the basic premise of *As I Lay Dying* . . . the transportation of a corpse growing smellier by the minute . . . is like a graveyard joke'²⁷⁵ through which Faulkner 'openly invites horror and astonishment.' Once again the onlooker dehumanises the grotesque spectacle, evident when Peabody perceives the dying Addie as simply 'a

²⁷⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, Introduction to *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis 1984), p.21

²⁷¹ Sylvia J. Cook, 'Camp Meetings, Comedy and Erskine Caldwell: From the Preposterous to the Absurd' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.52

²⁷² Mikhail Bakhtin, Introduction to *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis 1984), p.25

²⁷³ Ed Piacentino, 'From Tap-Root to Branch: The Humor of William Price Fox' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.150

²⁷⁴ David Minter, 'Recognitions' in *William Faulkner: His Life and Work* (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 1980), p.118

²⁷⁵ Richard Gray, 'ch.3: Rewriting the Homeplace' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.152

bundle of rotten sticks,²⁷⁶ consigning her to inhumanity even though she is still alive; again the 'grotesque' often has its roots in a sense of distance, since Addie's children cannot detach themselves in the same way.

In this novel, Faulkner uses the grotesque to emphasise the feelings and motives of his characters, both comically and on a more emotional level. Anse Bundren, for example, is described as 'dangle-armed, humped,' a 'green-eating tub of guts' (p.57) motivated entirely by self-interest; as his wife dies, he murmurs 'now I can get them teeth.' (p.47) and is as lacking in aesthetics as he is courage or magnanimity. There is far less sympathy shown for Anse than Ike Snopes, since Anse is competent enough to be responsible for his actions. Conversely, however, grotesque or bizarre behaviour also signifies an expression of grief; Vardaman mutilates his fish to vent his horror at Addie's death until it is simply 'not-blood on my hands and overalls.' (p.48) However, the primary spectacle is the 'bodily lower stratum'²⁷⁷ of Addie's corpse, the epitome of Milton Rickels argument that the bodies of Southern writing are 'not the bodies of classical esthetics . . . [they do not] represent the stability and completion of being'²⁷⁸ but rather the concreteness of degradation and death, which Faulkner is able to present as 'heartbreakingly painful and extremely funny.'²⁷⁹ The Bundrens odyssey certainly reflects the exaggerated actions of Southwestern humour, yet onlookers are less amused than genuinely horrified. The character Rachel condemns the paraded corpse as an 'outrage,' once again putting the grotesque in perspective rather than simply the solipsistic view of each Bundren family member, and laments the men who 'torture [women] . . . alive and flout us dead.' (p.105) Rachel encourages the reader to question the wisdom of the Bundren's actions and emphasises the power of the grotesque; as a woman she feels so violated by the sight that she refuses to allow her husband Samson to comfort her, crying 'don't you touch me!'

The journey ravages not only Addie's body but the bodies of her family. After diving into the river to retrieve Addie's upended coffin, Cash's 'face appears sunken a little, sagging from the bony ridges of eye-sockets.' (p.144) Faulkner's imagery here is similar to his description of Addie at her

²⁷⁶ William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* [1930] (London: Vintage 2004), p.39 (subsequent references in the text)

²⁷⁷ Mikhail Bakhtin, Introduction to *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis 1984), p.28

²⁷⁸ Ed Piacentino, 'Intersecting Paths: The Humor of the Old Southwest as Intertext,' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.19

²⁷⁹ Theresa M. Towner, 'Al Jackson, Ernest V. Trueblood, and 'Mr. Faulkner, a Member in Good Standing of the Ancient and Gentle Profession of Letters' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.49

point of death, as if Cash too were a dead body or thing. Faulkner uses the grotesque spectacle of Cash lying physically immobilised, 'a little pool of vomit at his head,' (p.144) illustrating the effects of the journey and to emphasising Anse's selfishness, since his only reaction to his son's injuries is to lament there was never 'such a misfortunate man' as himself. Anse, too, is described in a dehumanised way, 'a figure carved clumsily from tough wood by a drunken caricaturist.' (p.151) In his selfishness, Anse appears less of a man or full human being, his physicality expressing his lack of substance, in direct contrast to Ike, who despite his extensive problems expressed real devotion for the cow. The imagery of Anse is contrasted with the image of Cash vomiting, once again using the physical grotesque to remind the reader who is really suffering. When Anse encases Cash's leg in cement to avoid the doctors, ultimately causing the leg to turn black and septic, Cash stoically remarks 'It's cold. It feels fine' (p.196) since he in contrast is willing to bear injury to hasten his mother into the ground. Likewise, Faulkner uses Vardaman's child consciousness as a distancing technique; when Vardaman remarks 'Cash's foot and leg looked like a nigger's. Then they broke it off. Cash's leg bled,' (p.210) the reader realises the results of Anse's callousness and the greater tapestry of the characters' suffering; ultimately, Cash loses 'sixty-odd square inches of skin.' (p.227)

Sylvia J. Cook points out that 'when the literary mode . . . is grotesque and cruel comedy . . . the questions tend to move . . . to investigations of . . . the absurd and their relationship to . . . decorum and propriety.'²⁸⁰ Thus once again the spectacle of the Bundrens signifies an alien, disturbing presence within Jefferson's social framework. Olga Vickery says that 'because only the actions of the Bundrens and not their . . . emotions are perceived, they become grotesques. What is horror and pain for the family becomes farce for those . . . who merely observe,'²⁸¹ and it is worth examining 'the linked realities of an unruly folk culture and 'the grotesque body . . . '²⁸² Armstid, seeing the buzzards circling his barn where he has agreed to house Addie's corpse, is convinced he can smell Addie even though 'the breeze was setting away from the house . . . but . . . it was like I could smell it in the field a mile away.' (p.174) Armstid finds the body so threatening, he feels infected by its presence and fears that the town will discover he is storing it, aligning him with the outsiders. Ironically, however, when Darl sets fire to the barn, Lula calls the destruction of the body

²⁸⁰ Sylvia J. Cook, 'Camp Meetings, Comedy and Erskine Caldwell: From the Preposterous to the Absurd' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.52

²⁸¹ Olga Vickery, 'ch.4: The Dimensions of Consciousness: *As I Lay Dying*' in *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1964), p.65

²⁸² Richard Gray, 'ch.3: Rewriting the Homeplace' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.154

an 'outrage' just as Rachel did its parade; even the destruction of the grotesque cannot eradicate the sense of contamination for whom encounter it. On the Bundrens' arrival in Mottson, the perspective on the corpse again switches to the public, 'the ladies all scattering up and down the street with handkerchiefs to their noses.' (p.191)

Faulkner describes the reactions of the townspeople directly after a passage of internal monologue which gives insight into Vardaman's inability to cope with the loss of his mother. He is driven into denial, thinking '*my mother does not smell like that*' (p.185) and carries a fish as a talisman to represent his mother's flesh, because the alternative would be accepting the woman who was once his mother is not only dead, but decaying. In this way, Faulkner continues to add greater emotional depth to the folk theme; the physical grotesque affects those who were connected to it on a psychological and emotional level, evoked through a child's inability to accept his mother as a creature of flesh which passes away and rots. Conversely, the reactions of the Mottston citizens call into question to question whether the Bundrens quest is the right course of action for themselves or the body, given the physical decomposition of Addie's corpse, which Mosely informs us has now been 'dead eight days.' Just as Armstid claimed to be able to smell the corpse despite being outside its vicinity, Mosely constructs a mental image of the corpse entering the town, saying 'it must have been like a piece of rotten cheese coming into an anthill' (p.192); a pattern gradually emerges of people constructing a fantasy of the grotesque as a result of a shared sense of horror whether they have seen the spectacle first hand, or merely heard about it. Mosely admits, 'when I went to supper it still seemed like I could smell it,' (p.193) even though, in fact, he never smelt it at all.

Bakhtin says the grotesque is historically concerned with 'dismembered bodies, their roasting, burning, and swallowing.'²⁸³ It is therefore fitting that Darl sets fire to Gillespie's barn to destroy Addie's corpse, an eccentric attempt to end the suffering his family have been through by purging the grotesque. Vickery notes Darl's actions are either 'a sign of a deranged mind or of an acute moral sensibility,'²⁸⁴ a result of his 'conviction that the corpse has long since become an offense to God and man.'²⁸⁵ However, in doing so he becomes a target of fear and violence himself and Cash concludes 'it wasn't nothing else to do . . . [but] send him to Jackson.' (p.219) Jewel,

²⁸³ Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Ch.5: The Grotesque Image of the Body and its Sources' in *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis 1984), p.347

²⁸⁴ Olga Vickery, 'ch.4: The Dimensions of Consciousness: *As I Lay Dying*' in *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1964), p.59

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p.58

however, has no reluctance in attacking or expelling the outsider, partly through rage that Darl would try to destroy his mother's corpse, and says they should 'fix him now . . . catch him and tie him up,' (p.219) as if he were an animal. Cash, however, provides the logical counter-argument that it is society which determines the outsider, saying 'sometimes I ain't so sho who's got ere a right to say when a man is crazy and when he ain't . . . sometimes I think it ain't none of us pure crazy or . . . sane until the balance of us talks him that-a-way.' (p.219-20)

The most fascinating perspective of all, however, comes when Darl describes his transportation to Jackson in the third person; 'Darl has gone to Jackson. They put him on the train, laughing.' (p.241) Like Ike Snopes, he is something of a spectacle or thing, but, while Ike could only be a spectacle through the consciousness of others, Darl himself creates a dual consciousness through which he watches and interacts with himself. Darl the man is now interrogating Darl the grotesque, asking him why he is laughing so uncontrollably: 'Darl's comments . . . [add] darkness and social commentary to the novel.'²⁸⁶ Thus Darl's identity as an outsider is complete, since he even appears bizarre to his dualistic self, let alone his observers, and he ends his story 'in a cage in Jackson where . . . looking out he foams . . . yes yes yes yes yes yes yes yes.' (p.242) In this novel, therefore, Faulkner has provided a spherical representation of the grotesque, from all angles including its own inner consciousness.

