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WILLIAM FAULKNER'S EARLY EXPERIMENTS WITH NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES.

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WILLIAM FAULKNER'S EARLY EXPERIMENTS WITH NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES

by
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William Faulkner's Early Experiments with Narrative Techniques

Faulkner's earliest works (Soldiers' Pay, Mosquitoes, The Marble Faun, A Green Bough, and New Orleans Sketches) have received some critical attention, but little attempt has been made to analyze their technique. Already at this early stage of his career (1920-1926), Faulkner was a conscious craftsman, and his earliest work is an interesting record of technical experimentation.

In addition to the published works, an important key to Faulkner's development as a narrative craftsman can be found in an unfinished and unpublished novel, Elmer, which he composed between the publication of the first novel, Soldiers' Pay, and the writing of his second novel, Mosquitoes. An examination of the Elmer typescript reveals that Faulkner was experimenting with fictional techniques--time displacement, point of view, and interior monologue--which figure significantly in his mature work.

Faulkner's early poetry is related in technique as well as theme to his early prose fiction. The poetry, largely imitative, shows the influence of the symbolist and imagist poets; and the techniques of symbolist poetry are related, in important ways, to the techniques of impressionist prose. Faulkner's earliest experiments in prose fiction, the sketches written in 1925 for the New Orleans Times-Picayune, reveal the influence of symbolist poetry. They show, in addition, that Faulkner was being influenced by the techniques of other fiction writers--impressionists like Thomas Beer, Sherwood

Anderson, and Joseph Conrad.

The influence of these impressionists is also evident in Faulkner's first novel, Soldiers' Pay, in which the narration proceeds by means of brief impressionistic scenes. There is almost no use of summary narrative in the novel, and Faulkner's treatment of time, mostly through flashbacks, is not wholly effective. Compared with Soldiers' Pay the unpublished Elmer is a much more radical experiment. The Elmer typescript reveals that most of Faulkner's attempts to revise the novel involved the treatment of time, not by simple flashbacks--as in Soldiers' Pay, but by the chronological rearrangement of large blocks of the narrative. Although impressionistic techniques are still present in Elmer, Faulkner was beginning to move in another direction. There is much more use of summary narrative, and the first traces of another influence--the novel of ideas--begin to appear.

The influence of the novel of ideas appears most clearly in Mosquitoes, a novel indebted in method to Huxley's Those Barren Leaves and Norman Douglas' South Wind. The method of Mosquitoes is more cerebral and ratiocinative than the method of Soldiers' Pay; Faulkner is obviously completing the transition from poet to novelist. In addition, Mosquitoes is a striking technical contrast to the unfinished experiment, Elmer. In Mosquitoes Faulkner returned to a straightforward and rigidly controlled time scheme. The pattern of radical technical experiment followed by reaction and a return to a more conventional method, seen first in the relationship of these two early works, is a pattern which was repeated

throughout the rest of Faulkner's career.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Faulkner as Apprentice Craftsman

In 1922, with his own career as a novelist still in the future, William Faulkner wrote, "It is not especially difficult--after a man has written and passed on--to trace the threads which were drawn together by him and put on paper in the form of his own work. It can be seen how Shakespeare ruthlessly took what he needed from his predecessors and contemporaries...."[1] However difficult the task of tracing influences may be, it is interesting that if any area of Faulkner scholarship may be said to have been neglected it is the tracing of source and influence. Faulkner has written and passed on; the threads have not yet all been traced. That this task has been neglected is probably not, however, a result of its difficulty. Faulkner may, in fact, have been right in observing that "it is not especially difficult." It may be that the task is too easy, the challenge not great enough for the Faulkner scholar who thrives on difficulty and complexity. In addition, there is a growing critical consensus that the influence study, with whatever degree of ease or difficulty it is carried out, produces results which in the end are inconclusive. Influence can seldom be proven with a high degree of certainty, and in the rare instances

[1]William Faulkner, "American Drama: Eugene O'Neill," The Mississippian, February 3, 1922; reprinted in Early Prose and Poetry, ed. Carvel Collins (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1962), pp. 86-87.

when proof is adduced, the proof itself provides no new insight.

Critics who discuss Faulkner's relationship to other writers, therefore, often point out that their essays are not to be read as influence studies. At the beginning of his essay "Hawthorne and Faulkner," for instance, Randall Stewart declares, "I am not concerned with 'influences.'"[2] And Robert Slabey, whose dissertation William Faulkner: The Wasteland Phase discusses Eliot, Joyce, and Freud with relation to Faulkner's early work, announces at the outset that "this dissertation will not be a 'source' or 'influence' study."[3] Later, however, as if he is aware that he may be practicing what he has renounced, he remarks, "To indicate influences, parallels, and sources in no way detracts from the highly original nature of his (Faulkner's) genius."[4]

The mildly derisive quotation marks in both these declarations speak plainly enough, and Slabey's last comment suggests another reason why the "influence study" may have fallen into disfavor: it may tarnish an author's genius by revealing the derivative nature of his work. This fear seems unfounded, particularly in connection with Faulkner's very early works. Most of the critics--Howe, Hoffman, Vickery, Collins, O'Connor, and Waggoner, for example--

[2]Randall Stewart, "Hawthorne and Faulkner," College English, XVII (February, 1956), 258.

[3]Robert M. Slabey, William Faulkner: The Wasteland Phase (1926-1936), unpubl. diss. (Notre Dame: 1961), p.13.

[4]Ibid., p. 41

though convinced of Faulkner's genius, are equally convinced of the imitative and derivative nature of his first two novels as well as his early sketches and poetry. Many critics in fact have mentioned possible sources for this early work, although few have attempted to demonstrate the influence in any detail. The only work which, to my knowledge, does attempt a detailed and extensive influence study of the early work is H. Edward Richardson's dissertation which thoroughly examines the sources of Faulkner's early poetry and devotes a chapter to the influence of Sherwood Anderson on the early prose.

There has been, in addition to Richardson's dissertation, considerable attention paid to Faulkner's early work. Carvel Collins had edited and published The Early Prose and Poetry and New Orleans Sketches with enlightening introductions which provide some of the most reliable biographical material on the young Faulkner. Olga Vickery has discussed both Soldiers' Pay and Mosquitoes in her book,[5] and Hyatt Waggoner devotes a thoughtful discussion to them in William Faulkner, From Jefferson to the World.[6] George P. Garrett Jr. has written the only significant essay on Faulkner's early literary criticism and has contributed the most ambitious critical evaluation, with the exception of Richardson's dissertation, of Faulkner's poetry.

There has been no full-scale attempt made to date,

[5]Olga W. Vickery, Novels of William Faulkner (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), pp.1-14.

[6]Hyatt H. Waggoner, William Faulkner, From Jefferson to the World (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1959), pp. 1-19.

however, to study the forms of Faulkner's early fiction, to trace the development of narrative techniques, the growth of facility with structure and method.[7] The source and influence studies which have been attempted are much more concerned with the source of ideas and attitudes toward life or with style in the limited sense of diction, phrase, and imagery than they are with the source of narrative techniques.[8] And yet whenever, in the published interviews, Faulkner made an acknowledgment of literary indebtedness, he nearly always confessed to the borrowing of techniques, or "tools" as he liked to call them. There is a consistency about these statements which cannot be claimed for all of Faulkner's public utterances and which may throw a new light on Faulkner's repeated insistence on the "amorality" of the artist as literary thief. He remarked to a University of Virginia audience: "Well, I'm not sure if I ever read Vergil--I can't remember whether I did or not-- I'd have stolen from him too for the reason that the writer is influenced by every-

[7]Waggoner, in his work, has made some initial suggestions on Faulkner's early experiments with technique and is one of the few critics to suggest a pattern of development in the early fiction. He recognizes, for instance, that Mosquitoes represents an advance in technique over Soldiers' Pay.

[8]See Harold Edward Richardson's chapter on the influence of the decadent tradition on Soldiers' Pay in William Faulkner From Past to Self-discovery; A Study of his Life and Work Through Sartoris (1929), unpubl. diss. (University of Southern California, 1963) pp.210-248; and Frederick L. Gwynn's article, "Faulkner's Prufrock," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, LII (January, 1953) 63-70, which treats the influence of Eliot's attitudes and imagery on Mosquitoes.

thing he ever read."[9] Told, moreover, by a questioner that some passages of "The Bear" reminded him of Conrad, Faulkner admitted:

> Quite true. I got a lot from Conrad and I got quite a lot from a man that you gentlemen, young people, never heard of--a man called Thomas Beer.... I got quite a lot from him--was to me a good tool, a good method, a good usage of words, approach to incident. I think the writer, as I said before, is completely amoral. He takes whatever he needs, wherever he needs....[10]

What is important here is the nature of the literary debt which Faulkner is acknowledging. It is not a debt of Weltanschauung; it is a debt of method, of storyteller's devices. Still later in the same interview Faulkner remarked that "Wuthering Heights is a book I have admired for its craftsmanship."[11] Not for its romanticism, for its use of the grotesque, but for its craftsmanship! The critic searching for sources and influences might have seen many other parallels; Faulkner, however, admired the novel for its craftsmanship.

If Faulkner's literary borrowings often involved technical or structural devices, narrative methods rather than ideas, attitudes, or story plots[12] (and the interview material

[9]Faulkner in the University, ed. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1959), p. 150.

[10]Ibid., pp. 21-22. I shall take up the influence of Thomas Beer's fiction in a later chapter.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Although H. Edward Richardson has argued in an interesting and persuasive essay that Faulkner's Wild Palms is an attempt to retell Hemingway's Farewell to Arms in civilian terms. Richardson cites what appear to be parodies of

quoted above, of course, is only an indication; corroboration must come in later chapters) then there is justification for a study which would combine the study of source and influence with a close structural analysis of narrative form and method. It is my purpose to apply such a study to Faulkner's early prose fiction, the works of that period commonly referred to as his apprenticeship. It is my contention that Faulkner was, during this early part of his career, a far more careful and conscious craftsman than has sometimes been supposed. It is my contention that his conscious experiments with narrative method did not begin with The Sound and the Fury, although his artistic maturity may well date from that novel. There is, however, beginning with the earliest fiction, a discernible pattern of growth and development in the assimilation and application of narrative techniques and an increasingly sophisticated understanding and use of narrative forms. It will be the purpose of this dissertation to trace the pattern of Faulkner's early development as a craftsman in prose fiction.

It is perhaps necessary here to anticipate a natural and obvious objection. There are certain reasons for believing that Faulkner's early career presents no such clear picture of development, but rather one of haphazard groping; no indication of conscious and careful experiment, but rather evidence of aimless fumbling. For this point of view

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Hemingway in Wild Palms. See his "The Hemingwaves in Faulkner's Wild Palms," Modern Fiction Studies, IV (1958), 357-360.

Irving Howe is an eloquent spokesman. He asks, "What happened to him [Faulkner] between Mosquitoes and the novel that followed in composition, The Sound and the Fury? What element of personal experience or literary cultivation can account for this leap? At the door of this mystery there is no use pretending entry."[13] Similarly, Frederick Hoffman divides Faulkner's career into his "time of apprenticeship" (1924-1929), "time of genius" (1929-1936), and "period of consolidation and affirmation" (1940-); he describes the first of these periods:

> The period of apprenticeship produced only three works. They are interesting primarily for what they say of a young man groping for a style and a subject: a volume of poems, The Marble Faun (1924), notable for echoes of late nineteenth century mannerisms; a novel in the postwar tradition, Soldiers' Pay (1926) which reflects the current interest in postwar disillusion; and a novel, Mosquitoes (1927), that seems at least superficially an imitation of Aldous Huxley whose Point Counterpoint (1928) impressed many contemporaries as a masterful summary of postwar attitudes. Each of these works is obviously in its own way an uneasy pose and affectation. Faulkner was conscious of the attractive possibilities of genius, but had not yet decided on a place or a function for his talent, nor indeed been certain whether he had a talent.[14]

[13]Irving Howe, William Faulkner, A Critical Study (New York: Random House, 1952), p. 15. Howe is in error, of course, in supposing that The Sound and the Fury followed Mosquitoes in composition, and it is curious that in the second edition of his book, ten years later, he has not corrected this error, although he has tinkered with the wording of the passage: "What happened to Faulkner between Mosquitoes and the novel following it in composition, The Sound and the Fury? What element of personal or literary experience can account for such a leap? At the door of this mystery there is no use pretending entry." Vintage Edition, revised and expanded (Random House, 1962), pp. 20-21.

[14]Frederick Hoffman, William Faulkner (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1961), p. 18.

The conviction that Faulkner's apprenticeship was a time of groping search is based partly on the quality of the early work, and partly on the lack of a consistent theme, a lack which the dissimilarity of Soldiers' Pay and Mosquitoes underscores. Faulkner himself has strengthened this impression. He has told several times the story about the composition of Soldiers' Pay: how he wrote it in six weeks after deciding, by watching Sherwood Anderson, that a writer's life was an easy and pleasant one.[15] Even more influential perhaps has been his account of how, in the middle of writing Sartoris, he suddenly realized what a writer could accomplish: "I discovered that writing was a mighty fine thing. You could make people stand on their hind legs and cast a shadow. I felt that I had all these people, and as soon as I discovered it I wanted to bring them all back."[16] This account, widely quoted, has led to the assumption that through his first two novels Faulkner the craftsman was learning nothing. As Hoffman puts it,

[15]See Faulkner's article, "Sherwood Anderson: An Appreciation," Atlantic Monthly, 191, 6, (July 27, 1953), p.29, in which he tells how Anderson would be secluded, working, all morning and in the afternoon and evening would lounge around, drink, and talk; Faulkner concluded: "'If this is what it takes to be a novelist, then that's the life for me.'" He told the same story to a University of Virginia audience, (see Faulkner in the University, pp. 21-22) and to a questioner in Japan (see Faulkner at Nagano, p.55: "I decided that that was about as pleasant a life as I knew, and if that's the way you live being a novelist, I would try being a novelist, too.")

[16]Quoted by Robert Cantwell in his introduction to Sartoris (Signet Edition, 1953), p.viii. Faulkner gave a somewhat similar account to Jean Stein in a 1956 interview: With Soldiers' Pay and Mosquitoes I wrote for the sake of

"The truth is that he was an indifferent writer until (in the novels beginning in 1929) he settled upon what he called his 'postage stamp of native soil.'"[17] If this were indeed the truth, then a close structural study of the earliest work would prove unrewarding. There is evidence, however, to indicate that Faulkner was not such an indifferent artist in this early stage of his career.

Faulkner's apprenticeship in prose fiction was not all blind groping. Of the novel Mosquitoes, Faulkner once observed in response to a questioner who asked whether he agreed with Malcolm Cowley's judgment that Mosquitoes was "a very bad early novel": "In that case I'll agree with Mr. Cowley because I was still learning my craft....I'm not ashamed of it, because that was the chips, the badly sawn planks that the carpenter produces while he's learning to be a first-rate carpenter, but it's not a--not an important book in my list."[18] This statement is hindsight, but so is his account of the "turning point" during the writing of Sartoris. The comment about Mosquitoes, however, indicates that Faulkner did not consider the years

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writing because it was fun. Beginning with Sartoris I discovered that my own little postage stamp of native soil was worth writing about and that I would never live long enough to exhaust it, and that by sublimating the actual into the apocryphal I would have complete liberty to use whatever talent I might have to its absolute top." Jean Stein, "William Faulkner: An Interview," Paris Review (Spring 1956) reprinted in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1960), p. 82. Faulkner gave much the same account in Japan. See Faulkner at Nagano, pp. 42-44.

[17]Hoffman, William Faulkner, p. 44.

[18]Faulkner in the University, p. 257.

of his apprenticeship a total waste of time from a craftman's point of view and that the "turning point" or "break through" which occurred during the writing of Sartoris was rather a consolidation of technique with subject matter (for it cannot be denied that in Sartoris Faulkner "found" his subject matter) than the miracle birth, full-grown, of an artist.

There is additional evidence, moreover, that Faulkner thought as a craftsman, a conscious experimenter, from an early point in his career. The young Faulkner wrote a number of critical essays in the years 1920-1925, some of them in the form of book reviews and some of them more general commentaries on literary subjects. The group includes essays written for the University of Mississippi student newspaper, The Mississippian; essays written for the New Orleans periodical, The Double Dealer; and a critical evaluation of Sherwood Anderson's work which was published April 25, 1925 in The Dallas Morning News. When he wrote the last essay, Faulkner was already in New Orleans, had published sketches and short stories in The New Orleans Times-Picayune, and was undoubtedly at work (or about to begin work) on his first novel, Soldiers' Pay. These early attempts at literary criticism are significant for the indication they give that Faulkner was aware, at this stage, of literary technique and methods.

In an early review, for instance, of Conrad Aiken's Turns and Movies he upholds Aiken as a voice crying in the wilderness of contemporary poetry and gives as his reason

the fact that

> Many of them [contemporary poets] have realized that aesthetics is as much a science as chemistry, that there are certain definite scientific rules which when properly applied, will produce great art as surely as certain chemical elements, combined in the proper proportions, will produce certain reactions; yet Mr. Aiken alone has made any effort to discover them and apply them intelligently.[19]

This strange metaphor of art as chemistry, which seems to hark back to Poe's "Philosophy of Composition," might be dismissed as a youthful aberration, coming as it does so early in Faulkner's career, but it indicates at least that Faulkner did not think of writing as a haphazard exercise, as unchecked expression. In the same essay Faulkner displays considerable acquaintance with poetic technique:

> Mr. Aiken has a plastic mind, he uses variation, inversion, change of rhythm and such metrical tricks with skillful effect, and his clear impersonality will never permit him to write poor verse. He is never a press agent as are so many of his contemporaries. It is rather difficult to quote an example from him, as he has written with certain musical forms in mind, and any division of his work, corresponding to the accepted dimensions of a poem is as a single chord to a fugue....[20]

Even more pertinent, perhaps, since they concern prose fiction, are his remarks on Joseph Hergesheimer's novels. "No one since Poe," the essay begins, "has allowed himself

[19]William Faulkner, review of Conrad Aiken's Turns and Movies, The Mississippian, Feb. 16, 1921; reprinted in Early Prose and Poetry, p.74. Richardson has misread Faulkner's position in this essay. "He (Faulkner) feels that art should not be treated mechanically according to formalized 'scientific rules'" William Faulkner: From Past to Self-discovery, p. 129.

[20]Ibid., p. 75.

to be enslaved by words as has Joseph Hergesheimer."[21] Ironically, it is a complaint which more than one critic has made about Faulkner's later fiction. But Faulkner is concerned with more than Hergesheimer's diction; he muses on the novel form and the problem of classifying literary genres:

> He has never written a novel--someone has yet to coin the word for each unit of his work--Linda Condon, in which he reached his apex, is not a novel. It is more like a lovely Byzantine frieze: a few unforgettable figures in silent arrested motion, forever beyond the reach of time and troubling the heart like music. His people are never actuated from within; they do not create life about them; they are like puppets assuming graceful but meaningless postures in answer to the author's compulsions, and holding these attitudes until he arranges their limbs again in other gestures as graceful and as meaningless.[22]

Faulkner has faint praise, however, for The Bright Shawl: "The Bright Shawl is better. The sublimated dime novel peopled, like Cytheria, with morbid men and obscene women. But skilful; the tricks of the trade were never used to better effect, unless by Conrad."[23] It is worth pointing out that Faulkner's early critical writing, for all its syntactic unorthodoxy and flippant, cock-sure impressionism, is not without occasional flashes of insight. His phrase, "sublimated dime novel," for instance, anticipates a judg-

[21]William Faulkner, review of Joseph Hergesheimer's Linda Condon, Cytheria, The Bright Shawl; The Mississippian, December 15, 1922; reprinted in Early Prose and Poetry, p. 101.

[22]Ibid., p. 101-102.

[23]Ibid., p. 102.

ment rendered on Hergesheimer's work ten years later by a more thoroughgoing, careful critic Joseph Warren Beach: "One is conscious here of a certain erotic sentimentalism, a kind of dressing up of the passion of love--a rationalizing of the vagrant impulse--which is a widespread feature of our 'modern' attitude toward the emotions."[24] Faulkner has another description of this trait in Hergesheimer; he calls it "the apostle James making an obscene gesture."[25] Faulkner's impressionistic criticism was not without its small successes.

George P. Garrett, Jr. has noted, in fact, that Faulkner's early critical writings "show a young man whose literary awareness at any time would have to be called considerable."[26] And this, it must be emphasized, was more than a general literary awareness; it was an awareness of and interest in "the tricks of the trade," an awareness of technique and method. He describes one of Hergesheimer's techniques appreciatively: "The induction (sic) to The Bright Shawl is good--he talks of the shawl for a page or so before one is aware of the presence of the shawl as a material object, before the word itself is said; it is like being in a room full of people, one of whom one has not yet directly looked at, though conscious all the time of his presence."[27]

[24]Joseph Warren Beach, The Twentieth Century Novel: Studies in Technique (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1932), p. 309.

[25]Review of Hergesheimer, p. 102.

[26]George P. Garrett, Jr., "Faulkner's Early Literary Criticism," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, I (Spring, 1959), 9.

[27]Review of Hergesheimer, p. 102.

Garrett remarks that Faulkner was later to use this device in his own fiction; it got perhaps its most extensive test in Mosquitoes, where the presence of insects is felt throughout the novel, but the word "mosquitoes" is used only in the title.

Another of Faulkner's early critical essays which reveals something of his early attitude toward literary craftsmanship is the essay "On Criticism." He sees the necessity in criticism of distinguishing between the artist and the work of art, the author and his book, and condemns American criticism for not having done so. "The American critic blinds, not only his audience but himself as well, to the prime essential."[28] English criticism, however, receives Faulkner's praise. "The English review criticises the book, the American the author. The American critic foists upon the reading public a distorted buffoon within whose shadow the titles of sundry uncut volumes vaguely lurk."[29] It is possible, I suppose, to make too much of this distinction, but it should be pointed out that the necessity of literary objectivity, of the author's separateness, aloofness from his work, is a recurring theme in Faulkner's early criticism. He praised Aiken for his "clear impersonality" (see the passage quoted on p.11, above), and lamented in another essay that "writing people are all so

[28]William Faulkner, "On Criticism," Double Dealer, VII (January-February, 1925); reprinted in Early Prose and Poetry, p. 110.

[29]Ibid., p. 112.

pathetically torn between a desire to make a figure in the world and a morbid interest in their personal egos."[30] There is at least an indication in the recurrence of this theme that Faulkner's "literary awareness" at this stage may have included an awareness of what Joseph Warren Beach has called the "great outstanding feature of technique since the time of Henry James": "the disappearance of the author,"[31] the attempt by the novelist to show rather than tell. "No artist...," Percy Lubbock wrote, "can afford to be swayed and beset by his material, he must stand above it."[32] The relationship of Faulkner's early fiction to this doctrine I shall discuss further in a later chapter, but it is interesting to note that one of the "tricks of the trade" employed by Hergesheimer in The Bright Shawl is the consistent use of the Jamesian technique of limited viewpoint: all the action of the novel is seen through the mind of one character.

I have attempted to show that, before his career as a writer of fiction had begun, Faulkner was aware of writing as a craft, a discipline. It cannot be argued that he had a fully developed theory of narrative form. It is possible but not certain that he had read The Craft of Fiction,

[30]William Faulkner, "American Drama: Inhibitions," The Mississippian, March 17 and 24, 1922; reprinted in Early Prose and Poetry, p93.

[31]Beach, The Twentieth Century Novel, pp. 14-16.

[32]Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction (New York: Viking, 1957), p. 17.

first published in 1921, and it is more doubtful that he had studied James' prefaces or essays on the technical aspects of the storyteller's art.[33] It is certain, however, as Joseph Blotner has pointed out, that Faulkner was not "another untutored genius warbling his native wood-notes wild."[34] And it is likely that he was well enough aware of the emphasis on technique which had come to dominate the discussion and writing of prose fiction by 1925.

The real proof of this, however, must be found not in Faulkner's fragmentary literary criticism or in the interview material but in the early novels and stories themselves: the New Orleans sketches (1925), Soldiers' Pay (1926), the unfinished and unpublished novel, Elmer,[35]

[33]It should be noted, however, that The Craft of Fiction is one of the books listed in the appendix to Blotner's Faulkner's Library: A Catalogue (p. 125), which were ordered by Phil Stone during the period when Stone was lending Faulkner books and acting as his unofficial tutor. There is a real possibility, therefore, that Faulkner had read Lubbock's book before going to New Orleans in 1925.

[34]Joseph L. Blotner, Faulkner's Library: A Catalogue (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1964), p.3. Blotner also mentions "the absorbing interest which literary technique had always held for Faulkner and the enormous amount of reading he had done in studying it." (p.3)

[35]Three other titles for this unpublished work are mentioned by Meriwether in The Literary Career of William Faulkner (Princeton: Princeton University Library, 1961), p. 13. They are Elmer and Myrtle, Growing Pains, and Portrait of Elmer Hodge. However, these three titles appear in the manuscript as headings for brief fragments of the novel, none of which is longer than four pages, and each of which is an attempt to write a new beginning for the novel. The bulk of the manuscript bears the title Elmer, and it is this title which I shall use in referring to this work.

and Mosquitoes (1927). That Faulkner was more than casually interested in the "how" of composition, for instance, is clearly shown in the number and nature of revisions made in the Elmer manuscript.

ii

Although this study does not purport to be a biography in any sense of the word, biographical data is necessary to establish the sequence of Faulkner's early writing. Obviously an attempt to trace development in technique must rest on some established order of composition. (See the Appendix for a table which indicates the probable dates of composition) An order of composition can be established, I believe, with some degree of certainty, but because of the remarkable variety in the accounts of this early phase of Faulkner's career, there are a few discrepancies which must be considered. For example, John Faulkner, in his recently published reminiscences gives this account:

> After Bill got fired from the post office, Dad began getting him more odd jobs around the campus. One of them was firing the boiler nights at the power plant. Bill said he wrote his best book there, As I lay Dying. He told me it was a good place to write; it was warm and quiet and he never was disturbed. The hum of the big old dynamo was soothing and he wrote between the times he had to stop and shovel coal into the furnace.
>
> Bill went to New Orleans soon after that, where he wrote Mosquitoes. It was not supposed to be very good but it contained the biggest whopper since Mark Twain, the part about the sheep and the empty whiskey kegs. Roark Bradford was feature editor for the Times-Picayune when Bill was down there and the paper allowed him ten dollars a week to buy a free-lance story for that page. He turned the money over to Bill each week, to live on while Bill wrote his book.

> Bill wrote stories for Brad and one was one of the best things he ever wrote. It was about a negro trying to get home to Africa and mistaking the Mississippi River for the Atlantic Ocean. He crossed the river in a rowboat and was killed by a farmer because he had killed the farmer's cow, thinking he was in Africa and it was some kind of dangerous wild beast.
>
> Next Bill sold Sartoris to Harcourt, Brace. It was a story taken mostly from our family history. He took the Harcourt advance and went on a walking tour of Europe. At New Orleans he got a job as cabin boy on a tramp steamer that landed him in Italy, then walked up through the Alps and into France. He lived in Paris and worked for a French newspaper. When he got word that he had sold another book, with the same advance, he came home by way of London, where he stayed for several more weeks.[36]

Faulkner has elsewhere told of writing As I Lay Dying while working the night shift at the power plant.[37] This much of the account is probably accurate. The account implies, however, with its "soon after that" that As I Lay Dying was written sometime between October 31, 1924, when he resigned the postmastership, and the beginning of 1925 when he went to New Orleans.[38] If this were true, it would make As I Lay Dying one of the earliest pieces of Faulkner's fiction, predating the composition not only of Soldiers' Pay and Mosquitoes but of the New Orleans sketches as well. The quality of As I Lay Dying itself argues overwhelmingly against this, but even more convincing are the dates which

[36]John Faulkner, My Brother Bill (New York: Pocket Books Inc., 1964), pp. 138-139.

[37]In the Jean Stein interview Faulkner said of the novel, "It took me just about six weeks in the spare time from a twelve-hour-a-day job at manual labor." Three Decades, p. 73. Coughlan reports: "Faulkner says that he wrote most of it on the back of a wheelbarrow in the university powerhouse where he was firing boilers." Robert Coughlan, The Private World of William Faulkner (New York, 1954) p. 76.

[38]Richardson, From Past to Self-discovery, p. 135.

Faulkner wrote on the manuscript version of the novel: "25 October 1929" on the first page of the manuscript and "11 December, 1929" on the last page.[39]

John Faulkner also states that Mosquitoes was written in New Orleans before the trip to Europe. Actually, Mosquitoes was written after Faulkner's return from Europe, and all or most of it was written in the gulf coast town of Pascagoula, Mississippi, not in New Orleans.[40] The last page of the Mosquitoes typescript, which I have seen in the University of Virginia Library, bears the words, written in Faulkner's handwriting, "Pascagoula, Miss. Sept. 1926." If that date marks the time when Faulkner finished the novel, as it probably does, then John Faulkner was certainly mistaken, for Faulkner was home from Europe and in Oxford with his family by Christmas of 1925.[41] Furthermore, Faulkner did not go to Europe on the advance from Sartoris. He had not, in fact, sold a novel to a publisher when he left on that trip.

[39]Meriwether, p. 65-66.

[40]Collins has quoted the following article from the New Orleans Item, published in the autumn of 1926 and describing Faulkner's activities of the preceding winter, spring, and summer; "William Faulkner, native of Oxford, Mississippi, who wrote 'Soldiers' Pay'... has returned to the Vieux Carre Sunday to plan a winter's work. Incidentally, he announced the publication of 'Mosquitoes,' another novel.... Mr.Faulkner sun-tanned from working as a fisherman on a Pascagoula schooner.... told of a summer spent working in a lumber mill, until a finger was injured, and then on the fishing boats of the Mississippi coast. At night, after working hours, he wrote his new book." New Orleans Sketches (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1958) p.33.

[41]Collins, New Orleans Sketches, p.33.

Soldiers' Pay, his first novel, was in the hands of Liveright, who had not yet decided to publish it, though urged to do so by Sherwood Anderson. When the decision was made, the advance apparently reached Faulkner in Paris.[42] It is true that Sartoris was published by Harcourt, Brace; but it was not published until June, 1929. Before this the novel had been rejected by Liveright, Faulkner's first publisher, and the delay in publication may account for John Faulkner's confusion. When the novel was first submitted to Liveright, in a somewhat different form from its final published one, it was entitled Flags in the Dust. Louis Kronenberger has described it in a recent Atlantic article:

> I had one real meeting with Faulkner also during Liveright days. By 1927 we had published two of his books, Soldiers' Pay and Mosquitoes. Neither had done well, and when he submitted a new manuscript called Flags in the Dust, it proved more than disappointing; it was quite bad. It posed a dilemma: everyone felt, as against the disorder of the book, the great potential talent in the man. It was at length decided, on the not wholly disingenuous reasoning that Flags would do Faulkner no more good than it would us, to ask him to put it aside and accept an advance on a new book. I was delegated to broach the offer, and I remember we talked about it in a sort of summer-house at the office where I used to read manuscripts in hot weather. Or, rather, I talked about it, with increasing embarrassment as Faulkner said nothing. Nor did he...speak when I had finished. He simply sat on. I had, of course, given him upsetting news; but he sat on and on, while I made an effort at small talk or a pretense of reading a manuscript; sat on for what seemed hours, to get up at last, say very courteously 'good-bye' and leave.
>
> In due time he turned down the proposal; and the

[42]Coughlan, p.73. Actually the decision to publish the novel was made in late August, 1925. (See Collins, Sketches, p. 30.)

> history of Flags in the Dust may shed light on a very murky period of his career. Very much rewritten, it was published some two years later, by Harcourt, as Sartoris. That, still very uneven, it should have been followed so soon and so overwhelmingly by The Sound and the Fury is explained by its having been composed so much earlier.[43]

If Kronenberger's memory (as may be hoped) was more accurate than John Faulkner's, then Sartoris (Flags in the Dust) must have been submitted to Liveright sometime in 1927, still considerably after Faulkner had returned from Europe. There can be little doubt that the composition of Sartoris followed that of Soldiers' Pay and Mosquitoes.

There have been, however, less obvious errors in the dating of Faulkner's early work. There is Irving Howe's assumption, for instance, that The Sound and the Fury was the next novel to be composed after Mosquitoes. (See p.7, note 13, above) This error helps Howe to see a huge gap in quality between the first two novels and the rest of Faulkner's work, ignoring Sartoris as a transitional novel.[44] Richardson's interviews with Phil Stone, as reported in his dissertation, prove that Sartoris was composed after Mosquitoes and that The Sound and the Fury was not begun until after Sartoris had been rejected by Liveright.[45]

[43]Louis Kronenberger, "Gambler in Publishing: Horace Liveright," The Atlantic, 215, 1 (January, 1965), p. 100.

[44]For a suggestion of the importance of Sartoris as a transitional novel in Faulkner's career, see Robert Cantwell's introduction to the Signet edition of the novel, p. viii.

[45]Richardson, From Past to Self-discovery, pp.253-254.

The typescript of the first version of Sartoris, moreover, entitled Flags in the Dust, bears on its last page the date, "29 September 1927," while the typescript of The Sound and the Fury bears the date, "October, 1928."[46]

Small errors in Faulkner biography have a tendency to foster larger errors in Faulkner criticism, as Collins has pointed out: "bits of biographical counterfeit, of course, have no importance whatever. But when...tertiary books drawing them from dubious secondary sources, offer them again and again, they are an obvious reminder of the existence of a much more subtle, much more significant false coinage of critical judgment which such books also circulate.[47] Thus the great mystery which Howe has created is no mystery at all, and the answer to his question, "What happened to Faulkner between Mosquitoes and The Sound and the Fury?" is simple: he wrote the novel Sartoris.[48]

One final problem in dating Faulkner's early work involves the short stories. Collins has set 1925 as the beginning of Faulkner's career in prose fiction.[49] However, the account which Robert Coughlan has written of Faulkner's life and writing in the 1920's does not agree. He describes

[46]Meriwether, p. 65.

[47]Collins, Early Prose and Poetry, p. 11.

[48]When Richardson asked Phil Stone much the same question: "What happened to Faulkner between Mosquitoes (1927) and The Sound and the Fury (1929)?"Stone answered, "He was writing all the time." From Past to Self-discovery, p. 255.

[49]Collins, Sketches, p. 9

Faulkner after his return to Oxford from Toronto where he was being trained as a pilot in the R.F.C. :

> He continued to regard himself as a poet and turned out poetry, largely under Imagist influence, at a great rate. Then after a while, he began to write short stories, with the practical object of making money to support himself while he wrote poems. Stone's secretary would type them and send them off, but they were invariably rejected, and they collected in a filing cabinet in the musty little red brick building occupied then, as now, by the Stone law firm.[50]

It is apparent that Coughlan is writing about a period before Faulkner's trip to New York and even before his withdrawal from the university in the autumn of 1920, for a description of his career as a student at Ole Miss follows. "His only good marks were in French and Spanish. He failed in English and dropped that in his second semester, and finally, early in his second year, left school altogether.[51] This, of course, occurred in the autumn of 1920, and Coughlan continues:

> Afterwards he reverted to his previous activities, writing more poems and stories, which collected at such a great rate that finally they filled a filing cabinet in Stone's office.[52]

This account would not be so startling if those rejected manuscripts had remained in that filing cabinet. But Coughlan mentions them again:

> Sanctuary was a tremendous popular success. He [Faulkner] and Stone sat back in amazed delight--but only momentarily. Then they opened the filing cabinet, the old manuscripts were dusted off and

[50]Coughlan, Private World, pp. 51-52.

[51]Ibid., p. 54

[52]Ibid.

> retyped, with a large price in the upper right corner of each title page, and sent off to the same magazines that had rejected them before. The money poured in.[53]

If Coughlan's account has any degree of truth, then some of Faulkner's short stories which were published after Sanctuary were actually written much earlier, before Soldiers' Pay and Mosquitoes, and even before the New Orleans sketches. Obviously, if this were true, it would have important implications for any attempt to trace a developmental pattern in Faulkner's early experiments with narrative methods. There are good reasons, however, for rejecting such an early dating for the composition of these short stories and for accepting, rather, Collins' judgment that Faulkner began writing fiction seriously only after his arrival in New Orleans early in 1925. One reason is the obvious disparity in quality between the New Orleans sketches and any of the short stories published after 1929. That any of these stories could have been written before the New Orleans sketches seems highly improbable. Another reason for doubting the account is that the legendary tale of previously rejected short stories selling like hot-cakes after the success of Sanctuary is difficult to verify from the actual dates of acceptance and publication of Faulkner's short stories.[54]

[53] Ibid., p. 74

[54] During the years 1930-32 Faulkner kept a record on a sheet of cardboard of the stories sent to magazines and the dates when the stories were accepted. This sheet is preserved in the Faulkner collection in the University of

Furthermore, Coughlan's general chronological haziness (he mentions few dates) and his unreliability on other points of Faulkner's early career throw suspiscion on his entire account. He claims, for instance, that Faulkner made his trip to New York in 1923, while Richardson has shown quite conclusively in his dissertation that the trip was made in 1921.[55] Coughlan claims, too, that Faulkner wrote his sketches for the Times-Picayune and the Double Dealer after he had written Soldiers' Pay and it had been accepted by Liveright.[56] The publication dates of the sketches make this impossible, and Soldiers' Pay had not yet been accepted by Liveright when Faulkner left for Europe in July of 1925. Coughlan also contends that Faulkner wrote most of his second novel, Mosquitoes, in New Orleans before leaving for Europe.[57] Evidence uncovered by Collins shows this to be in error.[58]

Virginia Library and is described by Meriwether in The Literary Career of William Faulkner. Meriwether notes that "a persistent legend has it that Faulkner collected rejection slips before Sanctuary for stories that he afterward sold, at fat prices, to the same editors who had previously rejected them. The legend... is not borne out by the statistics afforded by the sending schedule.... If only five had actually appeared before the publication of Sanctuary, eight had been accepted and Faulkner marked only eight acceptances during the year following. (i.e., the year following the success of Sanctuary which was published in February, 1931) Sanctuary may have helped the sale of Faulkner's stories, but there is little evidence that it did so in the first ten or twelve months after its publication." p. 168.

[55]Richardson, From Past to Self-discovery, pp.134-139

[56]Coughlan, Private World, p.61

[57]Ibid.

[58]See note 41. Faulkner wrote Mosquitoes in Pascagoula, after returning from Europe.

In dating Faulkner's early work, for the purposes of studying the development of his technique, I shall use the dates of composition arrived at by Collins and the evidence of dates written on the manuscripts and typescripts themselves. I shall be concerned chiefly with the period from the beginning of 1925 to September of 1926, or from the composition of the first sketches in New Orleans to the completion of Mosquitoes. Most of the poetry, of course, was written before 1925, although A Green Bough was not published until 1933. My concern with the poetry, however, will be limited to those techniques, narrative and dramatic which Faulkner was able to transfer to the writing of prose fiction. There is, for instance, a relationship between the symbolist poetry and the impressionist prose, a relationship which I shall treat in the next chapter.

Faulkner's first published work, after his arrival in New Orleans, was entitled "New Orleans" and appeared in the January-February issue of the Double Dealer. It consisted of a series of impressionistic character sketches some of them containing the germ of future sketches for the Times-Picayune. The sketches published in the Sunday section of that newspaper stretched from February 8, 1925 to September 27 of that year, the last four sketches, in fact, appearing in print after Faulkner had left on his trip to Europe.[59]

[59]Of these four, Collins speculates that "The Liar" may have been mailed back to New Orleans from Savannah where the ship was taking on cargo from July 11 to July 14, and that it is likely the other three were mailed back from Europe. Sketches, p. 31.

It is apparent from the early dates of publication that Faulkner began writing the prose sketches soon after arriving in New Orleans, but if his account of his decision to become a novelist is correct and the pleasant working hours of Sherwood Anderson influenced that decision, then the composition of Soldiers' Pay was not begun until March, for Anderson was away from New Orleans on a lecture tour until that time.[60] Faulkner claims to have written Soldiers' Pay in six weeks, but it is not certain whether this includes the time spent typing the novel or only the time spent writing it out in longhand. Faulkner invariably wrote first in longhand before preparing a typescript, and would make revisions while typing. Therefore, the composition of each work must be thought of as including both steps of this process.[61] It is likely that Faulkner was referring only to the time spent in the longhand writing of Soldiers' Pay, for the autograph manuscript of As I Lay Dying, which Faulkner has also said was written in six weeks, bears dates which corroborate this time span but the typescript of the novel bears a somewhat later date.[62]

[60]Collins, Sketches, p. 25

[61]See John Faulkner, pp. 219-220, "Bill wrote all of his stuff in longhand.... He had to do all of his own copying himself because no one else could read what he had written." See also Faulkner's comment in Faulkner at Nagano, "Yes, I typed it up because nobody can read my script." p. 122.

[62]However, it cannot be proven that Faulkner wrote out a complete draft of each novel before making a typed copy.