Faulkner and the Psychological Grotesque: 'A Rose for Emily,' *The Sound and the Fury* and *Light in August*

Both Ike Snopes and Darl Bundren represent the psychological incongruity or damage of many Faulknerian characters, especially those who are "possessed in a way" by the past.²⁸⁷ 'A Rose for Emily' explores the physical and mental results of such an obsession on its subject, as well as the fascination these eccentrics hold for the townspeople around them. The story takes place in Jefferson, which becomes as fascinated by Emily Grierson as it did Addie's corpse. Emily's death, we are told, represents a 'fallen monument' to the townspeople, and many of the women go to her

²⁸⁶ Edward A. Shannon, 'Talkin' World Revolution: Woody Guthrie's 'Seeds of Man' as Socialist Parable' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.112

²⁸⁷ Ruth D. Weston, 'Barry Hannah's 'High Lonesome' Humor: New Voices for Old Grotesqueries' in *The Enduring Legacy of Old Southwest Humor*, Ed Piacentino, ed., (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 2006), p.178

funeral 'out of curiosity to see the inside of her house,'²⁸⁸ where Emily has lived the latter part of her life in isolation. This isolation and refusal to function in the public world seems to lead to the physical grotesque thus indicating a link between the two. Emily's home smells of 'dust and disuse – a close dank smell' (p.120) evocative of a tomb, developing the physical grotesque itself; once we begin to question the psychological reasons behind it, it is harder to dismiss it as a humorous or horrifying spectacle. Her isolation has given her a frame the humorists would certainly have seen fit to mock; because she is small 'what would have been plumpness in another body was obesity in her.' (p.121) Part of her bloated appearance comes from her stasis, the imagery of her being 'submerged in motionless water' (p.121) evoking withdrawal from the social world as some engulfing abyss in which 'the flow of . . . life stops.'²⁸⁹

Her understanding of reality appears tenuous, and when Emily is confronted about the taxes she owes in Jefferson, she tells her collectors to 'see Colonel Sartoris' about the matter. Again she indicates her inability to engage with the present, since Sartoris has been dead for a decade. He may represent Emily's obsession with her own sense of past nobility, a time when she feels she would not be answerable to the town. Here the psychological grotesque has further elements of social commentary, indicating how the Southern perpetuation of past myths can erode its citizens' links to reality. The narrator then circles back to tell the story of Emily's lover, Homer Barron, who disappeared two years earlier; even the narrative style emphasises preoccupation with the past and its continuing influence on the present. The grotesque creates mystery and suspense as the narrator circles back to an unpleasant smell emanating from Emily's house which had disturbed the townspeople thirty years earlier, who realised 'we really must do something about it'; another communal impetus to purge or otherwise expel the grotesque. However, the townspeople also seem to take pleasure in perpetuating Emily's psychological imbalance. After her father dies, Emily refuses to acknowledge his death, and none of the townspeople attempt to influence her decision to remain within her memories. Her obsession, however, may indicate the psychological damage inflicted by her father. His refusal to allow Emily a suitor when she was young made him the only person of significance in his daughter's life, and now 'with nothing left, she would have to cling onto that which had robbed her, as people will.' (p.124)

²⁸⁸ William Faulkner, 'A Rose for Emily' in *Collected Stories* (London: Vintage 1995), p.119 (subsequent references in the text)

²⁸⁹ David Minter, 'Recognitions' in *William Faulkner: His Life and Work* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, Maryland, 1980), p.129

Faulkner continues to illustrate Emily's psychological state through small details of her behaviour, such as asking the chemist for arsenic. Through these insights, the reader begins to suspect her isolation may conceal a darker secret. The townspeople, however, maintain their callousness, believing that even if Emily plans to kill herself, 'it would be the best thing.' (p.126) Conversely, however, when she begins to be seen with Homer Barron, the town continue to construct her identity assuming, she will soon marry him to place Emily within a conventional social framework. Homer's presence further escalates Emily's isolation, which affects her appearance, and when she reappears on the street – after Barron has supposedly left her – the reader is told she has 'turned fat and her hair was now grey.' (p.127) Once again Faulkner draws attention to links between psychological deterioration and the effect it has on the physical, and develops the latter through the former. There is also a sense of social commentary, as the narrator unintentionally reveals the town's judgmental nature; in reality, there is nothing so strange about Emily's hair having turned grey.

In her isolation, Emily becomes a symbol of the Old South resistant to the onset of modernity. She loses her last link to the society, her china-painting lessons, when 'the newer generation became the backbone and the spirit of the town, and the painting pupils grew up and fell away,' (p.128) and refuses to allow a mailbox to be attached to her door, actively repelling communication. Instead she appears in her windows like 'a carven torso of an idol,' (p.128) an object created rather than a human being, just as she is created in the narratives of the town. (p.129) Her room bears 'a thin, acrid pall as of the tomb . . . decked and furnished as if for a bridal,' (p.129) as if her obsession with the semi-marriage of her past has drained her of life and essence. The results of her obsession reach an obscene crescendo when the townspeople discover Homer's corpse, preserved in formaldehyde, 'lain in the attitude of an embrace . . . rotted beneath what was left of the nightshirt.' (p.130) Emily seems to have seen Barron as her only significant moment of happiness and has tried to preserve the moment physically by sleeping with his corpse, which is now 'inextricable from the bed,' (p.130) just as he was physically and psychologically inextricable from Emily's life, symbolising the continuing presence of the past. Despite Emily's somewhat depraved actions, her condition is a result of suppression at the hands of her father and pain at her denial of love. Despite these perverse revelations, her actions are not comedic, and she is to be pitied despite having poisoned her lover; sleeping with his corpse represents an inability to re-connect with modern society. Once again, Emily's mental and physical deterioration also emphasises the rejuvenating effect the folk community can have, since it serves to counter one's being lost in solipsism, and losing hold on the present reality.

Cleanth Brooks says that 'Jean-Paul Sartre has argued . . . Faulkner's characters, because they are committed to the past, are helpless.'²⁹⁰ Benjy Compson certainly has an obsession with the past; he represents the 'blind, self-centeredness of innocence'²⁹¹ and to begin with there is no countering voice to put Benjy's non-linear narration into perspective. The reader infers Benjy's actions predominantly through the words which surround him and Richard Gray points out, 'different voices occupy [Benjy's] consciousness . . . while he himself inhabits silence.'²⁹² He is silent, however, only in his own mind; Luster's remarks 'listen at you now . . . hush up that moaning'²⁹³ when mentions of 'caddie' from the golf course causes Benjy to break into anguished wails. Benjy is just as much a spectacle as Addie Bundren's corpse, but he never realises this, and Faulkner also emphasises the lack of sympathy he receives from those surrounding him. Benjy is even more immersed in the past than Emily, since he sees no distinction between past and present; catching his shirt on a nail while crawling under the fence reminds him of the past when '*Caddy uncaught me and we crawled through.*' (p.2) Stylistically, however, there is no immediate indication of a time shift, because, immersed in Benjy's perspective, everything is part of a continuous present, and 'otherness does not exist.'²⁹⁴ Caddy is Benjy's 'absent centre,' a haven from the neglect he receives from his family in reality. Caroline regards him as 'a judgment' and blames Benjy's condition for exacerbating her own illnesses, which are in fact hypochondria. As a result, his 'psychological grotesque' is an obsession with a past which represented love and acceptance, the figure of his sister; given the circumstances of Benjy's present, such a past is perhaps beneficial.

In his memories, Caddy's attitude towards Benjy is in marked contrast to her mother's, since she is the only one with any concern to alleviate his pain. She asks her mother's permission to take him outside, knowing he will feel pain if he is neglected, but Caroline simply moans 'why did you come in here? To give him some excuse to worry me again.' (p.5) Benjy, and indeed the plight of all Caroline's children, is treated simply as an albatross around her neck, and Caroline is only concerned for Benjy's illness to the extent that it will upset her 'company'; the spectacle of Benjy is a taint to

²⁹⁰ Cleanth Brooks, 'ch.15: Man, Time and Eternity (The Sound and the Fury)' in *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1990), p.328

²⁹¹ David Minter, 'The Self's Own Lamp' in *William Faulkner: His Life and Work* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, Maryland 1980), p.97

²⁹² Richard Gray, 'ch.3: Rewriting the Homeplace' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.141

²⁹³ William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* [1929] (London: Vintage 1995), p.1 (subsequent references in the text)

²⁹⁴ Richard Gray, 'Out of the South: the fiction of William Faulkner' in *Writing the South* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge and London 1997), p.210

Caroline's sense of her own nobility. Jason, too, has no sympathy for his brother, and warns his mother against crying in case she '[gets] that damn loony to bawling in the middle of the square.' (p.8) While he is an insult to Caroline's past, Benjy poses a taint to Jason's present attempts to represent an image of success. Again, an external perspective emphasises Benjy's potential for bellowing; there is an apparent correlation between the times Benjy immerses himself in a memory, and the times he begins wailing. There is some irony in the abuse which is accepted towards the grotesque; when asked what he does when Benjy starts 'bellerin,' Luster simply replies 'I whips him' (p.12) with no sense of shame, while if Luster were to whip the 'normal' white son of an old plantation family, the repercussions would be severe; many are so powerless that the grotesque outsider is the only person over whom they can have any authority.