Soldiers' Pay was undoubtedly composed during the spring and early summer of 1925. The typescript was in the hands of Liveright by July when Faulkner left for Europe, although it had not yet been accepted for publication. While in Europe Faulkner began work on a second novel, Elmer, which as it exists in 130 pages of manuscript, is an unfinished book; whether Faulkner never finished it or whether part of the manuscript was lost is not certain. Chances are, however, that Faulkner never finished the book, and his only recorded comment about it later was that "it was funny but not funny enough."[63] Although only four pages of the manuscript are in Faulkner's handwriting and the rest are typed, it seems likely that he had written out the entire manuscript, perhaps not typing it until his return to the United States.[64]

By Christmas of 1925, Faulkner was back in Oxford. He remained there apparently until spring or early summer of 1926. Perhaps during this time he worked on the Elmer manuscript, rewriting, typing, and revising. The 130 page

[63] Meriwether, p. 81.

[64] If, however, Collins' supposition that Faulkner may have written one of his sketches aboard ship and mailed it back to New Orleans from Savannah (Sketches, p31), is correct, then Faulkner must have taken his typewriter with him, for his script was virtually illegible to anyone but himself. In 1961 he spoke of owning an "old portable" which he had had for about forty years. (See Elliott Chaze, "Visit to a Two-finger Typist," Life (July 14, 1961), 11-12.") Perhaps he took this "old portable" to Europe with him. At any rate the typescript of Soldiers' Pay and the typescript of Elmer, both of which I have examined, appear to have been typed with the same machine, although four pages of the latter, entitled Portrait of Elmer Hodge, were typed with a different machine.

section of the manuscript which has survived, and which I shall describe in Chapter V, reveals that Faulkner had made extensive revisions. Perhaps he abandoned Elmer at this point and began Mosquitoes, which was to be his second published novel. The summer of 1926, however, he spent in Pascagoula, Mississippi, and it was there that most if not all of Mosquitoes was composed. By September 1, according to the date on the last page of the typescript, it was finished. It is to this point that I shall carry my study of Faulkner's earliest experiments with narrative methods. At this point in his career Faulkner was ready to write Sartoris and, in rapid succession, The Sound and the Fury, As I lay Dying, Sanctuary, and Light in August.

I have suggested that Faulkner's apprenticeship in narrative techniques was not the haphazard learning process that has often been suggested; in the following chapters I intend to examine some of "the chips, the badly sawn planks" which the apprentice craftsman produced while he learned his trade.

Chapter II

From Symbolist Poetry to Impressionist Prose

"Faulkner began his literary career as a poet, and that fact colored all his later writing of prose," Lawrance Thompson has recently observed.[1] Much earlier, reviewing Absalom, Absalom!, William Troy decided that "much confusion will be saved if one applies to Mr. Faulkner's new book not the usual standards of the realistic novel but whatever standards we are accustomed to apply to lyric poetry of the most subjective sort."[2]

Comments like these indicate a long-standing and widely shared critical hunch that one key to Faulkner's development as a master of prose may be found in his beginnings as a poet. This impression was reinforced in 1956 when Faulkner himself asserted in an interview: "I think that every novelist is a failed poet. I think he tries to write poetry first, then finds he can't. Then he tries the short story, which is the most demanding form after poetry. And failing at that, only then does he take up novel writing." Asked by the interviewer, "Do you have any writer in mind when you say this?" Faulkner answered, "I'm a failed poet. I tried writing poetry when I was a young man, but I soon

[1]Lawrance Thompson, William Faulkner: An Introduction and Interpretation (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1963), p.5.

[2]William Troy, "Poetry of Doom," Nation, CXLIII (October 31, 1936), 524.

found I wasn't a poet. So I turned to the novel."[3] Actually the pattern which Faulkner outlines in retrospect, a kind of inevitable transition from poet to short story writer to novelist, is much more clear-cut than the pattern which Faulkner's own career followed. It is true that Faulkner's first volume of verse, The Marble Faun, was published in 1924, that he became a short story writer in earnest in 1925, and that his first novel, Soldiers' Pay, was published in 1926. But Faulkner was still writing poetry after his first novel was published and, in fact, dated several poems from Pascagoula, Mississippi, where he was writing his second novel, Mosquitoes, in the summer of 1926.[4] His second book of verse A Green Bough, was not published until 1933, although it is true that most of the poems it contains were probably written much earlier, the bulk of them, perhaps, as early as 1925.[5] However, Faulkner revised many of the poems before their 1933 publication, and some of the sonnets in the volume seem to reflect his experiences in the autumn of 1925 when he visited the World War battlefields in France.[6] These poems, at least, were composed after Faulkner had become

[3]Cynthia Grenier, "An Interview with William Faulkner," Accent, XVI (Summer, 1956), 167-177.

[4]Some of the manuscripts of poetry in the University of Virginia Library's Faulkner collection bear this inscription.

[5]Harry Runyan, "Faulkner's Poetry," Faulkner Studies. II (Summer-Autumn, 1954), 24.

[6]Poem IV (pp.20-21), for instance, contains a description for a battlefield and what are apparently Faulkner's reactions to a guide's harangue:

a novelist.

It is difficult to say when the realization that he was not to be a poet struck Faulkner, if indeed a specific moment can be pin-pointed. It is certain, however, that Faulkner still considered himself a poet when he reached New Orleans early in 1925,[7] and that he continued to write poetry during the two years that the New Orleans sketches, the first two published novels, and the unpublished novel Elmer, were composed. If there is any of Faulkner's prose which one might reasonably expect to find colored by his poetry, it is this early prose.

Such coloring does exist in the early prose. It is not difficult to find, and it has been pointed out by several critics; but it is a "coloring" in a very apt sense

---

on our left we see
that blanched plateau wombing cunningly
hushing his brilliant counterattack saying
shhhhhh to general blah in the year mille
neufcentvingtsomethingorother
the general himself
is now on tour somewhere in the states
telling about the war
and here
battalioned crosses in a pale parade
the german burned his dead (which goes to show
god visited him with proper wrath)

Poem XXXI is also a description of a battlefield:

He winnowed it with bayonets
And planted it with guns,
And now the final cannonade
Is healed with rains and suns.

He looks about and leaps to stamp
The stubborn grinning seeds
Of older plantings back beneath
His field of colored weeds.

[7]See Sherwood's Anderson's sketch, "A Meeting South," the protagonist of which is almost certainly Faulkner.

of that word to which these critics usually point. It is a surface influence: diction, image, and phrase borrowed from the poetry and superimposed on the prose.[8] It is a coloring and not an ordering or structuring influence, and as such it provides no wholly satisfactory key to the transition from Faulkner the poet to Faulkner the craftsman in fiction.

Faulkner's experience as a poet did, however, have a deeper and more lasting effect on his prose fiction-an effect closely connected with the order in which he came to know and assimilate the poets who influenced his own verse and with the unmistakable development of his own verse from the purely lyric to the dramatic and narrative.

ii

It is clear that the first important technical influence on Faulkner's poetry was the influence of French symbolism.[9] George P. Garrett observes of Faulkner's first published book, The Marble Faun, that

> The effect gained by joining the evocative method of symbolist poetry with the highly developed patterns of the English pastoral is a unique conjunction. It could scarcely have been attempted by an unlettered,

[8]In Soldiers' Pay, for instance, Faulkner has Januarius Jones say, "For a moment, an aeon, I pause plunging above the narrow precipice of thy breast." (p. 158, Signet Edition) Poem XVII of A Green Bough has the lines, "for a moment an aeon i pause plunging/above the narrow precipice of thy breast." Richardson notes this and other "borrowings" in his William Faulkner: From Past to Self-Discovery, 232-239.

[9]See Richardson's dissertation, 156-178, and George P. Garrett's article, "An Examination of the Poetry of William Faulkner," Princeton University Library Chronicle, XVIII (1957). 124-135.

> accidental poet. The structure of the book, separate poems joined together by common subject and both external and internal devices, indicates an early awareness of the problems of creating structural unity. Concern with form has marked Faulkner's work from the beginning and throughout a career noted for variety and sublety of structural experiment.[10]

The Marble Faun is a series of images, a linked series of pictures, each of which is intended to evoke an emotion through a specific, concrete image. The progression of moods, of emotions, is governed by the seasons and the times of day, and the book is, as Garrett points out, a most ambitious undertaking. But The Marble Faun is lyric poetry in the purest sense of the word; in no sense can it be called narrative or dramatic. A marble faun as a poetic protagonist is exactly what its name suggests it would be--static. The faun serves as a literary device, a literary convention, through which the young poet voices his own melancholy doubts and yearnings. And by employing the conventions of pastoral poetry Faulkner has imposed on even these doubts and yearnings a patterning from without and a resulting predictability and sense of artifice. Since the moods of the poet are subject to the conventions he has adopted, the

[10]George P. Garrett, Jr., op. cit., 125. Phil Stone, in his preface to The Marble Faun, wrote: "It is inevitable that this book should bear traces of other poets; probably all well-informed people have by this time learned that a poet does not spring full-fledged from the brow of Jove. He does have to be born with the native impulse, but he learns his trade from other poets by apprenticeship, just as a lawyer or a carpenter or a bricklayer learns his. It is inevitable that traces of apprenticeship should appear in a first book but a man who has real talent will grow, will leave these things behind, will finally bring forth a flower that could have grown in no garden but his own."

cycle of the seasons, there is a peculiarly static quality about the whole production.

The text of The Marble Faun is dated "April, May, June, 1919," and there is no reason for doubting that Faulkner wrote the poems this early. The rest of his early verse, from "L'Apres-midi d'un Faun," his first published work of any kind,[11] to the early verse published in The Mississippian, shares the same non-dramatic and non-narrative characteristics which I have noted in The Marble Faun. All of these poems too are strongly influenced by the French symbolists, and some of them are adaptations and translations of poems by Paul Verlaine. An examination of one of these poems--a fairly representative sample, I think, of the verse of this period--will suffice here. "A Poplar" was published in The Mississippian on March 17, 1920:

> Why do you shiver there
> Between the white river and the road?
> You are not cold,
> With the sun light dreaming about you;
> And yet you lift your pliant supplicating arms as though
> To draw clouds from the sky to hide your slenderness.
>
> You are a young girl
> Trembling in the throes of ecstatic modesty,
> A white objective girl
> Whose clothing has been forcibly taken away from her.[12]

The poem is purely a picture; nothing happens. The voice of the poet, certainly of great importance in the poem's structure and theme, is a lyrical voice, not a dramatic one.

[11]It was published in The New Republic, XX (August 6, 1919), 24.

[12]Reprinted in Early Prose and Poetry, ed. Carvel Collins, p. 60.

In all of his earliest verse (until, as far as it is possible to determine, 1924 or 1925) Faulkner created no characters in his poetry. He created instead a poetic personality, a consistently lyric voice.

Faulkner's poetry, however, began to take on a narrative and dramatic cast not long before his trip to New Orleans and the writing of his first significant fiction. This change in the direction of Faulkner's poetry from the wholly lyric to the narrative and dramatic has not been mentioned by the critics who have commented on Faulkner's poetry. Garrett, who has written the most ambitious and useful essay on the poetry, refers to all of Faulkner's verse as "abstract lyric poetry," and stresses "a sense of continuity in Faulkner's entire poetic work," finding a link of continuity between The Marble Faun and A Green Bough: "the dominant mood of the whole book [A Green Bough] is pastoral."[13] There is a continuity in theme and "mood"; there is also, however, a sharp break, in form and technique. Garrett's is an understandable and perhaps necessary attempt to clear Faulkner's poetry of the charge of imitativeness, by means of which earlier critics had dismissed the poetry as completely insignificant. Garrett's concern, therefore, is not primarily with influences, and it is quite possible that he missed the change in technique for this reason. Nonetheless, the sequence of the poets who served Faulkner as models contains the key to the change.

[13]George P. Garrett, Jr., op. cit., 131-134.

Faulkner described the sequence of these influences in the essay "Verse Old and Nascent: A Pilgrimage." The first poet to catch his fancy was Swinburne, whom he discovered "at the age of sixteen." Immediately after the war came "the contemporary poets," by which it is to be assumed Faulkner meant not only the American imagists but the late nineteenth century French symbolists as well. "When the unco-ordinated chaos of the war was replaced by the unco-ordinated chaos of peace I took seriously to reading verse. With no background whatever I joined the pack belling loudly after contemporary poets." But Faulkner, according to this account, soon became disenchanted with contemporary poetry. "That page is closed to me forever," he announces. "I read Robinson and Frost with pleasure, and Aldington; Conrad Aiken's minor music still echoes in my heart. I no longer try to read the others at all." There remains, however, one influence; and it is a crucial one, I think, in explaining the turn which Faulkner's poetry took toward the dramatic and narrative:

> It was 'The Shropshire Lad' which closed the period. I found a paperbound copy in a bookshop and when I opened it I discovered there the secret after which the moderns course howling like curs on a cold trail in a dark wood, giving off, it is true, an occasional note clear with beauty, but curs just the same. Here was reason for being born into a fantastic world: discovering the splendor of fortitude, the beauty of being of the soil like a tree about which fools might howl and which winds of disillusion and death and despair might strip, leaving it bleak, without bitterness; beautiful in sadness.

Faulkner concludes the account of his pilgrimage in poetry by saying, "From this point the road is obvious, Shakespeare

I read, and Spenser, and the Elizabethans, and Shelley and Keats."[14] The road which Faulkner has mapped out provides an important clue to the shift of Faulkner's poetic method in the direction of narrative verse.

The influence of Housman on the poetry of A Green Bough has been widely recognized, beginning with the reviewers of the book.[15] But when Runyan says that "Housman's pseudo-pastoral poetry quite possibly provided the stimulus for Faulkner's own pastoral predilections,"[16] he misses what seems to me to be the important point about the Housman influence. Faulkner's own poetry had been pseudo-pastoral, full of nymphs, satyrs, and references to Pan. With A Green Bough Faulkner's pastoral poetry comes down to earth. The Marble Faun bears no trace of a Housman influence, and is instead what Garrett calls "abstract lyrical poetry," showing no tendency toward the narrative or dramatic. The poetry of A Green Bough, on the other hand, shows quite clearly the effect of Housman's ballads:

> When evening shadows grew around
> And a thin moon filled the lane,
> Their slowing breath made scarce a sound
> Where Richard lay with Jane.

[14]"Verse Old and Nascent: A Pilgrimage" appeared first in Double Dealer, VII (April, 1925), 129-131; reprinted in Early Prose and Poetry, ed. Carvel Collins, pp. 114-118.

[15]For instance, see William Rose Benet's review, "Faulkner as Poet," Saturday Review of Literature, April 29, 1933, 165.

[16]Harry Runyan, op. cit., 24.

I am not suggesting that, before he discovered Housman, Faulkner had never seen a ballad, that he never had an inkling that poetry could be used to tell a story. It seems quite possible, however, that his discovery of Housman revealed to Faulkner possibilities within the pastoral tradition which had not occurred to him before. It is a minor literary irony that Housman, the rustic only by proxy, should become the teacher of Faulkner, the genuine rustic by birth and inclination.

There is, at any rate, a great difference between the idealized landscape of The Marble Faun, populated with figures from classical mythology, and the countryside of A Green Bough, "Where Richard lay with Jane." The Marble Faun shows the dominant influence of Swinburne; A Green Bough, reveals the tempering influence of Housman. Garrett, in making a case for the "continuity between Faulkner's verse and his prose," observes that "the pastoral feeling of The Hamlet echoes many images in The Marble Faun and A Green Bough."[17] Perhaps so, but The Marble Faun contains no prototype for a Eula Varner, while Jane of A Green Bough might be called her legitimate ancestor. However, the most important result of the Housman influence, for the purposes of this study, is that in supplying his pastoral landscapes with real people Faulkner began to create characters and to involve these characters in events, in action. He had done none of these things in The Marble Faun. With the

[17]George P. Garrett, Jr., op. cit., 124.

poems of A Green Bough, then, Faulkner began to use the methods of narrative in his verse.

But the influence of Housman and the beginnings of narrative poetry are not the whole story. The influence of T. S. Eliot is of equal importance. Faulkner never, so far as I know, spoke of Eliot as an influence, at least in the interviews which have been published. Nor is Eliot mentioned in the essay "Verse Old and Nascent," although there is a plausible reason for his exclusion. Having announced with such finality that "That page [contemporary poetry] is closed to me forever," it would have been an obvious rhetorical and strategical blunder for Faulkner to have admitted that Eliot was a very important and very current influence on his own verse. Nonetheless, there is considerable evidence that Eliot's poetry was such a current influence; the poem "Lilacs" was published, for instance, in The Double Dealer just two months after Faulkner's essay on poetry. Slightly revised, it became the first poem in A Green Bough; I quote here, however, from the first version of the poem.[18]

> We sit drinking tea
> Beneath the lilacs on a summer afternoon
> Comfortably at our ease
> With fresh linen on our knees.

Runyan notes that "one can find reminiscences of 'Prufrock'"[19]

[18]"The Lilacs. To A.... and H...., Royal Air Force, August, 1925," The Double Dealer, VII (June, 1925), 185-187.

[19]Harry Runyan, op. cit., p. 27.

here. Actually there is a more important relationship than the echo of phrase and imagery in the poem. "Lilacs" is structurally related to "Prufrock"; it is a dramatic poem, although it cannot strictly be called a dramatic monologue, as "Prufrock" is, because there is more than one voice in the poem:

> And we sit we three
> In diffident contentedness
> Lest we let each other guess
> How happy we are
> Together here, watching the young moon
> Lying shyly on her back, and the first star.
>
> There are women here:
> Smooth-shouldered creatures in sheer scarves, that pass
> And eye me strangely as they pass.
> One of them, my hostess, pauses near:
> ...Are you quite all right, sir? she stops to ask.
> ...You are a bit lonely, I fear.
> Will you have more tea? Cigarettes? No?...
> I thank her, waiting for her to go:
> To me they are like figures on a masque.
> ...Who?...shot down
> Last spring--Poor chap, his mind
> ....doctors say...hoping rest will bring...
> Busy with their tea and cigarettes and books
> Their voices come to me like tangled rooks.

It is clear at this point that the first speaker of the poem has not come through the war with all his faculties intact. The comments of the women ("Poor chap, his mind...") tell us this much. He is, in all likelihood, "horribly wounded," like young Donald Mahon, the hero of Soldier's Pay. The exact condition of his mind is revealed in the rest of the poem when the voices of his two friends speak, and it becomes apparent that these are ghostly voices, that the two friends with whom he is sitting "in quiet amity" are aviators and former comrades who have been killed in action. The

voice of the first dead friend speaks and is answered by the voice of the second dead friend; then the lilacs murmur to the surviving aviator. The first friend says:

> ...It was a morning in late May...
> A white woman, a white wanton near a brake,
> A rising whiteness mirrored in a lake;
> And I, old chap, was out before the day
> In my little pointed-eared machine,
> Stalking her through shimmering reaches of the sky....
> I felt her arms and her cool breath.
> The bullet struck me here, I think,
> In the left breast....
> One should not die like this
> On such a day,
> From angry bullets, or other modern way.
> Yet science is a dangerous mouth to kiss.
> One should fall, I think, to some Etruscan dart
> In meadows where the Oceanides
> Flower the wanton grass with dancing
> And, on such a day as this,
> Become a tall wreathed column: I should like to be
> An ilex on an isle in purple seas.
> Instead, I had a bullet through my heart...

The second dead friend answers him:

> ....Yes you are right:
> One should not die like this,
> And for no cause nor reason in the world.
> It's well enough for one like you to talk
> Of going in the far thin sky to stalk
> The mouth of death, you did not know the bliss
> Of home and children, the serene
> Of living and of work and joy that was our heritage.
> And, best of all, of age.
> We were too young.
> Still...he draws his hand across his eyes
> ....Still, it could not be otherwise.
> We had been raiding over Mannheim. You've seen
> The place? Then you know
> How one hangs just beneath the stars and sees
> The quiet darkness burst and shatter against them,
> And, rent by spears of light, rise in shuddering waves
> Crested with restless futile flickerings.
> The black earth drew us down that night,
> Out of the bullet tortured air,
> A great black bowl of fireflies. . . .
> There is an end to this somewhere. . .
> One should not die like this...

The voice of the second dead aviator dies away "While the lilacs Nod their heads on slender stalks,/ Agreeing while he talks." They continue to sit in "silent amity." The first speaker concludes:

> I am cold, for now the sun is gone
> And the air is cooler where we three
> Are sitting. The light has followed the sun
> And I no longer see
> The pale lilacs stirring against the lilac-pale sky.
>
> They bend their heads toward me as one head
> ...Old man...they say...How did you die?...
>
> I--I am not dead
>
> I hear their voices as from a great distance...Not dead
> He's not dead, poor chap; he didn't die...