Like Addie's corpse, Benjy is treated as a corrupting influence on those who observe him; one onlooker remarks '*folks don't like to look at a loony. Tain't no luck in it.*' (p.15) This dehumanisation also contributes to Benjy's mistreatment, since onlookers have fewer scruples about abusing him should they see him as less than human, some demon or goblin. As Luster notes, the family have made a 'bluegum' of him, and this represents a cultural rejection of the outsider rather than simply an individual one. As a result, 'Benjy is concerned with preserving the pattern . . . even Caddy has no existence for him except as she forms part of that pattern.'²⁹⁵ He wails at the sight of Caddy's dirty drawers, which symbolise her becoming a sexual being, moving outside his own childlike understanding of the world. Likewise, he remembers how horrified he was when she began to wear perfume, unable to articulate his fear of her seeking out other relationships beyond himself. His memories are obsessed with the point when she stopped being 'his' Caddy, began the transition away from his private world, first conceptually and then literally. Benjy calms down only when Caddy washes the perfume off; his repetition 'she smelled like trees' seeming to emphasise a relief his sister has reverted to her natural self. This memory is one of the few times anyone understands the cause of Benjy's bellowing, and in a sense the psychological grotesque allows him relief, a memory of the time he was most loved and accepted. Caddy understands 'you were trying to tell Caddy and you couldn't tell her' (p.34) how much the significance of the perfume threatened him, and, like most of

²⁹⁵ Olga Vickery, 'ch.3: Worlds in Counterpoint: *The Sound and the Fury*' in *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1964), p.36

Faulkner's male characters, Benjy begins to see women as 'identified with the dangerous margins of the body biological.'²⁹⁶

The sight of Caddy's daughter Quentin seated on the swing with a boyfriend triggers Benjy's memory of seeing Caddy, doing the same thing, and again Benjy cries at the aura of female sexuality. He cries louder when the boyfriend, Charlie, attempts to embrace Caddy; he understands that Charlie, too, was instrumental to Caddy's sexuality, and thus to her banishment. In the present, however, this scene emphasises the misconceptions observers hold regarding the grotesque, since Luster assures him, incorrectly, that Benjy is 'deaf and dumb.' Assumptions about the grotesque once again provide useful narrative tools, since they mean Benjy can listen, without understanding, to the conversation of others, and gradually reveal the Compson history to the reader. Benjy's inability to distinguish the past is to his cost, however, when he grabs the daughter of the Burgess family, believing her to be Caddy; Benjy is castrated as punishment. During this ordeal, he once again escapes into memories of Caddy and the night their grandmother died, a refuge from his present. His punishment shows that, like Darl Bundren, once a person has been defined as mentally unstable, any violence visited upon them is justified in the interest of purging the 'grotesque.' Luster, not crediting Benjy with the ability to feel pain, simply tells him '*looking for . . . [your balls] ain't going to do no good. They're gone.*' (p.61) Benjy's section ends with a final immersion in memories of Caddy as respite from his predicament.

The novel's final section exemplifies the physical manifestations of Benjy's mental health issues, reminding us that in addition to his unique mindset, Benjy has 'external manifestations which cannot be ignored.'²⁹⁷ The section is the only one not narrated in first person, but its powerful scenes with Benjy and Dilsey emphasise her 'patient preoccupation with the present.'²⁹⁸ The use of an external narrative voice allows the reader insight into how Benjy appears to other characters, and he is indeed somewhat bizarre and animalistic, his skin 'dead-looking and hairless . . . he moved with a shambling gait like a trained bear' (p.233); the reader sympathises, however, knowing Benjy cannot change this. Once again, we see the inner psychology manifests in the physical; Benjy is utterly dependent on those around him and unable even to feed himself. The reader, however, cannot

²⁹⁶ Richard Gray, 'ch.4: Of Past and Present Conflicts' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.189

²⁹⁷ Olga Vickery, 'ch.3: Worlds in Counterpoint: *The Sound and the Fury*' in *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1964), p.47

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.* p.48

simply regard Benjy to be nothing more than 'a victim in the sense in which an animal is,' as Cleanth Brooks does, since this dehumanises Benjy and, by extension, all those who are severely autistic. Yet while the Compsons reaction to Benjy's crying was to ignore him or abuse him, Dilsey shows him kindness, stroking and quieting him, with no qualms about coming into contact with a physical grotesque. Likewise, she scorns the 'trash white folks' who gossip about her taking Benjy into her church, identifying the racial double standard that 'thinks he ain't good enough fer white church, but nigger church ain't good enough fer him . . . de good Lawd don't care whether he smart or not.' (p.246) The novel ends, however, on a final spectacle when Luster drives Benjy in a new direction around the Confederate monument, and his 'empty and untroubled' (p.271) expression explodes into 'agony eyeless, tongueless' (p.271) as he screams with horror at this final inconsistency. Jason makes one last desperate attempt to hide the grotesque spectacle, beating both his brother and Luster and crying, 'you ever cross that gate with him again, I'll kill you.' (p.272)

Quentin Compson, in a very different way, is also a psychological grotesque consumed by the past, and Cleanth Brooks argues his 'obsession with the past . . . amounts to . . . having no future.' In contrast to his nihilistic father, who warns Quentin to 'forget [time] . . . now and then and not spend all your breath trying to conquer it,' (p.63) Quentin has anxieties that have their roots in idealisation of the past, and an aversion to female sexuality, causing him to '[idealise] his fair and beautiful sister into [an] . . . unravishable maiden.'²⁹⁹ Quentin recalls Caddy with imagery similar to that with which Ike Snopes viewed his cow, with imagery of roses and a woman running from a mirror like a mythical nymph, but with none of the humour. In a sense she represents his insecurities with female sexuality, so unlike Benjy his psychological problems originate the world around him, even if they are communicated through a private internal world. Quentin's obsessions reveal an ironic sexual perversity. His plan to lie about having committed incest with Caddy may be a fantasy wish fulfilment, and an attempt to protect her purity; he hopes they will both be banished from society. Minter argues Quentin's lie represents the logical extension of his obsession with purity; 'Quentin . . . sees . . . [incest] as a way of transmitting perishable love into an enduring bond.'³⁰⁰ Like Benjy, he is unable to cope with Caddy's loss of purity, but understands it in a concrete way and has the means to move on from his obsession; instead he perpetuates it by defining Caddy as '*the voice that breathed*

²⁹⁹ David Minter, 'The Self's Own Lamp' in *William Faulkner: His Life and Work* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, Maryland, 1980), p.97

³⁰⁰ David Minter, 'The Faces of Fame' in *William Faulkner: His Life and Work* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, Maryland 1980), p.232

o'er Eden.' (p.68) His statement that 'only when the clock stops does time come to life' (p.71) seems to say that memory, the image of the past we carry with us, is the most significant form of time and thus, 'repulsed by the world around him, [Quentin] . . . determines to possess moments only in idealized form.'³⁰¹ The real Caddy, as opposed to her idealised counterpart, proves to be 'too much for her men, too various and unpredictable for them to handle,'³⁰² and the revolting Herbert Head may in fact give Quentin valuable practical advice when he tells him Quentin's ideals will not matter so much 'out in the world,' and that it might be healthier for Quentin to be concerned with the practical present, rather than past ideals. Caddy herself has a practical approach to sexual relations rather than abstract 'honour,' and when Quentin criticises her lover Dalton Ames for being dropped from his club for cheating at cards, Caddy replies 'I'm not going to play cards with him.'

Quentin, however, finds the idea of becoming a sexual being so threatening he admits envy for a man who castrated himself and removed himself from the sexual world altogether. He is unable to reconcile himself to his father's belief that 'purity is a negative state and therefore contrary to nature.' (p.97) Quentin believes if he cannot regard virginity as an ideal, then it must be an inadequacy, and cannot cope with either of these extremes; as he says to himself, 'if it was that simple to do it . . . and if it wasn't anything, what was I.' (p.124) Quentin may be drawing on this memory to try and take his father's advice to realise the fallacy of 'purity,' and takes his life when he realises he is unable to do so. Instead he immerses himself in memories, this time of Caddy losing her virginity. Quentin assumes her lover must have manipulated her, and asks how she could have let it happen. Caddy, however, destroys Quentin's 'damsel-in-distress' assumptions by asserting she did not let her lover have sex with him, she made him, determined to own her sexual identity. This realisation threatens Quentin even more; that Caddy was not losing her ideal status, but actively rejecting it, thus depriving him of a positive image of virginity to assuage his own anxiety. The loss of this image, of course, enhances Quentin's own sense of inadequacy, and he smears handfuls of mud on Caddy's '*wet hard turning body*' (p.115) as if to make her appear as physically grotesque as he perceives her. Likewise, he regards the couples as 'wild un-secret flesh . . . swine untethered in pairs,' (p.149) un-tethered because their coupling has none of the idealism he longs for but only the connection of sex, the imagery of swine presenting them as bestial; the grotesque is created in the

³⁰¹ David Minter, 'The Self's Own Lamp' in *William Faulkner: His Life and Work* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, Maryland 1980), p.98

³⁰² Richard Gray, 'ch.3: Rewriting the Homeplace' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.140

mind to reflect what the subject finds threatening, rather than physical abnormality. These 'swine' evoke Quentin's memories, or fantasies, of confronting Dalton Ames; and like Benjy he commits violence in the present, attacking Gerald Bland after asking him 'did you ever have a sister?' (p.140) He preserves this memory because it represents the chivalric role he yearns to fulfill, but as a result he is as incapable of distinguishing between past and present as Benjy, seeing the external world simply as reflective of his inner self.

Quentin and Mr. Compson, in their own ways, seem to reflect Brooks' argument that, in reality, 'Faulkner's male characters . . . assert that women are not innocent and have a natural affinity for evil.'³⁰³ Brooks argues, however, that it would be more accurate to say women 'lack the callow idealism of the men.'³⁰⁴ They do not see the world as a perceived ideal, as is the case with many of Faulkner's male characters, so its physical realities cannot tarnish this ideal. *Light in August* examines these two themes, obsession with the past and idealism of women, in the figures of Joe Christmas and Gail Hightower. Joe Christmas regards the female sexual sphere as 'slow and lascivious . . . a whispering of gutter filth lie a drowned corpse in a thick still black pool.'³⁰⁵ This imagery evokes a threatening presence, as if the sexual sphere were an infectious influence which drained him of essence; whilst with Joanna, Joe admits a sudden urge to smell horses 'because they are not women. Even a mare horse is a kind of man.' (p.83) Conversely, women are 'perceived as creatures of turbulence and darkness, not preventing chaos but actively partaking of it.'³⁰⁶ As Joe walks through Freedmen Town, the very sound of a woman's voice is enough to make him feel emasculated, 'reduced' to 'the lightless hot wet primogenitive Female.' (p.88) Like Quentin, Joe sees women as inherently linked to venality; and he fears such an influence may be within himself, making it inescapable. As a teenager, Joe joins a group of boys in attempting to sleep with a black prostitute, hoping to lose his virginity. However, he is overwhelmed both by the prospect of 'promiscuous sex,' which counteracts his ideals, and of sleeping with a black woman (the type of person his rumour of mixed race has taught him to consider inferior) and his feelings manifest in violence when he begins to beat her uncontrollably, really striking at his own fears of female sexuality and blackness.

³⁰³ Cleanth Brooks, 'ch.4: The Community and the Pariah: *Light in August*' in *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1990), p.68

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.* p.68

³⁰⁵ William Faulkner, *Light in August* [1932] (London: Vintage 2005), p.82 (subsequent references in the text)

³⁰⁶ Richard Gray, 'ch.3: Rewriting the Homeplace' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.165

Joe's foster father McEachern is a distinct influence on his views, providing a religious framework for Joe's insecurities about women. While Joe senses the presence of blackness around him, McEachern, like Quentin, perceives the threatening influence of 'lechery' in Southern society. Upon discovering Joe has secretly bought a suit, he assumes the outfit could only be used to aid his stepson in 'whoring' and reacts to the prospect with violence by beating Joe.

Joe continues to pursue an ideal, however, in his relationship with the waitress Bobbie. Her smallness makes her appear 'something beyond flesh,' (p.136) rather than the carnal embodiment which the young Joe finds threatening; he can regard her as an innocent ideal. At this point Joe's aversion to women, which has both physical and psychological elements, may simply be due to lack of experience. When he shoots a sheep and rubs its blood over his face in an attempt to understand menstruation, we see further evidence of the link he sees between sexuality and violence, yet he thinks '*not in my life and my love,*' (p.140) trying to understand the physical world in order to reject it for ideals. Joe, unlike Quentin, ultimately abandons this idealism, understanding the world to be made of 'blood, bodily fluids and emissions.'³⁰⁷ This abandonment is represented in the vision of the urns, which Joe perceives after Bobbie has refused to sleep with him whilst on her period, of which 'not one was perfect. Each one was cracked and from each crack there issued something liquid, deathcoloured, and foul.' (p.143) Joe cannot see sexuality as a natural thing, rather as threatening and insurmountable, and vomits '[as] life will vomit him.'³⁰⁸ Indeed, after sleeping with Bobbie, Joe thinks, 'Jesus . . . so this is it.' A further ideal is tarnished when Joe discovers Bobbie is a prostitute, contaminated by the 'odourreek of all anonymous men above dirt.' (p.150) Unlike Quentin, however, Joe is averse to female sexuality not from lack of experience, but through the inability of experience to meet his expectations. His final disillusionment comes when, after struggling with McEachern, who attacks him for 'lechery,' Bobbie refuses to marry him, instead telling the police officers of Joe's possible mixed race, and leaving him determined any conventional relationships will end in betrayal. Joe's psychological fear of intimacy and female sexuality add a level of 'psychological grotesque' which allows for a far more individualistic examination of the grotesque than the culture of shared pain in Chesnut's conjure tales.

³⁰⁷ Richard Gray, 'ch.4:Of Past and Present Conflicts' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.188

³⁰⁸ Frederick R. Karl, 'ch.14: Into the Mouth of Cannon' in *William Faulkner: American Writer* (Faber and Faber: London, Boston 1989), p.465

In his relationship with Joanna Burden, Joe once again seems threatened by recognising her as a woman. He tells himself '*she has nothing under her clothes,*' (p.180) since to see her as a sexual being would be to admit how far their perversity detracts from his former ideals. Nonetheless, Joe feels 'as though he had fallen into a sewer,' (p.192) and finds Joanna's unorthodox approach to the relationship bizarre and humiliating. She leaves love notes by day and '[plays] . . . out like a play' (p.194) the romanticism she feels her life has denied her, throwing herself into 'the wild throes of nymphomania, her body gleaming.' (p.195) Joe, however, does not realise this, simply assuming she is going mad; ironically one person with psychological anxiety is not equipped to understand another. Furthermore, the more Joanna asserts herself as a sexual being, the less she fulfills the role of either ideal or sexual object, and again Faulkner uses the imagery of foul liquid to emphasise Joe's sense of threat, as he sees her 'ready to flow into putrefaction at a touch, like something growing in a swamp.' (p.197) When she begins to encourage Joe to go to university in order to become an emissary to the black community, Joe turns on her in revulsion; both because she has tried to make him 'choose' a racial identity and because he has become accustomed to only seeing women in the extreme of sexual beings. He mocks her menopause, saying 'you . . . got old and it happened and now you are not any good anymore,' (p.209) once again saying a woman can only be regarded as 'good' when fulfilling a sexual role; Joe's final confrontation with her can be seen as turning 'against the dark fecundity [and] . . . sexuality he associates with women . . . toward the . . . love of violence that he associates with men.'³⁰⁹ Joe withdraws himself from women or, largely, interaction in general, and it is his resulting self-obsession which solidifies him as an outsider, refusing to enter into the culture of talk in which he might have influenced the opinions or actions of his persecutors.

Gail Hightower represents a different kind of psychological grotesque, and is 'another of Faulkner's remarkable cripples.'³¹⁰ He is obsessed with the memory of his Confederate grandfather, even using his sermons to spread the myth of his grandfather 'as if he did not care about the . . . living people at all.' (p.47) Instead, he uses religion 'as though it were a dream,' a tool of escapism to counteract the uneventful present. Hightower may attempt to escape from his failures, such as his wife's breakdown, but like Emily Grierson, his escapism into the past prevents him functioning in the present. His wife begins to wear 'a frozen look on her face' as if she too is being drained of essence

³⁰⁹ David Minter, 'Recognitions' in *William Faulkner: His Life and Work* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, Maryland 1980), p.132

³¹⁰ David Minter, 'Versions of the Artist' in *William Faulkner: His Life and Work* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, Maryland 1980), p.68

through Hightower's detachment and obsessions. The deterioration of Hightower's wife is perhaps an even stronger development of the psychological grotesque, since Benjy and Quentin's obsessions largely affected only themselves; his wife becomes 'thin and gaunted . . . that frozen look . . . as if she were not seeing what she was looking at.' (p.49) She is an example of the psychological grotesque extending its damage beyond simply the person obsessed with the past to those with whom they have emotional connections. Yet Hightower remains obsessed, believing that since his grandfather's death 'nothing had happened . . . since, not even him.' (p.50) Vickery notes that 'what destroys Hightower is not that he has a dream, but that . . . he becomes . . . indifferent to the quality of his actual experience.'³¹¹ Imagination, Vickery continues, 'can . . . be destructive [if] . . . man [invents] . . . excuses which permit him to live while ignoring life itself,'³¹² as is certainly true in Hightower's disregard for his own existence; Byron Bunch understands, 'it's the dead folks that do him the damage,' (p.58) because they command Hightower's attention at the expense of rebuilding links with the community.

This sense of being outside of life prevents Hightower offering any shelter or guidance regarding Lena Grove's pregnancy, and he may use his obsessions as a convenient excuse not to help or become involved in the lives of others. Hightower, like Emily Grierson, abandons hygiene along with interaction, making him a physical grotesque; he is described as 'flabbyjowled and darkcaverneyed,' (p.230) giving off the odour of unwashed flesh. He also becomes obese just as Emily did, his stomach powerfully evoked 'like some monstrous pregnancy,' both his weight and smell the result of a sedentary lifestyle. His house, too, falls into neglect, resembling some 'precursor of the tomb.' (p.239) Faulkner again presents the physical and psychological decline that result from social withdrawal as stasis, a slow death in life, using the tomb-like imagery as he did to describe the Grierson house. He is too committed to his solipsism even to save Joe's life, refusing to provide an alibi for Joanna's murder and admitting, 'It's not because I can't, don't dare to . . . It's because I won't!' (p.294) At this point, Hightower admits to having chosen his obsessions, actively sought withdrawal from society, and as he orders Byron out of his house, Byron realises '*it aint me he is shouting at . . . there is something nearer to him . . . to convince.*' (p.294) Hightower is addressing the part of himself without the strength to re-integrate into the world.

³¹¹ Olga Vickery, 'ch.5: The Shadow and the Mirror: *Light in August*' in *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1964), p.76

³¹² *Ibid.* p.83

Ironically, however, Hightower seems revitalised after delivering Lena's baby, and he allows himself self-congratulation, 'I showed them . . . life comes to the old man yet.' (p.304) He describes the child as 'luck and life returned to these barren and ruined acres,' (p.306) a metaphor for his own life, and it is this new sense of purpose which causes him to intervene in an attempt to prevent Percy Grimm killing Joe. Grimm symbolises the darkest manifestation of the obsession with the past. Bitter that he was too young to fight in the First World War, his obsession manifests in violence towards others; he has 'blind obedience' to the civilian military act, which panders to his urge to 'preserve order.' As Grimm chases Joe, his face is filled with a 'grave and reckless joy,' (p.346) finally believing his actions to live up to the heroism of his ancestors, and when he finally corners his quarry he shows no anger, simply the determination of one doing their duty. When Joe attempts sanctuary in Hightower's house, Hightower shows the true futility of his attempt to involve himself. He tells Grimm Joe was with him the night of the murder, the lie he had originally told Byron he would not tell, but Grimm easily beats Hightower and casts him aside, and subsequently shootis and castrates Joe.

Richard Gray compares Hightower to a '[sleepwalker] . . . [his] immersion in memories has deprived [him] . . . of [his] . . . ability to function in the present.'³¹³ After Joe's death he is forced to admit his 'life had already ceased before it began,' (p.359) and again his language conjures up images of being dehumanised or ghoulish, that he has 'bought his ghost' and 'paid for it with his life.' He is, in fact, dying from the wounds he received from Grimm, but he attaches symbolic significance to his death for never entering life, and dies unattended to the fantasy of 'clashing sabres and the dying thunder of hooves.' (p.371)

Sanctuary: The Crescendo of the Physical and Psychological

Sanctuary carries both the physical and psychological grotesque to extremes, and has been called Faulkner's 'vision of evil'³¹⁴; though this is surely too simplistic an analysis. Unlike Harris or Longstreet, Faulkner uses the inner psychology of characters like Benjy or Temple to examine the damaging effects of rape or exploitation. Richard Gray says the novel surpasses even *The Sound and the Fury* in '[illustrating] . . . [Faulkner's] relationship to his region's cult of Woman . . . balanced

³¹³ Richard Gray, 'Out of the South: the fiction of William Faulkner' in *Writing the South* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge and London 1997), p.180

³¹⁴ *Ibid.* p.192

between love . . . and hate.³¹⁵ Popeye's perverse 'family' and their influence on Temple Drake are Faulkner's strongest example of what Bakhtin called, the 'lower stratum. . . [replacing] . . . the upper stratum.'³¹⁶ Popeye himself is described as if he were a thing, his face 'bloodless' with the 'vicious, depthless quality of stamped tin,³¹⁷ and his family also seem degraded by poverty and madness; his cousin Tommy has 'stained and ragged' teeth and a 'sunburnt thatch of hair, matted and foul . . . [with a] shambling, bear-like gait,' (p.10) almost an echo of Benjy Compson. Horace Benbow represents a righteous contrast to emphasise the horror of the family's lifestyle, yet ultimately, like Quentin, he comes to represent abstract virtues 'violated and destroyed by . . . concrete experience.'³¹⁸ For Horace, like Benjy, odour symbolises the threatening presence of female fecundity, and claims to have left his wife Belle because he could no longer bear the smell of the shrimp he bought her home for dinner on Fridays, or the way 'the package drips . . . [It just] drips and drips.' (p.17) Horace may believe the suffocation he feels within his marriage is reflected in the smell and dripping of the shrimp every Friday, the same repulsion Joe Christmas felt for the female form. It is ironic, then, that he crosses paths with Popeye's gang and the sexual exploitation they represent.