And so the poem ends with the two dead aviators expressing pity for their still-living friend. In the version of the poem which appeared in A Green Bough Faulkner made some changes, particularly in the second section of the poem where he changed some singular pronouns to plural ones ("eye me" becomes "eye us"; "my hostess" becomes "our hostess"; "to me they are" becomes "to us they are"; and "come to us" becomes "come to me"). Garrett notes the change and remarks:

> Faulkner made a number of small changes, the most important being the elimination, as much as possible, of the poet speaker as singular, replacing him with a collective pronoun, thus increasing the dramatic conflict in the poem without the danger of the poet's being explicitly identified as more than a spectator.[20]

Garrett fails, it appears to me, to see just what is

[20]George P. Garrett, Jr., op. cit., p. 131.

happening dramatically in the poem, and without doing that it is futile to speak of "increasing the dramatic conflict." It is difficult to see how the dramatic conflict of the poem is increased in that second section unless one takes the very literal position that a greater quantity of conflict exists in a conversation between a woman and a man. But Garrett is quite correct in seeing that the change is significant. What the change accomplished, however, was a heightened sense of the poet speaker's mental condition. He is clearly having hallucinations; the presence of his dead friends is real to him, and because he sees them he assumes that the woman does too. The sense of hallucination is evoked later in the poem too (in both versions), when the poet speaker "sees" one of his friends pause and draw a hand across his eyes. The change of pronouns from singular to plural, however, does not reduce the speaker to a spectator in the poem; it could not do that without at the same time eliminating the dramatic conflict, for the speaker is a part of that conflict. The conflict is between him, as survivor, and the voices of his two dead friends; and the irony of the poem is the pity expressed at the end by the two dead voices in unison for the more unfortunate condition of their living friend. It is significant that Faulkner did not change any pronouns at the end of the poem. What Garrett has failed to see is that Faulkner has created a truly dramatic character in this poem, that the wounded aviator is not William Faulkner any more than Prufrock is

T. S. Eliot.

A correct reading of the poem reveals some interesting advances in Faulkner's poetic methods and some interesting parallels with his early experiments in narrative prose. Faulkner provided himself a difficult technical problem at the outset of the poem. How does one create a character whose eyes and voice are to be the central point of view in a dramatic poem but whose mind is deranged? Faulkner solves the problem by giving his character a mind and voice of the most decorous rationality--within the limits of his hallucinations. Thus he establishes two levels of reality in the poem: the hallucinatory level of the narrator and the sane level of the whispering women who give us the first clue to the narrator's condition. It is the hallucinatory level which is important to the reader because the conflict of the poem takes place at this level; but this level could not exist without the other level, the sane ordinary reality revealed by the women's comments. To the narrator the women are not real, and the women, of course, know nothing about the world of his hallucinations. All of this is handled with considerable skill, even in the first version of the poem.[21] Faulkner encountered the same kind of problem in Soldier's Pay in which the wounded aviator, Donald Mahon,

[21]Note that the pronouns are plural in the first section of the first version of the poem, indicating hallucination.

suffers from the same disability as the narrator of "Lilacs."[22] He encountered the same problem, in a more acute form, of course, when he made the idiot Benjy the narrator of the first section of The Sound and the Fury.

The poem also illustrates a problem in the treatment of time--a crucial technical concern in fiction and particularly in Faulkner's fiction. Time is inextricably involved in the dramatic conflict of the poem, for that conflict is between the living and the dead; or, in terms of time, between the present and the past. The poem proceeds from the present into two flashbacks from the past and ends in the present. The flashbacks, the descriptions of the two deaths, are the most vivid sections of the poem, underlining the ironic conclusion of the poem that the dead are really living, and the living, in the quiet, motionless existence of the surviving aviator, are to be pitied. Faulkner uses much the same technique, particularly the flashback, in Soldiers' Pay.

[22]Donald Mahon is wholly inarticulate throughout the novel with the exception of a brief period just before his death when he is "quietly conscious of unseen forgotten spring, of greenness neither recalled nor forgot." He recalls and retells in detail the aerial battle in which he was wounded. The passage takes up only a few pages (pp. 202-204, Signet Ed.), and at the end of it, "He knew sight again and an imminent nothingness more profound than any yet, while evening, like a ship with twilight-colored sails, drew down the world, putting calmly out to an immeasurable sea. 'That's how it happened,' he said...."

That there should be similarities between Faulkner's early fiction and the poetry he wrote at approximately the same time is not surprising. The dramatic monologue in poetry and the short story in fiction have much in common in terms of method and technique. They both require compression and conciseness; both require economy and preciseness of diction. Both emphasize development of a single character, or at most, in the short story, several characters. Neither permits much liesurely development, or the indulgence in what Percy Lubbock calls the "panoramic" method of presentation, the protracted "telling" of background information. Both are much better adapted to the "showing" method, or "scenic" method, as Lubbock calls it. Most of the same generalizations may be applied to the ballad, especially the abbreviated ballad as it was written by Housman and adapted by Faulkner in A Green Bough.

I am not suggesting here that the development of Faulkner's poetry from the purely abstract and lyric to the narrative and dramatic was followed in a direct chronological line by an inclination to try his hand at prose fiction; that his experiments in poetry, in other words, caused his experiments in prose. To assert anything of the sort would, in the first place, distort what was more likely a relationship of mutual influence between the early poetry and the early prose.[23] Secondly, it would ignore the

[23]I have already noted the relationship between "Lilacs" and Soldier's Pay. Many of the other poems of A Green Bough were also composed after Faulkner had begun writing fiction.

obvious possibility that Faulkner turned to prose not solely because he had failed artistically as a poet--although this may have been a factor--but simply because prose offered a greater chance of financial remuneration.

Nonetheless, the relationship between the poetry and the prose is further indication that the early Faulkner cannot be dismissed as an "unconscious" or "automatic" writer; he must be reckoned with as a craftsman at this early and formative stage of his career. He was craftsman enough to cope with narrative and dramatic problems of some complexity in his verse and to solve them with some degree of success. From a technical and structural point of view, Faulkner faced similar problems in his verse and in his early fiction.

There is one further influence which Faulkner's experience as a poet did have on his fiction; it is an influence of technique and method, and it is a lasting influence. Edmund Wilson has remarked that "if English and American critics have sometimes shown themselves at a loss when confronted with the work of certain recent writers, it is partly because the work of these writers is the result of a literary revolution which occurred outside English literature."[24] The revolution to which he refers is the French Symbolist Movement, and since the techniques of the French symbolists were a persistent and continuing influence on Faulkner's poetry--even after he had turned to Housman and Eliot as models--

[24]Edmund Wilson, Axel's Castle (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. 23.

Wilson's observation may well speak to the student of Faulkner's early work. Both Wilson and Leon Edel have pointed to a relationship between the Symbolist Movement in poetry and the psychological fiction of Proust and Joyce. Wilson notes that

> Joyce has carried the methods of Symbolism further than merely to set a naturalistic scene and then, in that frame, to represent directly the minds of his different characters in Symbolistic monologues like 'Mr. Prufrock' or 'L'Apres Midi d'un Faune.' In order to understand what Joyce is doing here, one must conceive a set of Symbolistic poems, themselves involving characters whose minds are represented Symbolistically.[25]

Edel agrees that Joyce "knew...the lessons of the symbolist movement,"[26] and that "the roots of Proust's novel reach deeply into the symbolist movement."[27] But Edel, in attempting to relate the techniques of symbolist poetry to the psychological fiction of Joyce and Proust, pauses first, in the chapter entitled "A Symbolist Experiment," to examine Edouard Dujardin's novel, Les lauriers sont coupés, which Joyce had cited as his source for the interior monologue. Edel selects this passage for scrutiny:

> I lean on the balcony, bending over the emptiness of space; I take deep breaths of the evening air, vaguely conscious of that loveliness outside, the shadowed, soft, forlorn remoteness

[25] Ibid., p. 207

[26] Leon Edel, The Psychological Novel 1900-1950 (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1955), p. 30.

[27] Ibid., p. 42.

> of the air, all this night's beauty; a grey-black sky, here and there suffused with blue, and tiny stars, like tremulous drops of water, watery stars; all around, the misty paleness of open sky; over yonder a solid gloom of trees and, beyond, black houses with lighted windows; roofs, dingy roofs; below, blurred together, the garden a chaos of tangled walls and all sorts of things; black houses with lighted windows; and, above me, the sky, vast, bluish, whitened with its early stars; mild air, no wind, air warm with the breath of early May. There is warmth, a soft caress, in this velvety night air; the trees down there are a patch of gloom beneath the grey-blue circle of sky, spangled with tremulous gleams; and vague shadows brood in the garden of the night.[28]

Edel, who is looking for a link with the psychological novel, is forced to admit that "This may seem more like a description of a series of images than of thought." Dujardin's novel, he says, "does seem to be indulging in what might best be described as a kind of impressionism.[29]

Edel has noticed an obvious but important relationship. The symbolist method in poetry is closely linked to the prose technique called impressionism. This link, it seems to me, is an important key to understanding Faulkner's early experiments in fictional technique, for it points to a relationship more deeply involved with the structure of fiction and the methods of prose narrative than a surface influence of diction, imagery, and metaphor. In learning to adapt the

[28]Edouard Dujardin, Les lauriers sont coupés; quoted in Edel, op. cit., p. 93.

[29]Edel, op. cit., p. 94.

techniques of symbolist poetry to the needs of impressionist prose, Faulkner, the apprentice craftsman had three important teachers: Thomas Beer, Sherwood Anderson, and Joseph Conrad.[30]

iii

Faulkner's first piece of fiction, a short story entitled "Landing in Luck," was published November 26, 1919 in The Mississippian.[31] The tale may have biographical significance, for it obviously draws on Faulkner's own experiences as an air cadet, but it reveals no sophisticated narrative innovator or experimenter at work; composed during the earliest stage of Faulkner's development as a poet--the period of the abstract lyric--it shows no carry-over of symbolist techniques to prose fiction. However, a prose sketch entitled "The Hill" and published in The Mississippian some two and a half years later (March 10, 1922) does reveal the influence of symbolist techniques.[32] "The Hill" is, in fact, prose impressionism. It is not a short story; it is not, strictly speaking, narrative writing. Nonetheless, "The

[30]I am not contending, of course, that these three writers were the only influences on Faulkner at this stage of his career; however, they were, as I hope to show, the three most important influences on his fictional technique.

[31]Reprinted in Early Prose and Poetry, pp. 42-50.

[32]"The Hill" was reprinted in Early Prose and Poetry, pp. 90-92.

Hill" reveals quite clearly a significant development of prose technique from the time of "Landing in Luck." "The Hill" is a description of a man standing on a hill from which he can see the village below:

> Before him and slightly above his head, the hill crest was clearly laid on the sky. Over it slid a sibilant invisibility of wind like a sheet of water, and it seemed to him that he might lift his feet from the road and swim upward and over the hill on this wind which filled his clothing, tightening his shirt across his chest, flapping his loose jacket and trousers about him, and which stirred the thick uncombed hair above his stubby quiet face. His long shadow legs rose perpendicularly and fell, ludicrously, as though without power of progression, as though his body had been mesmerized by a whimsical God to a futile puppet-like activity upon one spot, while time and life terrifically passed him and left him behind. At last his shadow reached the crest and fell headlong over it.

Faulkner's nameless character in this sketch is made more real in the first paragraph than Cadet Thompson, of "Landing in Luck," was allowed to become in an entire short story. Faulkner has learned to create an illusion of reality, using the methods of impressionism, by effecting a unity of character and scene <u>in</u> time. The sense of stasis, of arrested motion, in this passage is the first example in Faulkner's prose of what was to become a favorite technique (as well as the first peculiar use of the word "terrific"). Faulkner has clearly begun in this sketch to adapt the techniques of symbolism to his prose and to produce a surprisingly successful prose impressionism.[33] The sketch is therefore a land-

[33]Richardson also notes the relationship of this sketch to Faulkner's poetry: "...it ["The Hill"] serves as a kind

mark in Faulkner's development, and it seems worthwhile to quote more of it:

> The entire valley stretched beneath him, and his shadow, springing far out, lay across it, quiet and enormous. Here and there a thread of smoke balanced precariously upon a chimney. The hamlet slept, wrapped in peace and quiet beneath the evening sun, as it had slept for a century; waiting, invisibly honey-combed with joys and sorrows, hopes and despairs, for the end of time.

Again there is the emphasis on time, and it is remarkable how successfully Faulkner creates the illusion of the slow passage of time in this early prose piece:

> The slow featureless mediocrity of his face twisted to an internal impulse: the terrific groping of his mind. His monstrous shadow lay like a portent on the church, and for a moment he had almost grasped something alien to him, but it eluded him....
>
> The sun plunged silently into the liquid green of the west and the valley was abruptly in shadow. And as the sun released him, who lived and labored in the sun, his mind that troubled him for the first time, became quieted. Here, in the dusk, nymphs and fauns might riot to a shrilling of thin pipes, to a shivering and hissing of cymbals in a sharp volcanic abasement beneath a tall icy star. Behind him was the motionless conflagration of sunset, before him was the opposite valley rim upon the changing sky. For a while he stood on one horizon and stared across at the other, far above a world of endless toil and troubled slumber; untouched, untouchable; forgetting, for a space, that he must return. He slowly descended the hill.

The nymphs and fauns are still present, tying this sketch unmistakably to Faulkner's early poetry, but there is a great advance here in Faulkner's grasp of prose technique.

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of bridge between Faulkner the poet and Faulkner the novelist." William Faulkner: From Past to Self-discovery, p. 150.

Before tracing the development of these experiments with impressionism through the New Orleans sketches, it might be well to ask the question: what happened to Faulkner between "Landing in Luck" and "The Hill"? The answer is: he read prose fiction, specifically the fiction of Thomas Beer. Beer is perhaps best known as the author of The Mauve Decade and as the biographer of Stephen Crane. But Beer himself was a writer of fiction, and a prolific one, with over forty short stories published in periodicals between 1917 and 1925, a few of them in Century and Harper's, but most of them in The Saturday Evening Post. In his fiction, Beer was a disciple of Stephen Crane and in many ways a refiner and perfecter of Crane's impressionist techniques. The first paragraph of his romance, Sandoval, which appeared in serial form in The Saturday Evening Post before its publication as a book in 1923, provides a good introduction to Beer's technique:

> Dust swayed up in golden ropes against the afternoon and fell in clouds about a laboring horse, about a woman who dully looked at me through a black veil. Two riders glanced as their horses followed wheels noiseless on powdered clay. The third horseman halted and was a shadow near my eyes while I stared after the long box that lay a little sideways in the jolting cart. Vehement sun glided the lid until it rolled under a bough and naked wood fleetly carried the cool print of leaves. A coffin, surely! My mare was restless but I stared at the cart mounting a curve of this lane toward a mouth of forest. The forest ate the funeral and the last rider spoke beside me.[34]

[34]Thomas Beer, Sandoval, a Romance of Bad Manners (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1924), p. 9.

The first image yokes together, with almost the violence of a seventeenth century metaphysical conceit, a visual image with temporal setting ("golden ropes of dust against the afternoon"). The rather strained connection, however, succeeds very well in fixing the scene in time, and of course the phrase "laboring horse" reinforces this impression. Beer has learned from Crane the functional value of adverbs and adjectives in impressionistic prose; when motion within the scene is to be accelerated, the single adverb "fleetly" serves his purpose. "Vehement sun" is very much reminiscent of Crane, but the unexpected adjective also became an integral part of Faulkner's diction: his use of "terrific" is an obvious example, appearing as early as "The Hill." Coined adverbs (adverbs formed by adding "ly" to adjectives not usually converted to adverbs) and ordinary adverbs in unusual juxtaposition were an important tool for Beer; they also appear in Faulkner's early prose, in the New Orleans sketches ("his platoon tramping newly through the mud," "Dawn was grayly at the window"), and much more frequently in Soldiers' Pay ("The cigar arced redly into a canna bed," "Her windy dress molded her longly").

"I got a lot from him," Faulkner said of Thomas Beer in 1957, "[he] was to me a good tool, a good usage of words, approach to incident."[35] It seems that Beer may well have been the catalyst in the process by which the symbolist poet

[35]Faulkner in the University, ed. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1959), p. 20.

was transformed into the impressionistic writer of fiction. None of Beer's books was in Faulkner's personal library, but as Joseph Blotner points out in the introduction to his catalogue of Faulkner's library, it cannot be assumed that the books listed there are the only books Faulkner ever read. Furthermore, Faulkner may have read Beer's short stories in The Saturday Evening Post; most of them, with the exception of the serialized novel Sandoval did not appear between hard covers. Robert Coughlan, describing Faulkner's early days in Oxford as the village eccentric, says that on summer days, "He would appear at 'Mack' Reed's drugstore on the square, his bare feet perhaps grimy from a long solitary walk in the fields and woods, 'hunker down' on his haunches by the magazine rack, and read the latest periodicals oblivious of the paying customers who came and went."[36] Coughlan is not very specific about dates, but he seems to be referring to the summers after 1920. Although there are many errors in Coughlan's biographical sketch, (some of which I have cited in Chapter I), the account of Faulkner's reading periodicals in Reed's drugstore seems to be authentic. Richardson, who spent some time in Oxford and interviewed Mr. Reed, corroborates the point. It is possible, therefore, that Faulkner's first exposure to Beer's impressionism came during those hours when he would "hunker down" to peruse the periodicals in Reed's drugstore.

[36]Robert Coughlan, The Private World of William Faulkner (New York, 1954), p.55.

Beer provided him, Faulkner said, with "a good usage of words, approach to incident." It was not only on the level of diction, then, that Beer's prose was an influence. Beer's fiction, Faulkner indicates, also taught him something about narrative method, "approach to incident." Beer was something of a craftsman in fiction, and it would be misleading to accept Ernest Boyd's comment on his method at face value. "Mr. Beer," said Boyd, "is not concerned about the mechanics of action because he is engaged upon the more congenial and fascinating task of creating a style, of building up a literary personality, which is mannered, ornate and as deliberate as conscious and delicate artistry can make it."[37] Beer was interested in the art or craft of story telling; his impressionism was more functional than ornate. As a craftsman in fiction Beer was very much aware of the importance of point of view in the narration of a story, and unlike his master, Crane, he makes frequent use of the first person narrator. There are, of course, advantages and dangers in employing a first person narrator in impressionistic fiction, the chief danger being the creation of a character who lacks any credibility because of his preternatural sensitivity and evocative gifts. The advantage of the method is the incorporation of imagery into the tale itself (this

[37]Ernest Boyd, introduction to The Fair Rewards (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929), 3-4. Boyd goes on to call Beer's method "...delicate and bold, an impressionistic medium through which he attains a vivid reality." (p. 6.)

is the way it appeared, felt, to someone on the scene) and the avoidance of authorial omniscience which, for instance, so often mars Crane's fiction. Beer usually makes his first person narrator a witness to the action of the story, not a chief participant in the action, and to further this strategy he often makes the narrator a child or adolescent.[38]

Beer's fiction shows a willingness to experiment with point of view. An entire chapter of Sandoval, for instance, is devoted to a story told by the narrator's older brother, who is the real hero of the novel, about an adventure in New Orleans during the Union occupation of that city in 1862. Instead of having the older brother, Christian, relate the story directly to the narrator, Beer lets the narrator tell the story, shifting for that purpose to third person narration. The story is told, then, as the narrator imagines it to have happened to his brother; he recreates it, in other words, in his own consciousness. The device permits Beer to keep the impressionistic surface of the novel intact. The narrator can say: "Inimical shadows looked down at Christian"

[38]This technique is not original with Beer, of course; The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn bears witness to this. Nonetheless, there is much in Beer's handling of the method, not only in Sandoval, but in stories like "Little Eva Ascends" and "Cool," which reminds one of Faulkner's narrator in the stories which make up The Unvanquished. In "Cool," which appeared in Century, September, 1920, and which Beer subtitled "A modern Irish saga in which Cuchulain of Belfast comes to America and quickly establishes by physical powers and humorous methods a new legend in Zerbetta, Ohio," Beer has incorporated some marvelous skullduggery with livestock in which the same cow is sold twice. It is quite possible, I think, that Faulkner may have gotten some of his horse trading and cow stealing inspirations from a story like this.

or "the carriage passed some Yankee soldiers circular about a girl under a lamp...." What Beer has done, essentially, is to have the narrator of the story imaginatively assimilate and recreate the past of another character. Faulkner was to do much the same thing in Absalom, Absalom! where the story of Sutpen and Charles Bon is recreated in the consciousness of Quentin Compson and his roommate Shreve. And in Faulkner's earlier, shorter fiction, too, his use of the first person narrator shows considerable variation and experiment, particularly in sketches like "Damon and Pythias Unlimited" and "Out of Nazareth."

Another of Beer's favorite narrative devices is the establishment of a symbol which will act as a controlling device through an entire story. Once such a symbol is established it can be reinvoked to comment on an action or a character's thought; it thus accomplishes the same thing as a lengthy authorial interruption. Beer's "The Lily Pond," for instance, is the story of a young girl kept from marrying by a sense of duty to her father who is dependent on her. The odor of water lilies pervades the story and is always described as "cloying." It represents the girl's entrapment and near suffocation in parental love. The odor of verbena in The Unvanquished and odor of honeysuckle in The Sound and the Fury are both examples of Faulkner's use of the device; but Faulkner's application of the method began still earlier. In "The Cobbler," one of the New Orleans sketches, Faulkner has the old cobbler say, "The smell of

leather is the wall of my house."