Cleanth Brooks argues that much of the action involving Popeye '[robs him] of substance,'³¹⁹ while Frederick R. Karl sees him as 'little more than a puppet, responding to an environment which could produce only a Popeye.'³²⁰ On his first meeting, Benbow senses a 'black and nameless threat' in Popeye's very being; he criticises Lee Goodwin for being Popeye's business partner, saying to Tommy:

'Why can't those Memphis folks . . . let you all make your liquor in peace?'

'That's where the money is,' Tommy said . . . 'It's in makin a run and gettin shut of it quick, where the money is.'

'Oh,' Benbow said, 'Well, I think I'd rather starve than have that man around me.'

³¹⁵ Ibid.p.192

³¹⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Ch.5: The Grotesque Image of the Body and its Sources' in *Rabelais and His World* trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis 1984), p.309

³¹⁷ William Faulkner, *Sanctuary* [1931] (New York: Vintage 1993), p.4 (subsequent references in the text)

³¹⁸ Olga Vickery, 'ch.7: Crime and Punishment: *Sanctuary* and *Requiem for a Nun*' in *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1964),p.114

³¹⁹ Cleanth Brooks, 'ch.7: Discovery of Evil (*Sanctuary* and *Requiem for a Nun*)' in *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1990), p.120

³²⁰ Frederick R. Karl, 'ch.6: Where To?' in *William Faulkner: American Writer* (Faber and Faber: London, Boston 1989), p.163

Tommy guffawed. 'Popeye's all right. He's just a little curious . . . I be dog if he aint a case, now'

'Yes,' Benbow said. 'He's all of that.' (p.21)

Even his relatives sense something dehumanised about Popeye. He certainly appears monstrous, and expresses a voyeuristic approach to women; he stands panting over the bed where the captive Temple lies asleep, and jerks his head back and forth and whinnies as he watches her, like some primitive creature or mutant. Benbow, likewise, refers to Popeye as a 'gorilla,' putting Popeye at linguistic remove from the reader through animal imagery. On the reader's part, therefore, attention must be paid to whether Popeye is more complex. Nonetheless, Popeye continues with acts of pointless, arbitrary violence, burning the back of a brothel customer on a whim.³²¹ Conversely, however, he then paws at the door until Minnie and lets him out, again actions similar to Benjy and showing Popeye to be underdeveloped. While Faulkner presented Benjy sympathetically, however, he seems to be constantly testing his reader's capacity for, or lack of, sympathy with regard to Popeye.

Not until the end of the novel do we learn of Popeye's beginnings; having presented him unsympathetically, Faulkner 'circles back' to explain the factors which have stunted his development. Born with learning disabilities, Popeye could not walk or talk until the age of four, and was disposed towards violence, 'gutting' his house by setting it on fire. He burns the house due to psychological imbalance and ironically leaves himself physically damaged, since like Benjy and Joe, Popeye loses his genitals in the fire; he also commits to further acts of violence, cutting up birds and animals alive. Once readers understanding Popeye's beginnings, however, he becomes more than the two-dimensional figure Brooks proposes.

Richard Gray draws a powerful connection between three prominent characters discussed in this chapter by observing that 'Quentin Compson . . . Horace Benbow . . . [and] . . . Joe Christmas . . . all . . . feel suffocated by the . . . sexuality, the physicality of the women they know.'³²² Indeed, in the South, as has been proved in Quentin, 'sexuality was acknowledged. . .but only on a suppressed,

³²¹ David Minter calls Popeye a 'pale, slobbering Mephistopheles,' actively conjuring an image of a creature of pure evil.

³²² Richard Gray, 'ch.1: Fictions of History: An Approach to Faulkner' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.44

subterranean level. . . assigned to the lower depths of society.³²³ Horace, evident in his aversion to the sexuality represented in the shrimp smell, searches for an elusive purity. He believes 'there's a corruption in even looking upon evil,' (p.129) a sense of being corrupted by the mere presence of otherness, a similar mindset to that which led to the persecution of Benjy Compson. While in Popeye's case, Benbow's belief 'you cannot haggle . . . with putrefaction' (p.129) is true, it still reveals a social unwillingness to recognise the humanity of those who appear corrupt or disgusting. Like Quentin Compson, Horace dreams of an ideal world, of 'honey poured in sunlight, pagan and evanescent and serene . . . miragelike glimpses.' (p.172) Ironically, the only physical realisation of these Romantic ideals is not in Benbow or Quentin's reality, but in the perfection Ike Snopes believes he had in his bestiality; Faulkner seems to be mocking the the futility of such ideals. Horace's fantasy is immediately contrasted in the concrete world with the sight of Temple Drake's name 'scrawled on the foul, stained wall' (p.172) of a bathroom, reminding him she is already the topic of sexual innuendo for many at her school. It is not until Horace hears of the pain and exploitation Temple has been put through that he is forced to admit, 'there is a logical pattern to evil,' (p.221) that even in its cruelest forms, the grotesque behaviour cannot simply be seen as some demonic presence but part of the existing order.

Temple Drake is critically regarded unfavourably, with Karl rather dismissively saying she 'sexually . . . comes alive [only] if the act is close to death,'³²⁴ while Richard Gray sees her as having a 'minimal inner life.' To begin with, Gray's criticism seems somewhat true, and likewise she has limited experience of the world, repulsed by the poverty this represented by the fact that her kidnappers have 'to walk all the way to a spring for water.' (p.48). Gowan Stevens, Temple's escort, also looks down on Popeye's family, believing that, since he has come from the inner society rather than the margins, he holds the upper hand. He calls Goodwin an 'ape' just as Benbow did Popeye, and, when Popeye orders him 'make your whore lay off me,' (p.50) Gowan asks 'don't you know who you're talking to.' The irony is that the grotesque are not marginalised here, in this case they are in a position of power, and Gowan's social standing is irrelevant; Temple is now trapped among 'stinking creatures from a subterranean underworld.'³²⁵ Once again the higher is toppled by the lower, but in a far darker sense than Rabelais' more carnivalesque use of the theme. Temple tries to use mockery as

³²³ Ibid.p.44

³²⁴ Frederick R. Karl, 'ch.12:The Depths of Yoknapatawpha' in *William Faulkner: American Writer* (Faber and Faber: London, Boston 1989), p.363

³²⁵ Richard Gray, 'ch.3: Rewriting the Homeplace' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.:Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.167

a defence mechanism; she asks Popeye 'what river did you fall in with that suit on,' (p.50) seeming unaware of the true threat he poses, and Gowan silences her with the warning, 'you want him to slam your damn head off?' (p.50) Likewise, she expects archaic chivalry from Gowan which she may have learnt through the same Southern myths as Quentin Compson. When he does not defend her, realising the severity of their situation, Temple cries, 'you're scared,' realising the fallibility of myths of heroism when confronted by a true threat. She repeats 'things like . . . [this] don't happen . . . my father's a judge' (p.56) to herself; her panic is increasing and her own social background is the only talisman she has to protect herself from the situation; how, after all, could these men dare do anything to a girl whose father represented the law? She may even be retreating into one's past as protection from the future; Brooks argues Temple is a 'brilliant handling of the psychology of terror.'³²⁶ Even Reba, owner the brothel to which Temple is consigned, treats her contemptuously, dismissing Temple's fear by saying, 'when you slipped out too often, you're squealing.' (p.57) Reba was cast out of her own home after her father and brother threatened to murder her lover, Frank; they finally shot him and ordered her to 'get down there and sup your dirt, you whore.' (p.58) Reba's past may be why she sees Temple, a girl who until recently could come and go with boys as she pleased, as such a threat. She takes malicious pleasure in telling Temple she is no longer with 'kids that give a damn whether you like it or not,' (p.59) and that she has 'never seen a real man' till she happened upon Popeye. Her resentment of Temple's presence, however, incites further sympathy for Temple's plight from the readers; she is clearly persecuted for a situation over which she has no control.

In contrast to Popeye, Tommy perhaps represents a crude moral compass. While Reba and Popeye exploit her, Tommy remarks they 'ought to let that gal alone,' (p.68) and his actions are an interesting reversal of the roles filled by Dilsey and Caddy; rather than pity being shown to the outsider, he represents a 'grotesque' showing pity to those within society who are being terrorised. He also provides a commentary to illustrate Popeye's unhinged, dangerous nature, defusing a confrontation between Goodwin and Van by warning, 'you [don't] want Mr Popeye to start guttin us all with that ere artermatic.' (p.72) Van, however, feels no remorse for exploiting Temple, and feels no qualms in taking 'hold of the raincoat upon Temple's breast and . . . [ripping] it open,' (p.74) as if attacking the image of female sexuality itself.