The New Orleans sketches, of course, reveal more influences at work on Faulkner's fictional techniques, two of which, as I have suggested, are Sherwood Anderson and Joseph Conrad, whom I shall consider in the next chapter. Nonetheless, it was Beer whose impressionistic fiction helped Faulkner bridge the gap between symbolist poetry and impressionist prose.

Chapter III

The Times-Picayune Fiction

The novelist, Faulkner once said, "tries to write poetry first, then finds he can't. Then he tries the short story, which is the most demanding form after poetry. And failing at that, only then does he take up novel writing."[1] Except for the fact that Faulkner continued to compose poetry after he had become a novelist, it would be tempting and convenient to attribute this same genesis and subsequent pattern of development to Faulkner's career. The short story, as I have pointed out, has much in common with the dramatic and narrative poetry which Faulkner had begun to write under the influence of Eliot and A. E. Housman. And of course the step from the short story to the novel is a relatively easy one; Carvel Collins has pointed out several details of subject matter and character in the Picayune sketches which clearly appear to foreshadow what Faulkner was to develop with greater thoroughness and skill in the later mature novels.[2]

It is quite possible too that a casual reader of the Picayune sketches would agree that they are failures and that Faulkner was wise to turn to the novel after having

[1]Cynthia Grenier, "The Art of Fiction: An Interview With William Faulkner," Accent, XVI (Summer, 1956), 168-169.

[2]See Collins' introduction, "About the Sketches," in New Orleans Sketches (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1958), pp. 27-29.

failed at "the most demanding form after poetry."[3] To accept this view of Faulkner's development, however, is to ignore two important facts. The first fact is Faulkner's later mastery of the short story form; by 1930 he had written some of his best short stories. If the Picayune fiction represents unqualified failure in the short story form, then the later short stories are an amazing technical comeback. The second fact is related to the first: there is a pattern of development in this early fiction which reveals Faulkner's technical experiments and technical advances in the writing of short fiction. The Picayune sketches, read as a collection, will impress no reader as a uniform performance. The reason for this, of course, is that Faulkner did not write the sketches as a collection; he wrote them week by week, and their dates of publication are probably fairly accurate indication of their dates of composition.[4] Because of this,

[3]Harry Runyan, in fact, in the bibliographical section of A Faulkner Glossary lists the Picayune fiction under "nonfiction prose," although he does so apparently for the sake of convenience and admits that "It is undoubtedly a critical misdemeanor to list Faulkner's nonpoetry and noncritical prose which appeared in The Mississippian, The Double Dealer, and the New Orleans Times-Picayune under the 'nonfiction prose' heading. One of the two pieces in the Mississippian and several of the Times-Picayune sketches are actually short stories." A Faulkner Glossary (New York: The Citadel Press, 1964), pp. 210-211.

[4]Collins observes in his introduction to the New Orleans Sketches that "former members of the staff of the Times-Picayune doubt very much that the rather hastily put together Sunday section of those days would have held...a sketch in reserve." p. 31.

the sketches provide a unique opportunity to study the progress of Faulkner's experiments with fictional technique during the period of time when his career as a writer of prose fiction was beginning.

The first sketch, published in the Double Dealer and entitled "New Orleans," is simply not narrative in any sense; it is not a short story by any definition. It is more like a series of dramatic monologues or soliloquies in prose. There are eleven of these soliloquies in all, delivered in turn by a "Wealthy Jew," "The Priest," "Frankie and Johnny," "The Sailor," "The Cobbler," "The Longshoreman," "The Cop," "The Beggar," "The Artist," "Magdalen," and "The Tourist." Except for a line uttered by the first speaker ("I, too, am but a lump of moist dirt before the face of God") and repeated by the ninth speaker ("I, too, am but a shapeless lump of moist earth risen from pain, to laugh and strive and weep"), each soliloquy is unrelated to the rest, although the net effect of the sketch was apparently intended to be a composite picture of New Orleans. Thus the tourist concludes the sketch with:

> New Orleans...a courtesan whose hold is strong upon the mature, to whose charm the young must respond. And all who leave her, seeking the virgin's unbrown, ungold hair and her blanched and icy breast where no lover has died, return to her when she smiles across her languid fan....
> New Orleans.[5]

Although the characters are not related in any narrative way, there is a unifying device in the sketch and it is

[5]The ellipsis periods in this passage are Faulkner's.

essentially a poetic one. Each character muses partly in accents peculiarly his own; the priest, for instance: "Ave Maria! A little silver virgin, hurt and sad and pitiful, remembering Jesus' mouth upon her breast." The longshoreman, a negro: "White man gives me clo'se and shoes, but dat dont make no pavement love my feets." Magdalen, the prostitute: "Men aint what they used to be, or money aint, or something." But the longshoreman is also made to muse: "Oh, the black night, and the thudding drums sultry among the stars. The stars are cold, O God, and the great trees sailing like ships up the rivers of darkness, brushing the ancient stars forever aside in vain." And Magdalen thinks of "lights and sultry music, and all the bright chimaerae of my brain! And ah! My body like music, my body like flame crying for silken sheens a million worms had died to make, and that my body has died a hundred times to wear them." What Faulkner has done, of course, is to impose his own rhetoric on what would be the expected diction of each character. Thus the series of poetic interior monologues are given a surface uniformity of diction and image. The beggar is made to say, "Ah, to have mounted heart and sight and sense on such a sorry nag." And the artist asks, "Which among ye have not this fire?" The diction is consciously archaic, perhaps to reinforce the tourist's comment about New Orleans: "The mirrors in her house are dim and the frames are tarnished; all her house is dim and beautiful with age....She lives in an atmosphere of a bygone and more gracious age."

Faulkner's device of immersing the mind of each character

in a controlling rhetorical pattern is reminiscent of Beer's method in Sandoval of having his narrator take over the story from his brother and reshape it in his own rhetoric (see p. 58, above). The resemblance to anything in Faulkner's later writing is perhaps to As I Lay Dying, which is another series of monologues also united by a controlling rhetoric. But "New Orleans" is perhaps more closely related to Faulkner's poetry than to his prose; the characters are not yet the characters of narrative but rather, projections of the poet's lyric voice and personality. Faulkner, however, in keeping with his practice of getting maximum mileage out of his brain children, incorporated some of these same characters (Johnny, the cobbler, and the longshoreman) in the short fiction he wrote during the next few months for the Sunday section of the Times-Picayune.

The first of these stories, "Mirrors of Chartres Street," appeared on February 8, 1925. Collins' observations on Faulkner's choice of title are worth considering:

> In selecting "Mirrors of Chartres Street" as the title for his first sketch and as the subtitle for most of his other Picayune pieces, Faulkner was surely being ironical. The Picayune carried a "Mirrors of Washington" column full of accounts of men of national affairs; and Harold Begbie's Mirrors of Downing Street was extremely popular just then, with its descriptions of men in the highest echelons of British government. Faulkner's "Mirrors"--held up to a main thoroughfare in the French Quarter--reflect entirely different people: the protagonist of the first sketch is a crippled beggar, and the series goes on to include as central characters a dynamiter, race-track touts, a pathologically jealous restaurant owner, a jockey, bootleggers, an

aged cobbler, and a youthful hoodlum.[6]

Apparently Faulkner's original intention in beginning a series of sketches for the Picayune was to continue what he had begun in the "New Orleans" sketch for the Double Dealer: to create a composite picture of the city by creating a cast of characters for it. I say "original intention" because some of the later sketches, most conspicuously "The Liar" and "Yo Ho and Two Bottles of Rum," depart completely from the scheme. In addition, if the original intention was to write a series of character sketches, then that intention was eventually discarded, for the sketches become more and more elaborate narratives.

Like the Double Dealer sketch, "New Orleans," Faulkner's first Picayune piece, "Mirrors of Chartres Street," is still more a character sketch than a fully developed short story. In "Mirrors," however, Faulkner chose to use the first person point of view. The sketch begins:

> His voice had the hoarseness of vocal cords long dried with alcohol, and he was crippled. I first noticed him when he swung himself across my path with apelike agility and demanded a quarter for bread.

The first person narrator in this sketch is almost purely a witness. At the end of the first paragraph he gives the hobo a quarter ("...to have such a breath fondly on one's neck in this nation and time was worth a quarter"), but from this point he becomes purely an observer. He sees the hobo twice more: once entering a movie theater (apparently to

[6]Collins, op. cit., p. 26.

spend the quarter), and later accosted by the police and arrested for vagrancy. The paddy-wagon takes him away, and the sketch concludes:

> And one thought of Caesar mounting his chariot among cast roses and the shouts of the rabble, and driving along the Via Appia while beggars crept out to see and centurions clashed their shields in the light of golden pennons flapping across the dawn.

The first person observer has become so impersonal by the end of the sketch that Faulkner has dropped the use of "I" in favor of "one." Margaret Church sees in the last paragraph of this sketch "an attempt by Faulkner to enlarge the scope of his reference, to move from the particular and individual to the larger historical or mythical area."[7] This seems doubtful, however, because it is not even clear which character is being compared to "Caesar mounting his chariot."[8] The fact is, the historical allusion is more ornamental than functional in the time scheme of the sketch, and for the most part that time scheme is a conventional one in which the passage of time is signalled very clearly ("Fifteen minutes later I saw him again...," "Later, from a railed balcony--Mendelssohn impervious in iron--I saw him for the last time."). The images of the last paragraph are more indicative,

[7]Margaret Church, Time and Reality: Studies in Contemporary Fiction (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), p. 230.

[8]Margaret Church believes it is the policeman (op. cit., p. 280), while Collins contends that it is the beggar (op. cit., p. 26).

therefore, of Faulkner's tendency at this period to use the first person narrator as a kind of poetic voice and viewpoint. The approaching police wagon, for instance, is described coming "Down the street, clanging among the shivering golden wings of streetlights." The diction, the imagery, and the use of the first person narrator all testify to the technical influence of Beer's impressionism.

The second Picayune sketch, published a week later (Feb. 15) and entitled "Damon and Pythias Unlimited," is twice as long as the first sketch, and like the first sketch it also has a first person narrator. However, the beginning of the story is unusual; in the first paragraph, the narrator is submerged:

> The Cabildo, a squat Don who wears his hat in the king's presence, not for the sake of his own integer vitae, but because some cannot, gloomed in sinister derision of an ancient joke; within the portals Iowa wondered aloud first, why a building so old and ugly could have any value; and second, if it were valuable, why they let it become so shabby. 'I bet the city ain't painted it in twenty years. Why don't they tear it down, anyway, and put up a modern building? They would have done that in Winterset years ago. These people in the South ain't got the pep we have at all.'

The Cabildo is the old government building erected near the end of the eighteenth century when New Orleans was still a Spanish colony. The Cabildo and the presbytery, which is almost its architectural duplicate, stand on either side of a cathedral, and all three buildings occupy a block of Chartres Street across from Jackson Park in the French Quarter. The Cabildo is used today as an historical museum. Its Spanish origin, perhaps, prompted Faulkner to

personify the building as a Don, and the massive Spanish architecture of the building does give it a squat appearance. As for wearing a hat, the Cabildo is topped with a cupola, which its twin, the presbytery does not have. The tourist from Iowa, of course, is painted as the epitome of Yankee grossness, with his complete ignorance of the value of tradition. With his talk about "pep" he seems related to Sinclair Lewis' midwestern creations. The character, who appears in only the first paragraph of this sketch, reappears in Mosquitoes as the Rotarian who amuses Fairchild and Talliaferro in the restaurant.

In the second paragraph of the sketch the first person narrator's voice is heard, sounding a great deal like an essayist:

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

The narration shifts inexplicably to the present tense in the third paragraph: "A round, very dirty man somehow becomes involved here. I seem to have answered intelligently one or two of his remarks before becoming aware of him." This man, who has a "broad Semitic face" and calls himself a "chentleman" ('I been a chentleman all my life, see'), discovers that the narrator is a stranger in town and offers to accompany him to the race-track. After an altercation with

a taxi-driver who doesn't treat the man like a "chentleman," they arrive at the track, and the narrator is introduced to a jockey who the "chentleman" says is his cousin. The jockey is not well: "one look at his flat spare shoulders and thin chest was enough to know it was no mere cough he had, poor boy." The two of them, however, assure the narrator that they know another jockey who is in still worse shape: in the hospital with "no money, no nothing...with the doctors cutting on him all day long." They offer their new (and they hope, gullible) friend valuable tips, and they all agree to donate five dollars from every bet they win to the poor jockey laid up in the hospital. The narrator notices, however, that he is the only one risking any real money, and when he finally wins (after four of the tips have failed) his two friends argue violently about who should be allowed to take the five dollar bill to the sick jockey. In the argument they succeed in exposing each other as confidence men. The narrator gives the money to neither of them, "leaving them glaring at each other across the empty room."

Although the first person narrator has a larger role in the action of the narrative than he had in the first sketch--he is involved with the characters to a greater extent and does not simply describe them--he is still, to a considerable degree, a passive narrator. In the climatic conflict between the two con men he is in the middle, observing, describing, implored by both sides, but not committing himself. Moreover, the character ascribed to the narrator of the first sketch is similar in many ways to that

of the second story. When he is accosted by the hobo of the first sketch and told that someday he too may be begging for quarters, he confides that "I had prided myself at the time on my appearance; that I did not look even like a prospective bum, wearing then tweeds which came from the Strand; but who knows what life may do to us?" In the second sketch when the narrator's new "chentleman" acquaintance hails a taxi, the driver is at first reluctant to pull over to the curb: "The driver weighed the two of us in his mind, and then he addressed me. 'Are you with him?' I told him that I seemed to be, and he drew up to the curb." The narrator's appearance and bearing is in sharp contrast to his temporary companions. When the "chentleman" announces that he is staying at the St. Charles, the narrator muses: "I was interested in seeing if he really could get in the St. Charles, even in a democracy." Later, in the cab, the narrator acts the part of censor: "'Yes, sir, tomorrow they won't no friend of mine be insulted by--' he nodded toward the driver's back and his lowered voice became obscene. I stopped him, revolted; and forbade his speaking again until we reached the track." The narrator, as he is portrayed in both sketches, is young, somewhat fastidious, curious, innocent without being gullible, aristocratic, and to a degree sympathetic, although his sympathy is apt to be condescending. Above all, he is in both sketches a reporter and not an actor. The sketches, in fact, resemble more closely the newspaper genre of "humar interest story"--an actual encounter related in the first person by a reporter--than they do the short story. What is more, the

narrator of these sketches bears a strong resemblance to the William Faulkner of 1925.

The next two sketches in the series, "Home" (Feb. 22) and "Jealousy" (March 1), are a drastic departure in technique from the first two sketches. In "Home" and "Jealousy" Faulkner abandoned the simple first person narrative (he returned to it in "Cheest," April 5) and began several other experiments. The first two sketches had been simple and straightforward in their time sequence; these next two sketches, particularly "Home," make use of flashbacks. Margaret Church, in fact, calls the sketch "Proustian" in its treatment of time.[9] Carvel Collins is not so kindly disposed, however, to another of Faulkner's technical innovations in "Home": "The inexperienced handling of the interior monologue of "Home"...in no way would lead the reader to anticipate that only four years later William Faulkner would publish in The Sound and the Fury some of the best interior monlogue ever written,"[10] The technique which strikes Collins as ineffective is not so much interior monologue as interior dialogue, in which one voice in the character's mind answers another voice:

> What do you want?
> I want to gain a part of that beauty which shall not pass from the earth, of companionship, of love, perhaps--who knows?
> Aye, who knows? Who knows what he wants even when he gains it? But do you expect to gain it by

[9]Margaret Church, op. cit., p. 231.

[10]Collins, op.cit., p. 30

robbing banks?

Why not? Money is everything.

Certainly, money is everything. But only money you yourself have earned. Can you take money not yours and buy contentment with it? Can you gain strength and sustenance from the food eaten by someone else?

Ah, but money is different. The food has been eaten, but the money has not been spent.

Good! You have now reduced it to its personal equation. Could you eat all the food you could obtain at this moment?

No.

Have you ever been without food?

Yes, for four days.

But you ate again?

Obviously.

Then, do you not see that He who gave you food when it was necessary will also care for your other wants? Who are you, to assume charge of a vessel, the destiny of which you cannot know?

The method <u>is</u> ineffective, partly because it is too mechanical to be psychologically credible; the method seems to owe more to the convention of the comic strip character being tempted by the demonic and angelic sides of his nature, each of which hover graphically over his head, than it owes, for instance, to the interior monologue of Joyce. Moreover, the method fails because it is not well enough integrated with the action and the central conflict of the sketch. Jean-Baptiste, the protagonist of the sketch, is a young immigrant boy from southern France who has agreed to help some thugs blow a safe; he has had experience with explosives in France during the war; while he waits for his partners, however, he begins to have second thoughts about the venture. He also begins to summon up remembrance of things past:

> He thought of his boyhood in the South; of a thatched cottage near a forest where he roamed in the spring, of the airs of May within the chestnut trees. Remembering it in this kind-

> hearted, impossible America was like remembering a song: through the twilight his waiting bowl of supper called him; there in the soft candle light he ate, and slept the night away on his pallet while the day of sun cooled in his quick blood.

The technique of the internal debate may not have been a happy inspiration, but Faulkner's handling of time and his juxtaposition of past and present in the thoughts of Jean-Baptiste is done here with surprising skill. The method for reporting thoughts is more conventional here, but it is also more effective; and it foreshadows the climax of the sketch when Jean-Baptiste hears a street corner musician playing a musical saw:

> Suddenly the empty street filled with sound, a resonant singing, half string and half pipe--a lilting provencal air somehow incongruously martial. Jean-Baptiste paused, stricken, and about him rose the land he called his; the wooded hills, and valleys, willow and tall chestnuts in the meadows where quiet cattle grazed or stood knee-deep in the water; of young love and nightingales among the chestnut trees after the sun had gone out of heaven and the intimate stars swam in a velvet sky. He saw the cottage where he was born, and ate and slept, sharp in the sun; he saw the wheeling candle light soft in a golden dusk beneath a single star like a yellow rose. He saw all this and knew that he had pursued a phantom into a far land; that destiny had taken him across seas so that he might see with a clear eye the thing which his heedless youth had obscured from him....

The music and the memories of home make Jean-Baptiste give up his life of crime before it begins:

> The strange yet familiar air rose and fell, and Jean-Baptiste lurched from his hiding place and went swiftly down the street. The musician sat on the curb, drawing his bow across his strange instrument; and so Jean-Baptiste passed swiftly on without disturbing him. At

> the end of the street the sky was rumorous with dawn, a new day.

Despite the ineffectiveness of the internal debate, "Home" is a moving sketch. The introduction of the past gives it depth, and the real conflict is not that of the unconvincing debate, but the one implied between Jean-Baptiste's past and his present. Furthermore, the sketch marks another step in Faulkner's experimentation with point of view by introducing the limited third person point of view (Jean-Baptiste is the center of consciousness in the sketch). And there is further experimentation with the treatment of time. Although on one level the time scheme is very simple--the brief scene in which Jean-Baptiste waits on the street corner and eventually makes his decision--Faulkner is learning to use the flashback as a device to give depth to the character and meaning to his actions within the brief impressionistic scene which is the surface level of the story.

The treatment of time in the next story, "Jealousy" (March 1), is also interesting, for here Faulkner, in addition to using the flashback, attempts to create a sense of the slow passage of time. "Jealousy" is the story of Antonio, a Sicilian restaurant owner, and his unreasonable jealousy. He harasses his wife constantly, accusing her of infidelity with the young waiter who works for them. The story begins with a scene in which he accuses his wife, followed by a scene in which he accuses the waiter; both tell him he is insane, and the waiter slaps him and dares him to retaliate. Antonio thinks of killing the waiter, does not dare, and

retreats to memories of the past:

> ...he stared at the starred sky stretching like taut silk above the walled well of the alley, watching the same stars at which he had gazed in far-away Sicily in his youth, when he had been a boy and life was clear and fine and simple; and that lads would stare wondering upon long after he and his dream and his problem were quiet underground.

He decides that the only answer to his problem is to go away to a new city; "among new people they might yet live a second honeymoon." At this point Faulkner summarizes what are apparently the events of several weeks or even months: the wife's agreement to the plan, the selling of the restaurant, the change in Antonio ("he became his normal self again"), and the continuing relationship between Antonio and the waiter:

> Whenever they were forced to meet the younger acted as though nothing had happened. His white, sinister smile was the same as ever, yet the flash of his teeth in his dark face had somehow the power to enrage the other, stirring again in him old angers and fears he had thought asleep.