³²⁶ Cleanth Brooks, 'ch.7: Discovery of Evil (Sanctuary and Requiem for a Nun)' in *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1990), p.134

Cleanth Brooks recognises the carnality of Temple's situation; his words 'the evil in which Temple is involved is no shadowy specter; it has blood and bone and belly,'³²⁷ show she has been brought down to the concrete, physical world. She becomes both object and spectacle, the latter mainly for Popeye. Richard Gray notes that, in *Sanctuary*, 'the watcher tends to be male and the watched female.'³²⁸ Unable to possess Temple sexually, Popeye watches her as she lies in bed; voyeurism is one of his few recourses. Temple's psychological damage manifests in the physical, and, when Ruby Goodwin approaches her, Temple immediately begins thrashing, now conditioned to expect exploitation. All her illusions about the safety of her station have been destroyed, and even Gowan is repulsed by the idea of having to face 'Temple, the men . . . Temple there among them,' (p.85) unable to bear the idea of his tarnished idol. Faulkner's imagery of Temple's lying 'in a tight ball,' shielding her body from violation even when she is alone, is the most pitiable and arguably the most sophisticated example of the psychological grotesque yet exemplified; it is a direct result of the physical, and transfixes the attention and pity of the reader. Likewise, she seems to suffer memory loss, as if her brain is shutting her off to protect her from trauma, and, as she wanders the kitchen thinks, 'I haven't eaten . . . since . . . Yesterday was one day . . . I haven't eaten since dinner Friday.' (p.88) Temple's growing psychological detachment represents a link between the black and white tradition; her loss of memory and self is similar to Dave's psychological breakdown when he believed himself turning into the ham, and shows how exploitation and degradation damage the psyche. When Temple relieves herself, she notes one of Popeye's men watching her; many of her most intimate actions are now under scrutiny, which further wears at her mental state. She stands with her hand on the unlit stove subsequent to the voyeurism, but suddenly shrieks as if burnt, possibly perceived pain at the realisation her body and all its functions have become a spectacle. Tommy even attempts to convince Temple to allow Goodwin to rape her, showing a total disregard for her trauma by advising her 'all you got to do is lay down,' (p.100) not realising Temple is wailing and trying to bar the door, begging him not to allow Goodwin to enter. On the contrary, Tommy sees her rape as a source of fascination, rubbing his hands at the prospect of watching with a 'groping, hungry fire' (p.101) in his eyes. Meanwhile, Popeye '[thrusts] his chin out in a series of jerks,' (p.101) again resembling some kind of primitive creature, and Temple, too, seems to become dehumanised, her face resembling a 'small, dead-coloured mask.' (p.104) Both evocations are powerful, and in Faulkner's more complex world, neither are truly dehumanised, thus we cannot entirely excuse

³²⁷ Ibid. p.136

³²⁸ Richard Gray, 'ch.3: Rewriting the Homeplace' in *The Life of William Faulkner* (Blackwell Publishers inc.: Cambridge, Massachusetts 1994), p.171

Popeye's actions or fail to pity Temple's gradual disintegration. Likewise, as she and Popeye drive, Temple begins to scream as if once again realising the horror of her situation. Popeye grabs her neck, at which point she sits open-mouthed 'like a small empty cave,' before starting to whimper; she regresses into a childlike state and becomes detached from her bodily functions. As they enter the town, she begins to look around 'like one waking from sleep,' (p.139) as if a return to society from its dark periphery has woken her from a protective mental stasis, and her sense of propriety returns, and with it the horror of the townspeople seeing her in her current state; Temple finally urinates due to fear. There is no comic edge to the incident, rather it is the latest stage of her regression, triggered by the sight of a boy she knew before her abduction; Temple fears they will see how 'degraded' the woman they desired has become. There is, of course, some irony here, since the scrawling on the bathroom wall showed she was already seen as something of a sex object. Her regression becomes explicit, as does her apparent psychological detachment from her body, when she stops chewing a sandwich with the 'round, hopeless expression of a child,' (p.141) a childlike consciousness perhaps being a welcome escape from her situation, and if regression constitutes a psychological concern for the past, it is a far more understandable escape than, for example, Emily Grierson.

In contrast to Quentin Compson, keen to preserve virginity, Reba and the other onlookers are unperturbed by the fact that Temple bleeds after sex. They are unaware Popeye has raped her with a corn-cob, his defence against 'both his impotence and his isolation,'³²⁹ simply congratulating her and telling her Popeye's attentions will raise her above the 'common whores.' As the doctor examines her, Temple begins to cry 'hopelessly and passively, like a child in a dentist's waiting-room.' (p.150) Her treatment has regressed her, and she engages emotional empathy from the reader. Faulkner uses the psychological grotesque to evoke pathos for his characters; Reba's cavalier advice that Temple take another 'sup of gin,' shows her inability to sympathise with Temple's psychological damage, and all Temple can do is retreat into patterns from childhood. When Popeye moves toward her, she

Began to shrink into the bed . . . he came and looked down at her. She writhed slowly in a cringing movement, cringing upon herself in as complete an isolation as though she were bound to a church steeple . . . when he put his hand on her she began to whimper. 'No no no'

³²⁹ Olga Vickery, 'ch.7: Crime and Punishment: *Sanctuary* and *Requiem for a Nun*' in *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1964), p.111

she whispered . . . her flesh beneath . . . her loins cringing rearward in furious disintegration.
(p.158-9)

The image of her being bound presents her as a sacrifice. Her fear eradicates pity for Popeye through the imagery of helplessness and trauma, Temple's repeated 'No no no' reflecting a psychologically broken consciousness. Fantasy, however, continues to be a tool through which Temple can briefly escape from her predicament. Mentally she is trying to destroy or block out knowledge of the organs which are vulnerable to be abused, and the psychological grotesque reaches another crescendo here, the desire to escape from oneself.

Towards the end of the novel, Horace visits Temple in the brothel. Faulkner continues to show her regression, Temple lying naked with her mouth painted in a 'savage cupid's bow,' (p.214) again evoking a sexual object on display. However, her repetitions of 'I want a drink' contradict the image of adult sexuality and make her appear more damaged than Minter's simple interpretation of 'corruption'; she is, in fact, retreating further into the past as a result of mistreatment. In this instance, the psychological grotesque is a result of external, not internal, influences. Temple further illustrates the damage to her inner psyche, telling Benbow that when the men entered to rape her, she began:

looking at my legs and I'd try to make like I was a boy . . . I tried to make myself into one by thinking . . . I was that scared, and I wondered if I could tell when it happened . . . I'd got out and show them . . . and say look? See? Let me alone now . . . then I thought about fastening myself up some way . . . about a kind of iron belt . . . a king . . . used to lock the queen up in when he had to go away, and I thought if I just had that . . . I'd say I guess that'll teach you . . . then it touched me, that nasty little cold hand . . . alive like ice and my skin started jumping away from it (p.216-8)

Minter notes that 'as soon as Temple begins . . . to express desire, she begins not only to wallow in filth but to taunt and humiliate men.'³³⁰ Minter does not realise, however, that this fantasy serves as a willed escapism, the only means she could have to humiliate her abusers as they do her; she wishes for detachment from her abused body. Temple fantasises of humiliating her 'customers' by revealing the penis, and wishes for a loss of a feminine identity, or to shield her violation with a chastity belt which 'would have long sharp spikes on it' (p.218) to penetrate her abusers. Fantasies of

³³⁰ David Minter, 'Recognitions' in *William Faulkner: His Life and Work* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, Maryland 1980), p.126

power, however, are all Temple can have, just as her rage and abusive language, such as calling Popeye a coward if he does not touch her, is her only defence. Her language articulates her sense of helplessness and dehumanisation, describing her skin 'jumping away' from Popeye's touch. Again she fantasises about her body physically disbanding or retreating; Temple constructs a fantastical physicality for herself just as Hightower created a fantastical history, further serving to make her pitiable. Her fantasy image of being in a coffin 'all in white' perhaps symbolises she feels so degraded in life that she feels only death can 'purify' her; this is a subversion of the psychological grotesque, an escape into a fantasy future. Horace, too, has fantasies about Temple which seem to present her, and himself, as contaminated, envisioning her bound naked to a moving flat car as 'something black and furious. . .[roared] out of her pale body,' (p.223) as if spewing the threatening presence Horace perceives in women. The car enters a dark tunnel, seeming to symbolise Temple being dragged against her will into both external and internal darkness.

However, Temple also develops a degree of Stockholm Syndrome; Minter observes that 'because Popeye has introduced her to evil . . . [Temple] is drawn to him as well as repulsed by him.'³³¹ She rages against him for her treatment, and mocks him for having to 'bring in a real man' to possess her sexually, mocking his impotence by asking 'don't you wish you were Red . . . don't you wish he was the one watching us instead of you.' (p.232) Yet when Popeye offers her the chance to escape, saying he will leave her in town, Temple cries, 'Oh god . . . I'll go. I'll go back.' Her Stockholm Syndrome is further emphasised when she calls Popeye 'Daddy'; he has taken on the role of control, but also protection. In contrast, when Red enters the room, Temple cries out in fear. Thus despite having mocked Popeye for his lack of 'masculinity,' when confronted by her abuser Temple regresses into speechless horror 'as though faced by an exquisite torture.' (p.238) Ironically, however, she also leaps upon him in lust, 'her mouth gaped and ugly like that of a dying fish as she writhed her loins against him.' (p.238) Faulkner once again presents her as clumsily lascivious, as if her very sexual expression were a grotesque spectacle. However, Temple's behaviour is arguably due to having been degraded until she sees herself as an object, and responds to the world through those learnt patterns of behaviour.

Temple's perverse attachment to Popeye reaches its darkest level when she appears as a witness during the trial of Lee Goodwin. Goodwin is blamed for Tommy's murder, which was in fact

³³¹ David Minter, 'The Self's Own Lamp' in *William Faulkner: His Life and Work* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, Maryland 1980), p.109

committed by Popeye. Once again the grotesque becomes a spectacle, as the district attorney presents the corn-cob used to violate Temple, still bloody as if 'dipped in dark brownish paint.' (p.283) Yet as Temple 'shrinks back' approaching the witness stand, the spectacle seems to incite sympathy for how deeply she has suffered; this spectacle assures Goodwin's death, the prosecutor saying the matter is 'no longer . . . for the hangman, but for a bonfire of gasoline.' (p.284) The sight of the corn-cob sends Temple back into her 'detached and cringing' attitude, desperate to escape this reminder of her suffering. Psychological detachment is once again a tool of respite from the physical, and Temple keeps her eyes focused on the back of the room as if willing herself to vanish, just as she did to change genders. However, rather than identify Popeye as her abuser, Temple claims Goodwin was the one who violated her, retelling the story using much of the truth, simply supplying Goodwin as the rapist and murderer. Here, as with Joe Christmas, the grotesque is significant, real or imagined, and the fictional evidence is all that is needed to incite its expulsion. We are told it takes 'eight minutes' for Goodwin's conviction, and, like Joe, mob mentality ensues, with people remarking, 'he wouldn't a never got to trial, in my town.' (p.294) Horace is awoken by cries about a fire, the 'stark and savage silhouette' of the burning jail and the 'furious sound of gasoline.' Again it is clear that even on the least reliable evidence, the grotesque contaminates and must be purged; 'Goodwin's self-elected executioners . . . kill an innocent man, and debase their own moral nature, all in the name of justice and morality.'³³² However, Goodwin's death can ultimately be traced to both the physical and psychological grotesque; the physical is Temple's violation, but the psychological, more powerfully, is her attachment to Popeye through her perverse attachment to his presence which prevented her telling the truth in court. *Sanctuary* provides not only develops the psychological grotesque through its use of trauma, but also examines how these psychological imbalances can lead to the destruction of others as well as the subject themselves; Goodwin's death exceeds even Joanna Burden or Joe Christmas,' the climax of psychological damage resulting in savagery towards others.

This chapter develops both of Bakhtin's definitions of the grotesque. Just as Chesnutt used the psychological grotesque to demonstrate the effects of cruelty on his characters, Faulkner develops the inner consciousness beyond the 'Satanic' surface of Caldwell and the white folk tradition. His characters are 'humanised' through the presentation of inner thoughts; even Ike Snopes, for all his comic potential, is sympathetic, since the reader understands the depth of his

³³² Olga Vickery, 'ch.7: Crime and Punishment: *Sanctuary* and *Requiem for a Nun*' in *The Novels of William Faulkner* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge 1964), p.104

emotion, however bizarre its target. Faulkner adds a conscience to his writing; even his more violent characters, such as Popeye, are not reduced to the level of 'monsters' or, in Brooks' words, 'animals.' This chapter's examination of Popeye's family demonstrates that the grotesque is not some monstrous anomaly, but rather part of the existing social structure, and often its product through the influence of poverty. Temple, meanwhile, represents the retreat into oneself – and one's past – as a respite from abuse and trauma. Temple is, nonetheless, a problematic character, since sympathy for her plight does not nullify the fact that her lies lead to Goodwin's death and exculpate Popeye. As a result, this chapter demonstrates the dangerous potential of the psychological grotesque not only for those it directly affects, but those around them whom might be harmed, or even killed, as a result of the subject's damage or neuroses.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

The Inherent Folk Elements of Faulkner's Writing

This thesis demonstrates three elements of folk culture in Faulkner's writing, and shows that Faulkner surpasses his earliest predecessors in Southern folk culture and develops the 'outlaw vernacular' of which Twain spoke. Its examination of the internal monologue argues that such a culture resides in the very consciousness of those within it. And while there is still a certain frivolity to some of the novels such as *The Hamlet*, it is often overshadowed by the darker themes Faulkner hopes to address, such as the exploitative nature of his tricksters or the violence inherent in his 'culture of talk.' This thesis examines at length how, while folk culture cannot be eradicated, it can certainly be corrupted; its elemental forces such as the trickster slowly usher folk communities into the developing new eras.

Likewise, themes such as the culture of gossip prove relevant to all three chapters. This culture appears a necessary force to sustain the folk community, yet can be destructive when directed towards outsiders. This thesis contradicts the idea of the folk community as necessarily inclusive or regenerative; rather, communities often use their culture of gossip to create a social consciousness based upon the 'nice believing' mentioned in Chapter One, rather than the 'old tales and talking' of *Absalom, Absalom!* To sustain these constructed myths, however, the community requires an 'outsider'; Joe Christmas binds the Jefferson community into a 'Roman holiday' of racial violence. Likewise, the culture of gossip allows the folk community to put characters like Flem Snopes or Joe Christmas within a constructed narrative. The community uses these narratives to gain a sense of control over these two figures and make them less of a threat; how else could they 'understand' the silent trickster, Flem, without making a certain amount of assumption about his history? Therefore how can he be anything but a threatening enigma? The communal mistrust of a trickster, however, is ironic, since the trickster is the only one with any means to resist the persecution of an 'imagined community,' and even to control it, as opposed to more vulnerable outsiders such as the supposed 'grotesque.'

The 'Interracial' Overlap

As the introduction states, both the black and white folk tradition create their own reality through their distinct narratives, and both work to sustain these narratives, whether for better or worse. The primary motives for this sustenance are to persecute others, and maintain one's own self-reliance, and this thesis outlines how these lines are blurred. Faulkner's liminal position between the black and white archetypes is further evidence for an all-encompassing folk tradition in his writing, since he does not fit within any one given folk community. This thesis also develops Morgan's clear dividing lines between the black and white trickster traditions; a true analysis of a folk culture, and the South itself, must examine the 'dialogue' between changing schools of thought, whether racial, economic or the 'them and us' mentality which defines the outsider. Faulkner subverts the stereotypes further through the 'mixed-race' figures of Lucas Beauchamp and (more problematically) Joe Christmas, who of course may not be 'mixed race' at all.

This thesis subverts the idea of the black folk tradition as somewhat downtrodden and concerned with 'survival,' since the 'sporting' or self-preservative nature of trickery erodes through the growing prevalence of the profit motive. For example, the dietician attempting to bribe Joe Christmas as a child shows the 'liminal nature' of the culture of trickery; while folk culture cannot, perhaps, be eradicated, it can certainly be corrupted, and even the bragging culture represented by Pat Stamper still shows an elemental transition towards profit seeking. Joe also exemplifies the solipsistic nature which Faulkner develops even more strongly in Flem; the interracial element becomes just part of a greater argument which includes further subversions, such as Addie Bundren's 'female trickster' role. The concern with financial gain, such as the gold coins in *The Hamlet* or Flem's elimination of his family members in *The Town*, erodes the bastions of the folk tradition. However, there is a cold rationality to Flem's outlook, and, despite the romanticism of the folk community, the changing economic environment perhaps renders its insular nature problematic.

'Nothing Ever Happens Once and is Finished': Tensions within Folk Culture Beyond the Interracial Overlap

This thesis shows that discourse is not passive, but often the only form of resistance and rejuvenation for downtrodden people; the re-invention of the past gives one autonomy in communicating the reality of their pain, and influencing the views of their listener. Characters such as Anse and Jason, and the folk/stream-of-consciousness synthesis they represent, further show how

Faulkner develops the tradition, and emphasise its relevance, its potential for re-invention and, I would say, its literary centrality; the germ which Faulkner enhances through Modernism and Modernity.

The horse-swaps in *The Hamlet* demonstrate that the community's desire to be 'in' on a joke provides opportunities for a trickster to exploit them. However, the community of Jefferson can no longer maintain 'moral detachment,' making Faulkner's presentation of the trickster more complex. The cold, sterile environment of the world of profit prevents characters like Flem from being accepted or included in the folk tradition, even when they adopt or exploit its practices; it is a tradition in transition as the society of the novel moves into new structures, pushed to the periphery with the proliferation of characters like Flem. By its very title, *The Town* emphasises that Faulkner is less concerned with the communal nature of a village; there is no longer a need for a trickster to assert himself within the rituals of the society. Rather, Jefferson represents a new economic system in which everyone is compelled to outdo one another; its environment, however, allows Flem to thrive, since Jefferson is not so concerned with old 'systems,' and is ideal for the most disturbing kind of trickster, who turns a blind eye to communal customs. As the environment moves towards modern capitalism, the trickster has little necessity to be underhanded. Flem uses existing legal systems to eliminate his rivals and his actions are more sterile and less concerned with the perverse sportsmanship of Frenchman's Bend.

Chapter Two demonstrates how Flem's 'poison teeth' move the culture of trickery beyond barter and one-upmanship (even in Chesnut, there is a degree of concern for personal gain in the black tradition). His threatening, self-serving nature puts the old folk trickster's concern for the 'game' in a more positive light; Flem does not exist on the 'margins' of the folk community – and thus, just within it – but above it, manipulating the social processes to his own advantage rather than trying to outwit them. Likewise, there is some humorous irony towards the close of *The Town*, in that although Flem sought no allies, they become necessary in a professional sense once he becomes president of the Jefferson bank.

'I always thought there was something funny about that Fellow': Folk Culture and the Outsider

Faulkner, it would seem, certainly regards himself within the folk culture he describes. However, Chapter One demonstrates that the Southern society unites and sustains itself by expelling the outsider. Faulkner, though within this culture, recognises the danger in the vigour with which

members of the Southern society partake in this persecution; in *Light in August*, nobody wants the mob's attention to be turned towards them. Faulkner presents society's rituals of talk and storytelling as a redemptive and cathartic process, but also catalyst for the destruction of the elements which threaten a society or culture. Joe Christmas' identity is entirely constructed through the narratives of others; he himself has no real knowledge of his origins, racial identity or even how to relate to the opposite sex. And like Flem, Joe subverts the archetype of the trickster through his silence, and does so for far more idiosyncratic reasons than simply the exploitation of others.

Chapter Three draws outsiders or 'grotesques' to the forefront, and analyses Caldwell's characters with more depth and sympathy than Caldwell does himself. This thesis demonstrates that Faulkner surpasses the traditional 'white' grotesque, both utilising and exceeding folk culture; he encourages identification and sympathy for outsiders like Joe Christmas, Benjy Compson and Temple Drake by giving insight into their psyches, and their humanity. Faulkner's techniques of psychological insight ask whether anyone can be reduced to a 'grotesque' at all, since the humorists traditionally used the grotesque as a spectacle intended for amusement. There is perhaps another cultural overlap, since it is Chesnutt, of all the Faulkner predecessors, who seems to develop his damaged subjects beyond simply 'grotesques.' Faulkner reconfigures folk traditions, which had not yet developed the techniques to give psychological insight in their writing. Though Faulkner's roots can still be traced back to Harris, who brought grotesque to the celebratory forefront, the tradition becomes a topic for psychological development in the inner sufferings of Chesnutt's Dave, or Faulkner's Temple or Miss Emily,. Chesnutt links the the memory of pain with the memory of one's culture, and Faulkner does the same through Rosa Coldfield and, in a different way, Lucas Beauchamp. Collectively, the aforementioned figures, and Julius, confirm that folk culture may reach it's greatest potential when fulfilling a social purpose; 'Dave's Neckliss' is neither detached from Dave, nor mocks his belief that he is turning into a ham; nor does Faulkner use Temple Drake's fantasies of sex-change in *Sanctuary* for comedic purposes. Likewise, his use of multiple perspectives when observing Ike Snopes subverts the 'spectacle' idea even further. Faulkner shows the horror, the visceral gut reaction, which the sight of the 'grotesque' can cause its observers, but also the callousness in their making no attempt to transcend this instinctive reaction. This thesis' discussion of *As I Lay Dying* further examines the potential for grotesque comedy and spectacle, but also that Faulkner is something of a polymath in his use of the theme. While the spectacle of Addie's corpse is comic, Vardaman's attachment to the fish, although superficially amusing, also shows bizarre actions

which represent manifestations of a child's grief, and observers in the novel are less amused by the Bundrens than they are genuinely horrified, subverting the comic element.