The story ends with a vivid and melodramatic scene in a curioshop. Antonio has accompanied the young waiter who has insisted on buying the signora a parting gift. While the waiter is examining a string of beads, Antonic, standing behind him, picks up an antique pistol from a counter, "aiming at the unconscious man he had once wanted to kill; and pulled the trigger." The last paragraph of the story follows:

> The tiny room roared with sound and a lance of red flame leaped out like a sword. The young waiter crashed forward into a table of glassware, then to the floor; and the other man stood screaming with the burst pistol in his hand

until a policeman plunged through the door.

Despite the melodramatic surprise ending, the somewhat hackneyed situation of the story, and the numerous fictional clichés ("His wife raised her head and regarded him coldly. 'Don't be a fool, Antonio.'"), the story does reveal further experiments with fictional techniques. There is an increasing willingness to experiment with time in the narration of the story, both in the use of flashbacks and in the illusion of time's slow passage. There is also an improvement in the method of reporting thought processes and emotional conflicts. Contrasted with the unconvincing inner debate of "Home" there are the more effective soliloquies of Antonio:

> He was almost middle-aged, and ugly and fat, while she, she was still young, and pretty. Was it any wonder that men were attracted to her as he had been? Was it any wonder that men should pause at her dusky oval face, her red mouth and raven hair, her black, black hair? And she--had she ever encouraged them? No! She had been a good wife to him, as she had said.

The point of view in "Jealousy" alternates between an omniscient and a limited third person, in which the mind of Antonio is reflector of the events. But we are also told much <u>about</u> Antonio by an omniscient author, and are even told what Antonio's wife's parents are thinking: "He was industrious and, until his present obsession took him, kind--a good husband in their eyes; too good to lose."

In "Cheest" (April 5) Faulkner returned to the first person narrative. The narrator in this tale, however, is no longer merely a witness or a secondary character--as he was

in the first two sketches--he is the central character of the story. The narrator of the story is a jockey, and he relates the story in race-track vernacular. ("Cheest! When he taken me out to look over them dogs he had I says to him: 'Say, whatcher doin'--startin' a glue factory?' I says.") The jockey narrator of this story, in fact, bears a resemblance to the narrator of Sherwood Anderson's "I'm a Fool," which Faulkner had called one of his favorite stories.[11]

The next sketch, "Out of Nazareth" (April 12), returns to the kind of first person narrative which Faulkner had used in the first two sketches, and it is quite obvious that the narrator of this sketch is Faulkner himself. Another character in the sketch is the artist William Spratling, with whom Faulkner has struck up a friendship in New Orleans. Spratling is referred to by name. But the central figure of the sketch is a wandering midwest farm boy who carries a battered copy of "Shropshire Lad." Faulkner and Spratling meet the boy in Jackson Park where "Sparrows were upon Andrew Jackson's head as, childlishly conceived, he bestrode his curly horse in terrific arrested motion." Spratling is immediately struck by the boy's face and Faulkner observes that "one could imagine young David looking like that. One could imagine Jonathan getting that look from David." They take

[11]See Collins, op. cit., p. 18: "According to one friend he had become eager to meet Anderson as soon as he read Horses and Men, which was published in 1923; and on the way to New Orleans Faulkner told that friend he ranked 'I'm a Fool' with Conrad's Heart of Darkness: the two finest stories he had ever read."

the boy to lunch where Spratling asks him to pose for him the next day, and they give him a dollar in advance. The boy, however, wants to give them something for the dollar in case he decides to move on and does not pose for Spratling, and he turns to Faulkner: "Here, you are a writing man. I will give you this, and if I ain't there, you can have this for the dollar." It is a written description of the boy's travels and impressions, and Faulkner observes editorially that "There is bad punctuation here and misspelling: there is one word I have never deciphered. But to correct it would ruin it." The boy's description is then given, taking up some four pages; thus, one narrator has introduced a second narrator--a strategy reminiscent of Conrad. At the end of the boy's story Faulkner repeats, "I have given his story word for word, as he wrote it. The spelling I have not changed, nor the punctuation." Faulkner has taken great pains to give an air of verisimilitude to his story-within-a-story device; within the boy's story, too, he has taken pains to create an air of verisimilitude:

> With a pack on my back (consisting of necessary articles rolled in two blankets) I trudge along. The smell of farm house fires drifts down the wind to me. Pure air fills my lungs and gives an exhileration unlike any other that I know. The morning sun casts long shadows accross the fields. The dew of early morning glitters and the tall grass overhanging the side of the road is heavy with it. I am at peace with the world. Nothing matters.

The simplicity of the boy's character is suggested by the simplicity of his diction:

> As the sun creeps higher the glare of summer

> is reflected from long rows of yellow corn. The road glistens and is a white streak which has no definite end at the horrizon. I sweat. Great drops roll down my face and settle in my open collar. The heat is good. It loosens the legs and warms the ground for the night's sleep.

The mood of the farm boy, his affirmation of life, is maintained by Faulkner in his own voice as first person narrator at the end of the sketch: "his clean young face and his beautiful faith that life, the world, the race, is somewhere good and sound and beautiful, is good to see." Thus the sketch has unity despite the shift from one narrator to another.

In "The Kingdom of God" (April 26) Faulkner adopts the point of view of the omniscient author. In the story two bootleggers are delivering their product with the idiot brother of one of them accompanying them. The partner objects ("'There ain't no luck in making a delivery with a loony along....Dam'f I see why you lug him around when they's good homes for his kind everywheres"), but the other replies, "Listen. He's my brother, see?" The idiot himself is described in the first paragraph of the story:

> The face of the sitting man was vague and dull and loose-lipped, and his eyes were clear and blue as cornflowers, and utterly vacant of thought; he sat a shapeless, dirty lump, life without mind, an organism without intellect. Yet always in his slobbering, vacuous face were his two eyes of a heart-shaking blue, and gripped tightly in one fist was a narcissus.

Later in the story, the partner, trying to get the idiot to help him move some of the liquor and failing, hits him in the face, breaking the stem of the narcissus at the same time.

The idiot begins to howl inconsolably--"a hoarse, inarticulate bellow"--like Benjy's at the end of The Sound and the Fury. The howl brings a policeman who discovers the moonshine liquor and arrests the two men. Before they are taken away, however, the idiot's brother repairs the stem of the flower by tying a splint to it. "Again the poor damaged thing held its head erect, and the loud sorrow went at once from the idiot's soul. His eyes were like two scraps of April sky after a rain, and his drooling face was moonlike in ecstasy." The story is perhaps Faulkner's most successful union, to this point, of impressionistic description and narrative action.

The month of May in 1925 had five Sundays, and Faulkner published a sketch in the Sunday section of the Times-Picayune on every one of them. He had published three sketches in February and April, and only one sketch during March. The five story output during the month of May is somewhat surprising because Faulkner must also have done most of the work on Soldiers' Pay during that month. For by June 5 that novel was finished, as the date on a letter from Horace Liveright to Sherwood Anderson, promising to read the novel, indicates.[12] If the novel was written in about six weeks,

[12]The letter, in the Newberry Library's Anderson collection, University of Chicago, is dated June 5, 1925, and reads: "Dear Sherwood, It's too darn hot to write or do anything important, but I want to let you know that I got your letter of June 1st and that, of course, I would be interested in considering Bill Falkner's [sic] novel." The letter is signed by Horace Liveright. Since Anderson probably did not write to Liveright until the novel was finished or close to being finished, the completion date was probably around the first of June.

as Faulkner claimed, then it was probably begun in the middle of April. This would be in accord with Faulkner's oft-repeated account of his decision to become a novelist after seeing what a pleasant life Sherwood Anderson led, for Anderson was away from New Orleans on a lecture tour until April. At any rate, Faulkner must have been working on Soldiers' Pay throughout most if not all of May. It is not surprising then that the five stories published during May are uneven in quality, showing that Faulkner was not progressing in a straight line toward the mastery of the short story form. Two of the stories, "The Rosary" (May 3) and "Chance" (May 17), are unpromising specimens of Sunday supplement fiction. Melodramatic and full of clichés, they do not live up to the narrative facility and technical competence promised in "The Kingdom of God." Two of the sketches, "The Cobbler" (May 10) and "The Kid Learns" (May 31) are elaborations of character sketches in the Double Dealer piece, "New Orleans." "Sunset" (May 24) is easily the best of the stories published during May, and one of the best of the entire Picayune series. John Faulkner, in fact, has called it "one of the best things he ever wrote."[13]

It is probably not wholly a coincidence that in "Sunset," as well as in three of the other May sketches and in the last sketch published in April, Faulkner has been experimenting with an omniscient point of view; he used the same technique

[13]My Brother Bill (Cardinal ed., 1964), p.139.

in Soldiers' Pay, which he was writing concurrently. Faulkner's use of the author's voice is interesting. The first paragraph of "The Kid Learns" is a good example:

> Competition is everywhere: competition makes the world go round. Not love, as some say. Who would want a woman nobody else wanted? Not me. And not you. And not Johnny. Same way about money. If nobody wanted the stuff, it wouldn't be worth fighting for. But more than this is being good in your own line, whether it is selling aluminum or ladies' underwear or running whiskey, or what. Be good, or die.

After this introduction, Faulkner the author disappears, and the rest of the story is related as impersonally as Hemingway might have done it: "Before a darkened alley he overtook her. She had stopped, leaning against the wall with her face in the crook of her arm, gasping and crying. When he touched her she screamed again, whirling and falling. He caught and supported her." In the first paragraph, however, Faulkner has not only announced the theme of his story, he has provided virtually a summary of its action. Johnny, the young apprentice hoodlum, wants the same girl who is desired by the Wop, boss gangster of the district. Johnny is "good" enough to take the girl from the Wop--he rescues her from his clutches and knocks the Wop down--but he is not good enough to keep the Wop from exacting his revenge, for at the end of the story "one stepped quietly out from a doorway."

> Why, say, here she was again beside him, with her young body all shining and her hair that wasn't brown and wasn't gold and her eyes the color of sleep; but she was somehow different at the same time.
>
> 'Mary?' said Johnny, tentatively.
>
> 'Little sister Death,' corrected the

shining one, taking his hand.

At the end of the story Faulkner has shifted to the third person limited point of view, after having begun with the omniscient author's voice and having narrated most of the story from an impersonal omniscient point of view. The use of multiple points of view in a narrative persisted throughout Faulkner's writing; it is conspicuous, for instance, in The Town (1957).

"The Kingdom of God" and "The Kid Learns" were straightforward narratives, without flashbacks, without significant experimentation in time sequence. "Sunset" (May 24), however, begins with a brief newspaper article entitled "Black Desperado Slain" which outlines in succinct and unemotional journalistic prose the story of an apparently crazed negro's death:

> The negro who has terrorized this locality for two days, killing three men, two whites and a negro, was killed last night with machine gun fire.... The troopers set up their gun before the copse in which the black was hiding.... No reason has been ascertained for the black's running amuck, though it is believed he was insane.

The story's conclusion is therefore provided before the narrative begins, in much the same way that "A Rose for Emily" begins with Miss Emily's funeral. In "Sunset" the reversed time sequence has an ironic effect, for the newspaper's finality has told nothing at all about the real story. It is this story which Faulkner now tells. The negro has come down river to catch a boat to Africa ("Ah wants to go back home, whar de preacher say us come fum"); he is deceived and

exploited by white men, one of whom, a river boat captain, takes all of his money and deposits him a few miles up river: "'All right, Jack,' he roared, 'here you are. Help put them barrels on board, and Africa is about a mile across them fields yonder.'" In the dark he shoots a cow, thinking it is a lion. He takes refuge on a haystack but is accosted by a man waving a pistol, whom he shoots. After a running battle in which he kills two more men and is wounded in the shoulder, he takes shelter in a grove of trees, thinking "'Whew! Dese Af'icans shoots niggers 'jes like white folks does.'" The machine gun fire which kills him is described at the conclusion of the story:

> Here was a wind coming up: the branches and bushes about him whipped suddenly to a gale fiercer than any yet; flattened and screamed, and melted away under it. And he, too, was a tree caught in that same wind: he felt the dull blows of it, and the rivening of himself into tattered and broken leaves.
>
> The gale died away, and all broken things were still. His black, kind, dull, once-cheerful face was turned up to the sky and the cold, cold stars. Africa or Louisiana: what care they?

The last paragraph, of course, is pure authorial commentary; but most of the narration is from the point of view of the negro ("He knew stark and terrible fear..." "He could feel sweat cold as copper pieces on his face..." "Savages, he thought, folks that eat you.") The technique for reporting thoughts, however, is almost wholly conventional; there are no experiments with interior monlogue.

"The Liar" was published on July 26, after Faulkner had left on his trip to Europe, and is the first sketch which

does not utilize New Orleans as its setting. Collins speculates that "he may have written it aboard the West Ivis and mailed it to the Picayune from Savannah, where the ship lay from July 11 through July 14 to discharge cargo.... And one may speculate that once at sea he broke his series about the New Orleans French Quarter to produce this story which foreshadowed so much of his later work."[14] In addition, "The Liar" is, as Collins observes, "Faulkner's first published story with the rural setting he was to use so successfully in some of his greatest fiction."[15] It is also the first short story in which Faulkner used the hill country dialect ("'Musta had a stroke. We kept telling him ter stay outen them sunny fields.'"), and Ek, the narrator of the story within the story, resembles the narrators of Faulkner's later fiction in more than his name:

> 'Well, sir, she kep' on trying to hold his arm and he kep' on a-flinging her off, all the time walking not fast but steady to'rds number one. Finally she sees she can't stop 'em, so she backed off with her hands kind of against her side, and I can see she is scared most to death.

Here is the deliberate, slow-paced narration which Faulkner would employ later through narrators like V. K. Ratliff. The story-within-a-story device permits Faulkner to use the impressionistic scene painting, with which by this time he is

[14]Collins, op. cit., p. 31.

[15]Ibid.

quite adept, and the more liesurely narration of events occurring over a period of time. Moreover, the welding of the two methods is remarkably successful. This is true because the four men sitting in Gibson's store listening to Ek tell his story do not comprise merely a frame or a convention for the telling of that story; one of them (not the narrator Ek, as it develops) is an important actor in the story. Thus the past--the story told by Ek--and the present are bound together, and the two stories become one story. The tale ends on the note of mild irony which characterizes many of the Picayune sketches: "'Aw, get out of here,' snarled Ek. And convicted of both truthfulness and stupidity, he turned his face bitterly to the wall, knowing that his veracity as a liar was gone forever." Ek, a notorious liar has told a tale of a murder observed; and one of his audience, a stranger, has leaped up, shot him in the shoulder, and fled on a departing freight train. Afterwards, Ek swears the story was just another fabrication, but he is told: "If you were lying you ought to be shot for telling one so prob'le that it reely happened somewhere; and if you were telling the truth, you ought to be shot for having no better sense than to blab it out in front of the man that done the killing." Hence, Ek's despair at the end of the story. In technique, "The Liar" is probably the most successful and the most sophisticated of the Picayune stories.

The next sketch, "Episode" (August 16), is very brief; it is not a short story at all but a character sketch, and in it Faulkner has returned to the use of Spratling and him-

self as protagonists. The central figure of the sketch, however, is an old woman whose portrait Spratling paints. The sketch is so unlike the one which preceded it and the two which follow it that it seems possible Faulkner may have written it earlier, not bothering to submit it to the Picayune until reaching Europe, when he may have mailed it with one of the longer stories.

"Country Mice" (September 20), is another experiment in narrative point of view. The story begins with a first person narrator describing a ride in "My friend the bootlegger's car." The friend then narrates a long story about a past encounter with the justice of the peace in a small Connecticut town. The first narrator in the story, who sounds much the same as the narrator of "Mirrors of Chartres Street" and "Damon and Pythias Unlimited," interrupts the friend's narrative only twice, near its beginning. The first narrator does not figure at all in the story told by the bootlegger, and at the end of the bootlegger's tale there is no return to the initial setting--the ride through the country in the bootlegger's car. The story told by the bootlegger is the real story here, and the first setting and the first narrator are unimportant except as an introduction to the bootlegger's story. In this, the technique is significantly different from "The Liar," but there is this important similarity: in both stories Faulkner is experimenting with a narrator who must be convincingly colloquial, yet observant and sensitive enough to relate a story. The bootlegger-narrator, for instance, relates: "'But by then they was calling

us. I felt like a kid does when he don't want to do something he knows he's got to, and so he walks slow and does everything he can think of to put it off. But I had to do it....'" And Ek, the narrator of "The Liar" notes; "I was jest about to sing out when he put his finger in his mouth and whistled. I thought mebbe he was calling his dog, and I was thinking to myself it was a sorry dog that never suspicioned me when I was this close, when a woman come to the back door of the house.'"

The last story which Faulkner published in the Picayune, "Yo Ho and Two Bottles of Rum" (September 27), reverts to the omniscient point of view. The second paragraph of the story is a good example; Faulkner has been describing in the first paragraph a ship "wallowing like a great enceinte sow in the long swells of the Pacific":

> Her best speed was ten knots--four knots from side to side and six knots forward. Perhaps this was sufficient, perhaps more speed than this would have blown her crew overboard. A casual observer would have thought so anyway, looking down from the bridge, seeing them squatting quietly, meager and fleshless, small and naked as children; yellow wisps of men clothed modestly in shirts, still and unfathomable as mummies or idols.

Faulkner is very careful to establish the point of view as that of a "casual observer," and his voice, as author, in the rest of the story occasionally becomes that of the familiar essayist:

> Pride is a funny thing, in the various forms it takes. The American or the Latin 'goes bad' and drops out of sight, assimilates himself with people and conditions among which his destiny casts him, becomes (sentimentally perhaps) noncommittal regarding his nationality. But the

> Britisher is still British, the lower he goes
> the more blatantly British he becomes.

Although Faulkner had lived for six months in New Orleans, a cosmopolitan city; although he had made his first ocean voyage (however, the West Ivis, unlike the Diana of this story which is sailing the Pacific, carried Faulkner across the Atlantic); and although Faulkner had some experience with the British as a cadet in the Royal Flying Corps, there is something about these generalizations of an all-observant world traveler which does not ring true. Furthermore, the patches of familiar essay--so useful to novelists of ideas like Huxley and Douglas--are ineffective in a sketch as short as "Yo Ho and Two Bottles of Rum." Nor do sentences like "And thereby hangs a tale, as the fiction writers say" enhance the method of narration. To make matters worse, Faulkner is so busy describing the "wall of contemplative Oriental calm" and "Mr. Ayers and his mushroom civilization of a short yesterday" that the details of the plot become blurred at the end of the story, and the last sentence which is intended to be ironic becomes simply meaningless. Faulkner's experiment in applying the method of the novel of ideas to the short story is not as successful as some of his earlier experiments in the Picayune series; the last in this case is, in fact, far from the best.

ii

It is probably as difficult to prove what a writer has not read at any stage of his career as it is to prove what he has read. Nonetheless, I must take issue with Lawrance

Thompson when he says of the Picayune fiction:

> The limpid style of these little narratives and the oblique handling of themes provide hints that Faulkner had already come under the influence of Joyce's Dubliners. But they lack Joyce's bitterly incisive treatment of moral paralysis--a theme which later attracted Faulkner.[16]

What Thompson means by "limpid style" is not quite clear, although he dismisses Soldiers' Pay with similar adjectives: "The style is clumsy and turgid, the attempt to braid three plots is awkward, and the handling of the characterizations is wooden."[17] If by "limpid style" he means that Faulkner's Picayune fiction and Joyce's Dubliners, in contrast to the later work of both writers, are written in conventional sentence structure, then he is obviously right. Unfortunately, however, there is really no other quality which the prose of Faulkner's sketches and Joyce's Dubliners have in common. Faulkner's prose in the Picayune fiction, for instance, is studded with impressionist images ("The chief gaped his toothless nut-cracker face," "The sun was red and implacable as a furnace mouth," or "The sun hung redly in the west") which are much more indicative, I believe, of the stylistic influence of Thomas Beer's impressionistic fiction. Faulkner, in fact, never mentioned reading Joyce's Dubliners, although

[16]Lawrance Thompson, William Faulkner: An Introduction and Interpretation (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1963), p. 6.

[17]Ibid.

he did read Ulysses at the urging of Phil Stone; however, it is doubtful whether he read it much before the middle of 1927.[18]

Three much clearer and more significant influences on Faulkner's Picayune fiction appear to me to be Thomas Beer, Joseph Conrad, and Sherwood Anderson. The influence of Beer's prose is evident in several aspects of the sketches; there is first of all the influence of diction and phrase, and I have cited a few examples above. Many more may be found, and the characteristic use of adverbs is an example: "his platoon marching newly through the mud" ("Home"); "Dawn was grayly at the window" ("The Rosary"); "the ancient hills brood bluely above the green and dreaming valleys" ("The Cobbler"); "A coatless white man was evident, loudly" (Sunset"). But this influence is a minor one compared to another effect which the predilection for impressionism had on Faulkner's early fiction. Impressionism in prose fiction leads most naturally to the "scenic" presentation of the story rather than the

[18]Faulkner himself has been vague about when he read the novel, saying in interviews that it was sometime in the late twenties. He did say, however, in Japan that "When I read Joyce and Proust it is possible that my career as a writer was already fixed, so that there was no chance for it to be influenced other than in the tricks of the trade you might say...." Faulkner at Nagano, p. 44. It seems certain that if Faulkner had read Ulysses before writing the sketches, Soldiers' Pay, Elmer, and Mosquitoes, more imitation of Joyce's method would have appeared in these works, for Faulkner was an experimenter and unashamed borrower of techniques.

"panoramic."[19] Impressionism lends itself more readily to the dramatic method of "showing" an event or action than it does to a more leisurely narrative method. Norman Friedman has commented on this distinction:

> The chief difference between narrative and scene is...of the general-particular type: summary narrative is a generalized account or report of a series of events covering some extended period and a variety of locales, and seems to be the normal untutored mode of story telling; immediate scene emerges as the specific, continuous, and successive details of time, place, action, character, and dialogue begin to appear.[20]

In most of the Picayune sketches it is the immediate scene which is the important thing, not summary narrative. In "Jealousy," for instance, Faulkner describes the jealous husband standing in anger and frustration at a desk: "Upon the desk was a china receptacle containing toothpicks; as he leaned upon the desk his fingers closed upon the toothpick holder. The thing burst in his clenched hand amid a spurt of wooden splinters and a thin line of crimson was suddenly between his fingers and across the back of his hand." Here is the impressionistic technique of conveying the immediacy of the picture. Beer did the same thing in Sandoval,

[19] I am using here Percy Lubbock's distinction and his terminology, which I think is quite useful. See The Craft of Fiction (Compass ed., 1957), p. 93.

[20] Norman Friedman, "Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept." PMLA, (December, 1955), 1169.

describing a girl getting up and sitting down again suddenly on the red cushions of a pony carriage: "Reins of scarlet leather flashed and May's gown was a silvery wave that boiled up in a nest of scarlet sand beside her mother--a jet rock. The silver wave sank back of red cushions."

In the attempt to achieve immediacy Faulkner sometimes shifts to the present tense, as in "Damon and Pythias Unlimited" ("A round, very dirty man somehow becomes involved here.") and in "Out of Nazareth," in which the entire narrative of the farm boy is given in the present tense; in the first part of that story too, before the introduction of the second narrator, Faulkner describes the statue of Jackson in the park and the voice of a tourist guide beneath it:

> Beneath the immaculate shapes of lamps we passed, between ancient softly greenish gates, and here was Jackson park. Sparrows were upon Andrew Jackson's head as, childishly conceived, he bestrode his curly horse in terrific arrested motion. Beneath his remote stare people gaped and a voice was saying: 'Greatest piece of statuary in the world: made entirely of bronze, weighing two and a half tons, and balanced on its hind feet.'

The subtle manipulations of time in this passage are quite significant. The phrase, "here was Jackson park," would normally in past tense narration be "there was Jackson park." The "here" supplies the connotation of suddenness as well as immediacy. This is followed by the image of Andrew Jackson's statue in arrested motion, indicating that "the imagery of stasis," as Karl E. Zink calls it, made an even earlier appearance in Faulkner's work than Mr. Zink had reckoned when he observed that

> ...the concept of stasis...is the key to an increased understanding of Faulkner's concept of time, and of the human state in time. The imagery of stasis is by all odds the most persistent in his novels, appearing first, falteringly in Soldiers' Pay (1926), and recurring constantly in all of his subsequent novels.[21]

It is interesting, too, that the device is used here, not primarily because of any philosophical concept of time, but because Faulkner, the impressionist, wants to freeze the scene in the present for a moment. For this reason too the voice is described in the past progressive ("was saying"), rather than in the simple past tense.

The scenic presentation of a story is most effective if the sense of time's passage can be momentarily and artificially suspended. This is what Beer aimed at in Sandoval when he transposed the flashback of Christian's adventure in New Orleans into the present voice of the younger brother who is the narrator of the story (see Chapter II, p. 58). And this is also, I think, what Faulkner aimed at in his first experiments with tense shifting and suspended motion. Carl Grabo makes an interesting observation in The Technique of the Novel about the impressionist method and point of view when he says of May Sinclair's novel Mary Olivier:

> ...despite the movement which the writer contrives to put into it, [the novel] seems to me essentially 'mannered,' the kind of thing impressionism becomes unless the point of view is most religiously held.... The reader is not conscious of perceiving the scene through the eyes of the heroine but

[21]Karl E. Zink, "Flux and the Frozen Moment: The Imagery of Stasis in Faulkner's Prose," PMLA (June, 1956), 286.

> through those of the author. It is decorative rather than built into the narrative and made indistinguishable from the action.[22]

The point of view is religiously held in Beer's Sandoval; and it is religiously held in the first few of the Picayune sketches, in which Faulkner used the first person narrative. Faulkner, however, apparently became restive at being limited to a single point of view for an entire story and began to experiment with multiple points of view. The result was not great fiction, but Faulkner was learning valuable lessons about his craft.

Carvel Collins relates that Faulkner told a friend on the way to New Orleans in 1925 that "he ranked 'I'm a Fool' with Conrad's Heart of Darkness: the two finest stories he had ever read."[23] A few months later Faulkner repeated his praise of Anderson's story "I'm a Fool" in the article on Anderson which he wrote for The Dallas Morning News, calling it "the best short story in America, to my thinking."[24] And

[22]Carl H. Grabo, The Technique of the Novel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), p. 308.

[23]Collins, op. cit., p. 18.

[24]William Faulkner, "Sherwood Anderson," The Dallas Morning News, April 26, 1925; reprinted in the Princeton University Library Chronicle (Spring, 1957), 91.

later, too, Faulkner reiterated his debt to Conrad.[25] An examination of Faulkner's Picayune fiction dispells any surprise that Faulkner mentioned Heart of Darkness with approbation just before writing the series, or that, many years later, he readily admitted that Conrad had been an influence on his work. There are first of all some obvious, if rather extrinsic, marks of Conrad's influence: the longshoreman, for instance, in the first sketch, "New Orleans," laments, "The stars are cold, O God, and the great trees sailing like ships up the rivers of darkness, brushing the ancient stars forever aside, in vain." Certainly Conrad's carefully controlled poetic prose must have appealed to the young Faulkner, who was himself just making a transition from poetry to prose:

> 'Going up that river was like traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. The air was warm, thick, heavy, sluggish. There was no joy in the brilliance of sunshine. The long stretches of the waterway ran on, deserted, into the gloom of overshadowed distances. On silvery sandbanks hippos and alligators sunned themselves side by side.'

The last story in the Picayune series also seems indebted in its general outlines to Conrad, not only because it has the sea as its setting--that might also be explained by the fact that Faulkner had just taken an ocean voyage--but because of

[25]Faulkner in the University, ed. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1959), p. 20. A questioner remarked that some passages from The Bear reminded him of Conrad, and Faulkner answered, "Quite true. I got quite a lot from Conrad...."

the picture of depraved seamen and the exploitation of a non-white race by white men, which is one of the themes of Heart of Darkness.[26]

There are a number of similarities in Conrad's narrative method to the impressionism of Thomas Beer, and in turn to the early fiction of Faulkner. Most important, perhaps, is the handling of scenic presentation in Heart of Darkness. The scene in which Marlow meets Kurtz' fiance near the end of the story is a notable example:

> 'The dusk was falling. I had to wait in a lofty drawing room with three long windows from floor to ceiling that were like three luminous and bedraped columns. The bent gilt legs and backs of the furniture shone in indistinct curves. The tall marble fire-place had a cold and monumental whiteness. A grand piano stood massively in a corner; with dark gleams on the flat surfaces like a somber and polished sarcophagus.'

All the while Marlow waits and while he talks to the girl, the memory of Kurtz' death is in his mind and before his eyes; "while I waited he seemed to stare at me out of the panel--stare with that wide and immense stare embracing, condemning, loathing all the universe. I seemed to hear the whispered cry, 'The horror! The horror!'" The objects of the present scene merge with the remembered past, so that the symbolism is unified, and the whiteness in the description of the room implicitly recalls Kurtz' ivory. This is an experiment with time-sequence within the impressionistic method which Beer

[26]Richardson also sees traces of Conrad's "Youth" in the story. William Faulkner: From Past to Self-discovery, p. 199.

rarely attempted. Faulkner did attempt it, however, in several of the sketches: in "Jealousy" and in "Home," the sketch which Margaret Church calls Proustian because the hero summons up the past upon hearing a familiar tune. It is more likely, I think, that Faulkner learned the technique from Conrad.

It seems possible too that Conrad's method of telling a story within a story might have led Faulkner to experiment with this narrative device, as he did in "The Liar" and "Country Mice," although it is probably unwise to make too strong a claim for this as influence since the technique is as old as fiction. Moreover, Anderson used the method in several of the stories in Horses and Men, the volume of short stories which Faulkner had also read before coming to New Orleans. Nonetheless, there is much about Conrad's use of the narrator Marlow in Heart of Darkness and in his handling of point of view which is reflected in Faulkner's early fiction. Faulkner's first person narrator in "Mirrors of Chartres Street," "Damon and Pythias Unlimited," "Out of Nazareth," "Episode," and "Country Mice" has this in common with Marlow: he is not only a witness of events but a judge of them, an agonizing appraiser. Marlow passes judgment on the pilgrims: "To tear treasure out of the bowels of the earth was their desire, with no moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe." Faulkner's narrator also sits in judgment; he commands his race-track friend in "Damon and Pythias Unlimited" to stop his obscene tirade; he observes of his friend the bootlegger in "Country Mice"

that "he owns a gold and elegant cigarette case of fourteen net ounces displacement which when opened reveals a brand of cigarettes which may be purchased anywhere at fifty for twenty-five cents."

One may argue with Faulkner's critical judgment in ranking Anderson's story "I'm a Fool" with Heart of Darkness; one cannot, however, read Faulkner's 1925 article on Anderson without realizing that Faulkner had read a considerable portion of Anderson's work. Nor can anyone with a reasonable acquaintance with Anderson's fiction deny, after reading Faulkner's Picayune sketches, that Anderson was an important influence on Faulkner.

Faulkner's 1925 article on Anderson contains a few errors of fact (for instance, he calls Winesburg, Ohio Anderson's first book), but it also contains some perceptive observations on Anderson's craftsmanship in prose fiction. He recognizes, for instance, that Anderson is no naturalist after the manner of Zola. He writes scornfully that "A cabinet maker in New Orleans discovered that he resembles Zola, though how he arrived at this I cannot see, unless it be that Zola also wrote books."[27] He mentions Anderson's presentation of "the sharp episodic phases of people, the portraying of which Mr. Anderson's halting questioning manner is best at."[28] And at this point too Faulkner apparently admires the simplicity

[27]"Sherwood Anderson," 89.

[28]Ibid., 91.

of Anderson's style and the brevity of his narrative method, for he exclaims of Winesburg, Ohio: "The simplicity of this title! And the stories are as simply done: short, he tells the story and stops."[29] A few months later, however, Faulkner wrote a parody of Anderson's "primer" style in Sherwood Anderson and Other Famous Creoles, a book of sketches by his artist friend, Spratling. And in 1953, of course, in his Atlantic article on Anderson, Faulkner wrote a more thorough critique of Anderson as a stylist:

> His was that fumbling for exactitude, the exact word and phrase within the limited scope of a vocabulary controlled and even repressed by what was in him almost a fetish of simplicity, to milk them both dry, to seek always to penetrate to thought's uttermost end. He worked so hard at this that it finally became just style: an end instead of a means: so that he presently came to believe that, provided he kept the style pure and intact and unchanged and inviolate, what the style contained would have to be first rate.[30]

But the 1925 article demonstates--and the Picayune fiction demonstrates as well--that Faulkner was at first much attracted to the simplicity of style which he later came to view as a fetish.

One thing about Anderson with which Faulkner did not

[29] Ibid., 89.

[30] "Sherwood Anderson: An Appreciation," Atlantic Monthly (June 27, 1953), 28.

become disillusioned was his integrity as an artist, "the integrity which he believed to be absolutely necessary in anyone who approached his craft."[31] Faulkner relates in the 1953 essay how he and Anderson exchanged a series of letters telling the story of a mythical Jackson family whose sheep turn into fish when the pasture is flooded. One of these stories appears in Mosquitoes. Faulkner tells how Anderson made him revise and rewrite one of these letters and how Anderson told him, "You've got too much talent. You can do it too easy, in too many different ways. If you're not careful you'll never write anything."[32] Faulkner obviously saw a different Anderson from the one Hemingway had seen a few years before in Chicago:

> Anderson's only shortcoming, as Hemingway saw it, was the theory of unconscious, instinctive creation under which, unknown to many of his friends, Anderson hid his laborious rewriting and revising. Hemingway was finding that 'the greatest difficulty, aside from knowing truly what you felt, rather than what you were supposed to feel, and had been taught to feel, was to put down what really happened in action,' and later he was to build his whole moral framework from a self-imposed aesthetic discipline; Anderson's profession of automatic writing must have seemed to be a mark of shallowness or dishonesty in his literary method.[33]

[31] Ibid., 29.

[32] Ibid.

[33] William L. Phillips, "Sherwood Anderson's Two Prize Pupils," University of Chicago Magazine, XLVII (January, 1955), 10.

Faulkner, on the other hand, saw and admired Anderson the painstaking craftsman; and Anderson's dedication to his craft continued to impress him after he had become disenchanted with Anderson's method.

In the spring and early summer of 1925, however, the disenchantment had not yet set in, and the fiction which Faulkner wrote for the Picayune reveals considerable Anderson influence. Richardson has noted that the reference at the end of "The Kid Learns" to "Little sister Death" is an echo of Anderson's phrase in "Out of Nowhere into Nothing": "Night is the sweet little brother of Death." He believes also that Faulkner's "Caesar mounting his chariot" at the end of "Mirrors of Chartres Street" is indebted to Anderson's description in "The Egg" of a working man's bald head looking like "a broad road, such as Caesar might have made to lead his legions out of Rome."[34] Richardson also points out the resemblance of Faulkner's story "Cheest" to the Anderson story which Faulkner had praised so highly, "I'm a Fool." And the most conspicuous feature of the similarity is the use of a first person narrator who relates the story in a race-track vernacular. Anderson's narrator observes: "She didn't talk hardly at all and neither did I, and I was thinking how glad I was my mother was all right, and always made us kids learn to eat with a fork at table, and not swill soup, and not be noisy and rough like a gang you see around a race track that way." And Faulk-

[34]Richardson, op. cit., 192.

ner's narrator: "Well we was to a place dancing and joking and so forth, having a good time; and while my skirt wasn't looking, I taken one of her--you know--garters, see, kind of for luck or something." In both stories the narrator is also the central character, and Anderson used the same narrative method in "The Man Who Became a Woman," perhaps the most bizarre tale in the volume Horses and Men.

In several of the stories in Horses and Men, however, Anderson used a different kind of first person narrator, one who is more reporter or witness than a participant in the action. "A Chicago Hamlet" is such a story; beginning with a character sketch of his friend Tom, the narrator tells a two-part story of Tom's past life:

> How vividly I remember the night when he told me the story. We had gone to dine together at a little combined saloon and restaurant in what is now Wells Street in Chicago. It was a wet cold night in early October. In Chicago October and November are usually the most charming months of the year but that year the first weeks of October were cold and rainy. Everyone who lives in our industrial lake cities has a disease of the nasal passages and a week of such weather starts everyone coughing and sneezing. The warm little den into which Tom and I had got seemed cosy and comfortable. We had drinks of whiskey to drive the chill out of our bodies and then, after eating, Tom began to talk.

But the narrative is indirect:

> It was late October and he and his father had been digging potatoes in a field. I suppose they both wore torn shoes as, in telling the story, Tom made a point of the fact that their feet were cold, and that the black dirt had worked into their shoes and discolored their feet.

Furthermore, the narrator interrupts, interprets, and analyzes constantly:

> At any rate he must have had some such feeling on that night of his childhood and I shall never forget a kind of illusion I had concerning him that time in the Wells Street place when he told me the tale. At the moment something seemed to spring out of his great hulking body, something young hard clean and white.

The narrator adds, in fact, "Perhaps I had better stick to my tale, try to tell it simply, as he did."

The narrator of "A Chicago Hamlet" and his friend Tom, whose story he tells, both work for a Chicago advertising company, as Anderson had done at one time himself; the narrator's voice in the story, in fact, may well be Anderson's own voice, rather than the voice of an invented character as in "I'm a Fool." Anderson's own voice in the story is even more apparent in "Milk Bottles":

> I lived, during that summer, in a large room on the top floor of an old house on the North Side in Chicago. It was August and the night was hot. Until after midnight I sat--the sweat trickling down my back--under a lamp, laboring to feel my way into the lives of the fanciful people who were trying also to live in the tale on which I was at work.

Faulkner, as the narrator of "Out of Nazareth" and "Country Mice," also identifies himself as a writer.[35] And in three other sketches ("Mirrors of Chartres Street," "Damon and Pythias Unlimited," and "Episode"), Faulkner uses a first person narrator who is a reporter or witness rather than a

[35]In "Out of Nazareth" the narrator is asked by the wandering farm boy, "So you are a writer?" and later in the sketch he confesses that "words are my meat and bread and drink." In "Country Mice" the narrator says of his friend the bootlegger, "...he seems to enjoy my company, and someday I hope to get a story out of him...."

participant in the action of the story. Although he is undoubtedly indebted to Anderson for this method of narration, Faulkner did not long continue to use the method. Nonetheless, Malcolm Cowley is right, I think, when he says of the influence of Anderson, "All his disciples left him sooner or later, so that his influence was chiefly on their early work, but still it was decisive."[36]

Faulkner did not remain a disciple long, but the influence of Anderson was decisive. One wonders if Faulkner's rejection of Anderson's simple style and limited diction was not an important step in the evolution of the later Faulkner style. But more importantly Anderson's influence was decisive in another area of narrative method. Cowley writes of the "moments of vision" in Anderson's fiction:

> They are what James Joyce called 'epiphanies,' that is, they are moments at which a character, a landscape, or a personal relation stands out in its essential nature or 'whatness' with its past and future revealed as if by a flash of lightning. For Anderson each of the moments was a story in itself. The problem he almost never solved was how to link one moment with another in a pattern of causality, or how to indicate the passage of time.[37]

This method of Anderson's, this conception of "story," had a major influence on Faulkner's fiction, although the influence scarcely shows in the Picayune fiction. It is clear, however, in Soldiers' Pay; it is even more apparent in the unfinished and unpublished Elmer; and it is crucial in Mosquitoes. Its

[36]Malcolm Cowley, "Sherwood Anderson's Epiphanies," London Magazine, VII (July, 1960), 61.

[37]Ibid., 61-62.

importance in Faulkner's later novels can hardly be questioned, for it is the key to an understanding of such works as The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom!

Chapter IV

Soldiers' Pay

Soldiers' Pay, the novel which Faulkner wrote in the spring of 1925 while his sketches were appearing in the Times-Picayune, was published in February, 1926, and though its sales were not spectacular, most of the reviews were favorable. Some of the reviewers complained understandably about an over-abundance of literary echoes in the novel, but nearly every reviewer saw the work as promising. One reviewer asserted: "The author owes something to James Joyce and something to Sherwood Anderson and something to someone else; but he has learned to pick and choose, to cut down and refine their methods."[1]

In later criticism the novel has not fared so well. Soldiers' Pay, compared with the later novels, has seemed to a majority of critics to be a very inferior production, and although not all of them dismiss the novel so summarily as Lawrance Thompson does (see p. 91), there is general agreement that it is shallow, haphazardly constructed, and something less than original--in short, an inferior imitation of other postwar fiction. There are, however, two conspicuous exceptions to this critical consensus. One is the opinion of the British critic V. S. Pritchett; writing in 1951 about the reissuing of Soldiers' Pay in England, Pritchett says:

> Soldiers' Pay, his earliest book, has just been

[1]Anonymous review, The Independent, (April 17, 1926), 463.