The Psychological Grotesque, and the 'Incorrect' Use of Folk Culture

Faulkner is even more accomplished than Chesnutt in his use of the psychological grotesque, since he is famous for his representations of the inner psyche, showing outsiders to be as capable of feeling pain, grief or loss as anyone within the community.

'A Rose for Emily,' shows that isolation and obsession with the past manifest physically, but nonetheless indicates that, to some extent, white people choose to perpetuate their obsessions. Benjy Compson, however, makes no such choice, even if, like Emily, his past represents the only time he felt valued or loved. This thesis evokes sympathy for Benjy on two levels; through demonstration of his sense of pain and loss, which his family do not bother to address, and through his inability to communicate those feelings, which means he is no more than a 'spectacle' to observers. This thesis aims to humanise Benjy by examining of both his and Dilsey's sections, highlighting a second party who is able to show him sympathy; therefore the fear and persecution of supposed 'grotesques' cannot simply be taken for granted.

The examination of Quentin Compson in chapters One and Three demonstrates the damage caused by obsessions with purity and the past. The narrative he and Shreve construct together is an example of using folk culture the 'wrong' way, since Quentin does not draw strength or therapeutic value from it. Instead, the narrative he creates exacerbates his neuroses. The discussion of *The Sound and the Fury* shows that things perceived as 'grotesque,' such as the 'threatening' imposition of female sexuality, often reflect the observer's own anxieties or hopes for an impossible perfection; this is true of Quentin, Joe, Horace Benbow and even Popeye. Yet with the possible exception of Popeye, these characters still engage the reader's sympathy through the loss, terror or abuse they experience. This is another example of the psychological grotesque; the ideal images Quentin and Joe construct arise because they are solipsistic in nature, and threatened by the 'bone and blood and belly' of real women. If one's revulsion towards is actually due to one's own neuroses, the perceived 'grotesque' becomes even more sympathetic; with Temple or Miss Quentin, we appreciate that these 'targets' are human beings, and that considering them simply as threatening 'otherness' cannot be justified. The second and third chapters examine Joe's fear and repulsion from intimacy and the female form; he is too complex to simply represent the liminal nature of black and white archetypes.

The psychological grotesque also manifests physically, as with Emily Grierson or Gail Hightower; however, recognition that physical deterioration results from psychological damage means it cannot simply be a target of mockery; it is physical evidence of the danger of becoming too concerned with the past at the expense of functioning in the present.

This thesis shows that the stories of the past are not always regenerative. While the folk culture's communal ethic can be a positive influence, the culture of gossip reaches its most damaging potential in *Light in August*, while in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Shreve uses folk culture to mock the South and its obsessions. Once again this thesis gives a more holistic analysis; even a novel as serious as *Absalom, Absalom!* contains certain elements of folk humour, though Quentin is another example of a subject interpreting the stories of the past in the 'wrong' way. The impulse for folk embellishment, or drawing on the events as a 'personal experience story,' is too much for the storyteller to resist. Folk themes form a prominent influence on the reconstruction of any long narrative, whether as a form of resistance, rejuvenation, or simply the fun of the telling.

Resistance, and the Trickster

In the trickster tradition, however, resistance takes on a different significance. In *The Hamlet* and *The Town*, Faulkner extends the conscience seen in Twain and Chesnut to cast a critical eye on both Flem's manipulative practices, and the environment which allows him to flourish. By extension, therefore, this thesis demonstrates how the changing trickster reflects the folk environment's transition to the modern world; Flem shows how a trickster is able to thrive in this changing system by adapting themselves to its economic practices. Faulkner does not entirely reject the idea of a community, particularly Frenchman's Bend, being 'in on the joke,' but, as Ratliff points out, once money starts to change hands it is harder to accept the trickster's dishonesty. Conversely, however, this thesis demonstrates Faulkner's subversion of the 'traditionally black' idea of deception being used as a means of survival and self-preservation; characters like Lucas Beauchamp are more autonomous when they trick for personal gain. The examination of Addie Bundren as the female trickster showed that oppression, or the sense of being oppressed, can come in multiple forms, including the racial and familial sphere. Figures such as the trickster often quietly resist the will of those in power, and exist at all levels of society. The older, more insular folk community structures allow a community to destroy an outsider or threat to its stability, while the transition towards a more self-interested society means an outsider such as Flem can come to control the environment.

Contradictory Elements of the Research

Elements of the research for this thesis, while fruitful and interesting, seem to contradict some of its hypotheses, but ultimately add more diversity and depth rather than diminishing it. Chapter One outlines how Faulkner's use of Modernism develops the folk tradition, but ironically Dewey Dell does not in fact have a folk consciousness; her inner thoughts communicate the miasma of feelings she experiences as she tries to hide her pregnancy. The inner narrative allows characters self-revelation and the ability to communicate deeper emotional turmoil than they can express in words. As the Old South fades in prominence and characters such as Flem begin to consume it, it is all the more important people retain individual significance in a ruthless new system through 'old ways' such as storytelling; Flem's silence is his most threatening characteristic. He is the epitome of the business system, cares nothing for human beings, and the tradition of personal trade which Ratliff represents is a necessary counter to his acquisitiveness; if not necessarily an entirely effective one, since even Ratliff can be corrupted.

Faulkner's work surpasses its precedents even in its darker elements, particularly since he refuses to reduce his characters to stereotypes. The third chapter best demonstrates how Faulkner develops his characters, beginning with Emily Grierson, her suppression by her father, and her subsequent life of isolation. It is, of course, obscene that Emily sleeps next to Barron's corpse, and that she may have been responsible for his death; however, her obsessions and inability to reconnect with modern society are nonetheless pitiful. Likewise, discussion of Benjy Compson hopefully gives the reader insight into his thoughts, feelings and suffering, and the cruelty of reducing a human being to a supposed grotesque.

Sanctuary, however, does not simply sympathise with every outsider; it displays the depravity of Popeye's gang, who live on the margins of society. However, though Popeye himself is described as a 'creature' and a 'mutant,' Faulkner also attempts to humanise him by providing the reader with his back story. Once again Faulkner provides a range of grotesques, with a variety of pasts and motivations, a step beyond the 'carnavalesque' nature of his precursors. His examination of pain provides another cross-cultural link, since Julius also intends his storytelling and folk memory to highlight the pain of the past; if the grotesque serves this purpose, it can be beneficial. Furthermore, Temple subverts the idea of grotesque as outsider; as a debutante, she represents the Southern society's upper echelons.

Chapter Three argues against prominent Faulknerian scholarship, demonstrating that folk culture in Faulkner's novels has not been examined to its full potential. The chapter uses Bakhtin scholarship regarding the psychological grotesque to argue that Faulkner extends this theme in a sympathetic manner to refute the idea of the grotesque as spectacle and 'thing'; which escapes the notice of Karl and Brooks. Faulkner may intend to present Temple as unsympathetic, but this thesis refutes the reductionist and callous sentiment of critics such as Karl by examining Temple's trauma and abuse. The imagery of Temple being repressed or sacrificed shows Faulkner can present her as a complex, three-dimensional figure through the use of psychological insight; even Chesnutt was only able to show us the surface of his repressed characters. Temple's childlike behaviour also demonstrates trauma, such as her repetitions of 'I want a drink' and her urination when she re-enters her hometown. Temple regards her inner fantasies as her only defence against her situation; if she is any kind of oddity, it is a manifestation of her mental and physical suffering. Faulkner's sympathy has at least an indirect similarity with the African-American folk tradition. Temple's only defence is psychological withdrawal, or fantasies of violence and gender-changes, just as the slaves' only form of power was the escapism of storytelling and the small gains they could accrue from beguiling their superiors. The folk tradition is the strongest foundation of this resistance, a culture of vulnerable outcasts and oppressed people; Faulkner's use of the inner consciousness develops the speaking tradition into an 'inner' resistance, giving it further psychological depth. The raw physicality with which Temple leaps on Red may be a result of the abuse she suffers in the brothel, where she is degraded to see herself as purely worthy of being exploited for sex. This thesis shows the 'grotesque' or bizarre to be a result of learnt patterns of behaviour, whether through upbringing or abuse.

In conclusion

Faulkner, like Zora Neale Hurston, is a literary source who extends folk culture into perpetuity. The folk communities he creates have a sense of tradition compared to capitalistic systems pervading his later novels; Faulkner not only incorporates the folk tradition, but proves that it provides rejuvenation and freedom for both individual storytellers and communities.

This thesis demonstrates that the practices of folk culture can have both positive and negative effects on its practitioners, outsiders, or on oneself. Through shared cultural narratives, particularly storytelling or gossip, a 'healthy' relationship with the past can develop instead of a solipsistic obsession, which can help one transcend past suffering. The same is true of the subversive or therapeutic nature of talk discussed in *The Hamlet* or *Absalom, Absalom!* These communities and

practices, however, are also dangerous when they seek to preserve themselves at all costs at the expense of an outsider, or an external threat like Flem.

Folk culture represents a 'resistance' to a changing world, but its effectiveness is dubious. For example, the racial definitions of tricksters become somewhat irrelevant as modern avarice consumes the folk community, but the concern with money simply reflects the changing values of the South, and America in general. The first two chapters in particular demonstrate this transition into a modern economic system, but also the malleable ways in which folk culture can change and sustain itself; folk culture's prominence within Southern writing shows that, even when incorporated into other traditions, or in tension with them, it cannot be suppressed.

The second and third chapters examine contrasts between two different kinds of outsiders, tricksters such as Flem and 'grotesques' such as Benjy. Tricksters have far more power to manipulate the Southern communities from the periphery, or the top; those defined as 'grotesque' or damaged have no such power, and are expelled to maintain the community. Characters like Temple Drake and Emily Grierson show the ways Faulkner develops the mistreated outsider; Benjy's castration and Joe Christmas' destruction emphasise the darker side of folk culture, and show that despite the benefits of a community, its discourse creates a shared understanding of what is 'normal' or 'acceptable,' often defined in relation to what it regards as an 'abnormality.' Faulkner, however, encourages more sympathy for the outsider, and has an understanding of folk culture which surpasses his more traditional antecedents.

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