> reissued. It is, one sees immediately, much fresher than the later ruminating and didactically humanistic Faulkner. It has the lyrical hardness, the fire of experiment and crispness of design which were to be found in Light in August and The Sound and the Fury, and is written before Faulkner became so deedily engrossed in his own complexity.[2]

The other dissenting opinion is A. Wigfall Green's, delivered in 1932 after Faulkner had published such works as Sartoris, The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, Sanctuary, and Light in August:

> This novel [Soldiers' Pay], published in 1926, is perhaps the most autobiographic of Faulkner's works; it contains philosophic disenchantment without sordidness. The death of Donald, the young aviator, who is Faulkner, is a bit of masterly description. Because Faulkner gave his heart unstintingly, as one can do only to one's first novel or to one's first born, this is in many respects, his best novel.[3]

I have cited these two opinions not because I think they outweigh all of the unfavorable criticism of the novel, but because they raise some interesting points about Soldiers' Pay which are worth considering. Pritchett's insistence on the "fire of experiment and crispness of design" is at variance with most contemporary American criticism, which would readily admit the lyrical quality but deny the craftsmanship which Pritchett sees in the novel. Green's insistence on the

[2]V. S. Pritchett, "Vogue of Faulkner, Soldiers' Pay," New Statesman and Nation, XLI (June 2, 1951), 624.

[3]A. Wigfall Green, "William Faulkner at Home," Sewanee Review, XL (Summer, 1932), 294-306; reprinted in Two Decades of Faulkner Criticism, ed. Frederick Hoffman and Olga Vickery (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1951), 42.

autobiographical nature of Soldiers' Pay, on the other hand, has been repeated by many later critics, although his contention that the novel is "in many respects, his best novel" has, perhaps justifiably, been largely ignored. I hope to show that Pritchett's comments are well founded but that Green's insistence on seeing Soldiers' Pay as an autobiographical novel is misleading.

Closely connected to the notion that Soldiers' Pay is an autobiographical novel is the assumption that the novel can best be explained in its relationship to a school of post-war fiction. Even Olga Vickery in her justly admired work on Faulkner observes that "In Soldiers' Pay Faulkner appears to be one of those bitter young men who brooded over their pain and frustration in print, thereby contributing to the ever-increasing mass of undistinguished post-war fiction."[4] And Lawrance Thompson claims that "Faulkner poured into that narrative [Soldiers' Pay] his own post-war disillusionments."[5]

[4]Olga Vickery, The Novels of William Faulkner, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), p. 2.

[5]Lawrance Thompson, William Faulkner, an Introduction and Interpretation (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1963), p. 6. Such conclusions were fostered originally by biographical misinformation. A. Wigfull Green's article, "William Faulkner at Home," for instance, (see note 3 above) contains the statement that Faulkner "has two enemy planes to his credit and several times barely escaped death...." (39) A remarkable achievement in view of the fact that Faulkner never left the training field at Toronto, Canada during the war. As late as 1957, however, Edd Winfield Parks could write, "Faulkner served with the Royal Air Force in France, and returned home with jangled nerves." ("Faulkner and Hemingway," South Atlantic Bulletin, XXII (1957), 1.) Carvel Collins has wisely noted: "These bits of biographical counterfeit, of course, have no importance whatever. But when such tertiary books, drawing them from dubious secondary sources, offer them again and again, they are an obvious reminder of the existence of a

The attempt to find an intimate link between Soldiers' Pay and the novel of post-war disillusion has led some critics to look for source and influence in the wrong places. To Robert Coughlan, for instance, Faulkner's first novel presents "a theme and treatment manufactured under the strong influence of the currently popular Hemingway-Dos Passos school."[6] It is true, of course, that attitudes of pessimism, cynicism, and general world-weariness may be found in Soldiers' Pay; it may even be true that "Soldiers' Pay is a 'lost generation' novel," as William Van O' Connor asserts.[7] Many of these attitudes, however, may be traced to Housman and Swinburne, echoes of whose poetry abound in the novel. Furthermore, Faulkner had spent six months in New York early in the twenties and another six months among the bohemians and writers of New Orleans' Latin quarter; it would be strange if he had remained unaware of the poses and postures of the "lost generation." But to force Soldiers' Pay into a "Hemingway-Dos Passos school" of post-war fiction is to look for literary and technical influence where it does not exist.

In the first place, the only one of Hemingway's books

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more subtle, much more significant false coinage of critical judgment which such books also circulate." (Early Prose and Poetry, p. 11.) It seems clear that the legend of Faulkner's exploits during World War I has helped to distort critical judgment of his first novel.

[6]Robert Coughlan, The Private World of William Faulkner (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), p. 61.

[7]William Van O' Connor, The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954), p. 27.

which Faulkner could have read by 1925 is the collection of stories In Our Time (1925). Hemingway's greatest "lost generation" novel, The Sun Also Rises, was not published until 1926. As for Dos Passos, there is little in either One Man's Initiation (1920) or Three Soldiers (1921) which would suggest that they were an influence on Soldiers' Pay. Faulkner's first novel may share some of the attitudes of the lost generation, but it cannot be adequately explained by assigning it a place in a Hemingway-Dos Passos school of post-war fiction.

ii

Percy Lubbock had this to say of the novel in 1923:

> ...it is clear that an immense variety of possible modulations, mixtures, harmonies of method, yet untried, are open to it [the novel] if it chooses to avail itself; and I should imagine that to a novelist of today, entering the field at this late hour, the thought might be a stimulating one. There is still so much to be done, after a couple of centuries of novel-writing without pause; there are unheard of experiments to be made.[9]

Faulkner, writing his first novel in the spring of 1925, had indeed a wide variety of choices open to him; and perhaps the most important choice which he faced, the one which ultimately determined the nature and direction of his experiments with

[8]Later in his career Faulkner did speak highly of Dos Passos' art, and Dos Passos' later experiments in the U. S. A. trilogy may well have been an influence on Faulkner, but the first part of that trilogy was not published until 1930.

[9]Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction (New York: The Viking Press, 1963), p. 173.

narrative methods, was a choice between two conceptions of the novel: the novel as realistic, reportorial, social document or the novel as symbolic, poetic, impressionist record of experience. Faulkner chose the latter concept.[10] Peter Swiggart is perhaps right when, using the old distinction between the novel and the romance, he entitles the first chapter of his book on Faulkner, "Faulkner as Romancer."[11] Certainly Faulkner's first novel meets Swiggart's criteria as completely as the later novels which he mentions, Light in August and Absalom, Absalom! Thomas Beer had subtitled his novel Sandoval, "a romance of bad manners," and Faulkner might well have used the same subtitle for Soldiers' Pay.

Januarius Jones, Joe Gilligan, Margaret Powers, Donald Mahon, and Cecily Saunders are not intended to be realistic characterizations. Jones is a mythical creature, a symbol of lust described alternately as a faun and a goat. Gilligan

[10]I think it can be demontrated that Faulkner was aware of this distinction: see his remark in the Dallas Morning News article that Anderson and Zola had nothing in common except that "they both wrote books," and his unfavorable reaction to the work of Sinclair Lewis (Early Prose and Poetry, p. 103).

[11]Peter Swiggart, The Art of Faulkner's Novels (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1962), p. 3-7. Swiggart cites Hawthorne's statement of the distinction in the preface to The House of the Seven Gables and also Northrup Frye's restatement of it, which focuses on characterization: "The romancer does not attempt to create 'real people' so much as stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes." Northrup Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 304.

and Mrs. Powers are saints, or as close to sainthood as any characters Faulkner created; they are the good Samaritans of the novel, aiding the wounded Donald Mahon on the train, seeing him safely to his Georgia home, and continuing to care for him there. Mahon himself, because of his physical condition, does and says almost nothing. He functions in the novel more as an object toward which the others react than as a participant in the action. It may not be too far-fetched to speculate that Faulkner half intended Donald Mahon to be an allegorical figure; his name, pronounced with a southern accent, could emerge as something close to "Man," and it might well be a doomed and stricken mankind that he symbolizes. Mrs. Powers and Gilligan react with compassion toward Man, while Cecily Saunders, the shallow flapper, screams and faints at the sight of his wound; she returns out of jealousy and spite, only to break her engagement with him at last. Jones, the self-centered hedonist, scarcely recognizes Mahon's existence. The meaning, then, on the allegorical level would be something like this: it takes great courage and compassion to see man as he really is and to continue to love him.

An allegorical reading, I have said, is not so far-fetched; a few years before, Faulkner had written an allegorical drama, "Marionettes," which was produced by the Ole Miss drama club of which he was a member; and shortly after the publication of Soldiers' Pay he began an allegorical novel, Mayday, which was never published.[12] Much later in his career, of course,

[12]Carvel Collins, About the Sketches, p. 30. There is one extant copy of this unpublished, but Prof. Collins has

he did publish an allegorical novel, A Fable (1953). Randall Stewart, in his essay "Hawthorne and Faulkner," sees both writers "as working in the orthodox Christian tradition, a tradition which posits original sin."[13] Like Hawthorne, Faulkner had a predilection, less pronounced perhaps, for the allegorical in fiction.

An allegorical reading, of course, is not strictly necessary to establish Soldiers' Pay as a romance--impressionistic rather than realistically descriptive, a symbolic and poetic rather than a social document. The characters, I have said, are not realistically presented. A further evidence of this is the fact that the characters are almost completely devoid of social backgrounds. Januarius Jones seems to drop from nowhere. We know that he was a foundling, "born of whom he knew and cared not," and that he was "lately a fellow of Latin in a small college." (40)[14] Later we are told that he was brought up in a Roman Catholic orphanage. (160) This in-

informed me in a letter that "The owner has specifically and severely enjoined me not to identify its whereabouts and he consistently denies its use to people who track it to him." The original title of Faulkner's first published novel was also Mayday as Collins points out and as a letter from Horace Liveright to Sherwood Anderson also proves. Liveright's note (Which is in the Newberry Library's Anderson Collection) is dated June 12, 1925, and reads: "I think I've already written you a line saying that I'll read Bill Falkner's [sic] May Day with much sympathy."

[13]Randall Stewart, "Hawthorne and Faulkner," College English, XVII (February, 1956), 262.

[14]All references to page numbers in Soldiers' Pay are to the Signet paperback edition, 1961.

formation is lavish, however, compared with what we know about Mrs. Powers and Joe Gilligan. Mrs. Powers, a native of the South, had married a young lieutenant named Dick Powers whom she had met at a Red Cross canteen; they spent only a few days together before Dick went to France and was killed. About Joe Gilligan's origins we know nothing at all and can only surmise from his speech that his education has not been extensive and that he springs from no privileged rank of society. Faulkner does, however, begin to paint a fuller picture of the Saunders family, or at least of Cecily's father:

> Here was Cecily in the masculine and gone to flesh: the same slightly shallow good looks and somewhere an indicated laxness of moral fiber. He had once been precise and dapper but now he was clad slovenly in careless uncreased gray and earthy shoes. His hair still curled youthfully upon his head and he had Cecily's eyes. He was a Catholic, which was almost as sinful as being a Republican; his fellow townsmen, while envying his social and financial position in the community, yet looked askance at him because he and his family made periodical trips to Atlanta to attend church. (68)

But this preliminary sketch is not made part of any finished larger picture. Mr. Saunders' Catholicism (which apparently the rest of the family shares, since they all make the trip to Atlanta) is never even alluded to again. This omission is particularly noticeable in the reaction to the proposed marriage of the daughter of the town's Catholic family to the son of the Episcopal minister. From the town there is no reaction at all, although the Baptist majority might at least have been expected to say, "They deserve each other." Neither is the question raised in the Saunders family councils or by

Dr. Mahon. The only character in the novel whose history has much significance is Emmy, Dr. Mahon's housekeeper, whose unhappy life with a tyrannical drunkard father led to a brief idyllic affair, before the war, with Donald Mahon.

Not only in characterization is Soldiers'Pay an impressionistic novel, but in its strategies for presenting the narrative. I am referring to the distinction between "picture" and "scene," to use Henry James' terms, or between "panorama" and "scene" or "picture" and "drama," as Percy Lubbock expresses it: the distinction, in other words, between the summarized account and the dramatized scene. "Every novelist," Lubbock remarks, "uses both, and the quality of a novelist appears very clearly in his management of the two, how he guides the story into the scene, how he picks it out of the scene, a richer and fuller story than it was before, and proceeds with his narrative."[15] The most immediately striking thing about the construction of Soldiers' Pay is that Faulkner in his first novel came so very close to disproving Lubbock's generalization that "every novelist uses both." In Soldiers' Pay there is virtually no story outside of what happens in a series of impressionistic scenes, for Faulkner has used the scenic method of presentation almost exclusively in constructing the novel.

The first chapter of the novel consists of three scenes, each designated by a roman numeral and each intact--uninterrupted by breaks in time or shifts of place, except for very

[15]The Craft of Fiction, p. 119.

minor ones like the shift from a railway coach to a station platform or from one room to another in the same hotel suite. Chapter II is subdivided into five of these scenes, Chapter III into fourteen, Chapter IV into seven, Chapter V into fifteen, Chapter VI into five, Chapter VII into thirteen, and Chapters VIII and IX into eight each. Some of these scenes are extremely short--less than a page in length--and very few of them are longer than a few pages. In its dramatic format, moreover, the novel resembles not so much a stage play as it does the script of a motion picture, and the use of flashbacks strengthens this impression. The only points in the novel, in fact, in which summarized narration is used are in the flashbacks--most notably in Emmy's account of her affair with Donald.

All the tricks of impressionistic diction which Faulkner used in the Times-Picayune sketches, the imagery which was perhaps partly a legacy from his apprenticeship as a symbolist poet and partly a result of his reading of Conrad and Thomas Beer, show up as a conspicuous feature of Soldiers' Pay. A negro porter's smile is described: "White teeth were like a suddenly opened piano" (13) and "the conductor's face was a bursting mellowing moon" (17), while "lights were shimmering birds on motionless golden wings, bell notes in arrested flight." (17) From the train travelers see "earth dissolving monotonously into a gray mist, grayly. Occasional trees and houses marching through it; the towns like bubbles of ghostly sound beaded on a steel wire--" (19) The face of George Farr, Cecily's seducer, like that of the conductor,

is likened to the moon: "His smooth empty face hung before her like a handsome moon, empty as a promise." (60) "Pigeons about the church spire leaned upon it like silver and slanting splashes of soft paint" (73), and the rain "whirled like cavalry with silver lances across the lawn." (83) When the rain stops, the equestrian image gives way to a nautical one: "the ships of rain had surged onward, drawing before the wind, leaving only a whisper in the wet green waves of the leaves, with an occasional gust running in long white lines like elves holding hands across the grass." (84)

The characteristic use of adverbs in the manner of Thomas Beer recurs throughout the novel: Mrs. Powers "thought of her husband youngly dead in France," (26) and "Lowe muttered wetly." (27) And again: "Lowe told her youngly." (37) Mr. Saunders disposes of his cigar: "The cigar arced redly into a canna bed and they rose." (70) Mrs. Powers stands in the garden: "Her windy dress molded her longly." (73) On another occasion "Her hand flashed slimly staying him." (141) And again: "The rose splashed redly against the front of her dark dress." (172) Somewhat like the gray mist dissolving grayly is this description later in the novel: "The pool lay darkly in the dark." This mannerism did not disappear immediately from Faulkner's prose, for in Light in August (1932), as Joe Christmas walks through the negro section of town, "the cabins were shaped blackly out of blackness by the faint, sultry glow of kerosene lamps."[16]

[16]Light in August (New York: Modern Library, 1959), p. 100.

The coining of unusual adjectives may safely be called a mannerism, a surface adornment; it has little effect on what might be called the structure or form of the novel. The same, however, cannot be said for all of Faulkner's imagery in Soldiers' Pay, and there is a sense in which the metaphor is a controlling and unifying device in the novel. The following passage will serve as introductory illustration:

> The music beat on among youthful leaves, into the darkness, beneath the gold and mute cacophony of stars. The light from the veranda mounting was lost, the house loomed huge against the sky: a rock against which waves of trees broke, and breaking were forever arrested; and stars were golden unicorns neighing unheard through blue meadows, spurning them with hooves sharp and scintillant as ice. The sky, so remote, so sad, spurned by the unicorns of gold, that, neighing soundlessly from dusk to dawn, had seen them, had seen her--her taut body prone and naked as a narrow pool sweetly dividing: two silver streams from a single source.... (135-136)

The passage is typical of much of the imagery in the novel, and it is imagery which is clearly indebted to symbolist poetry--the paradoxical synesthesia of "the mute cacophany of the stars," for instance. Furthermore, the passage is typical of the impressionistic description used by Faulkner in Soldiers' Pay in that the point of view is not, as Grabo has insisted it must be in the impressionistic novel, "religiously maintained."[17] In other words, it is not made clear whose eyes, among the characters of the novel, see the stars as golden unicorns. Most of the time, in fact, Faulkner makes no effort to suggest, to create the illusion, that the de-

[17]Carl Grabo, The Technique of the Novel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), p. 308. See Chapter III of this dissertation, pp. 95-96, for the full quotation.

scription is communicated through the senses of any particular character; the voice is not transmuted to that of a character in the novel, but remains instead the transcendent voice of author-poet hovering over the novel. The technique is very similar to that of the Double Dealer sketch "New Orleans," the poetic description upon which a unifying diction has also been imposed. (See p. 63) It is apparent, however, that toward the end of this passage Faulkner is linking the impression to a specific character. "The sky...had seen them, had seen her--her taut body prone and naked as a narrow pool sweetly dividing: two silver streams from a single source...." This is George Farr remembering his seduction of Cecily, a crucial moment in the novel which is never described directly but always seen in retrospect--always with the same imagery: "Her body prone and naked as a narrow pool, flowing like two silver streams from a single source." (146) George Farr laments, "she doesn't even speak to you who have seen her prone and silver...moonlight on her like sweetly dividing water, marbled and slender and unblemished by any shadow...." (146) "Again he became one with the earth, with dark and silence, with his own body...with her body like a little silver water sweetly dividing...." (165)

Silver and white are Cecily's colors, and they are used throughout the novel to describe her:

> George Farr, from the outer darkness, glowered at her, watching her slim body cut by a masculine arm, watching her head beside another head, seeing her limbs beneath her silver dress anticipating her partner's limbs, seeing the luminous plane of her arm across his black shoulders and her fan drooping from her arched wrist like a

willow at evening. (135)

To Januarius Jones she is also silver: "Jones stood baggy and yellow, yellowly watching her fan across her partner's coat, like a hushed splash of water, her arching neck and her arm crossing a black shoulder with luminous warmth, the indicated silver evasion of her limbs anticipating her partner's like a broken dream." (141) Earlier in the novel Cecily is described:

> Her white dress in the sun was an unbearable shimmer sloping to her body's motion and she passed from sunlight to shadow, mounting the steps. At the door she turned, flashed him a smile and waved her hand. Then her white dress faded beyond a fanlight of muted color dim with age and lovely with lack of washing, leaving George to stare at the empty maw of the house in hope and despair and baffled youthful lust. (62)

When Cecily faints at the first sight of Donald's scar, "the light passing through her fine hair gave her a halo and lent her frail dress a fainting nimbus about her crumpling body like a stricken poplar." (66) George Farr sees her coming toward him in the drugstore, "silhouetted against the door, with light toying with her white dress, giving it a shallow nimbus." (148) And Jones sees her: "Light in her hair was the thumbed rim of a silver coin, the divan embraced her quietly and light followed the long slope of her limbs." (54)

Cecily's white and silver contrasts strongly with Margaret Powers' darkness:

> She was dark. Had Gilligan and Lowe ever seen an Aubrey Beardsley, they would have known that Beardsley would have sickened for her: he had drawn her so often dressed in peacock hues, white

> and slim and depraved among meretricious trees
> and impossible marble fountains. (23-24)

Had the readers of the novel, we might add, ever seen Faulkner's own black and white sketches, done a few years before for The Mississippian, they would have had a further insight into Faulkner's use of light and dark imagery in Soldiers' Pay.[18] In the sketch "Out of Nazareth" Faulkner remarks to his friend Spratling that "no one since Cezanne had really dipped his brush in light." He says in the same sketch that "Spratling, whose hand has been shaped to a brush as mine has (alas!) not, here became discursive on the subject of transferring light to canvas."[19] In the first of the Picayune sketches, "Mirrors of Chartres Street," Faulkner describes a New Orleans street: "The moon had crawled up the sky like a fat spider and planes of light and shadow were despair for the Vorticist schools"[20] Faulkner's previous experience, it seems, as painter and poet was consolidated in his new calling as novelist, and the imagery of Soldiers' Pay was the result. Thus Cecily is constantly seen in white against a dark background, while Margaret Powers is dark against a light background: "the woman's dark dress shaped her against the dull

[18]These drawings are reproduced in Early Prose and Poetry, ed. Carvel Collins (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1962).

[19]New Orleans Sketches, p. 102.

[20]Ibid., p. 54.

white of her canvas chair." (202) Mrs. Powers refers to herself as "dark": "what would they think to see a dark strange woman smoking a cigarette on the rectory porch at eight o'-clock in the morning." (73) In the eyes of Jones she is "the mean-looking black-haired woman," (62) and to Cecily she is "that black woman." (98)

Soldiers' Pay is not, of course, in its color imagery, a totally black and white production. Jones' predominate color is yellow: "Jones' eyes were clear and yellow, obscene and old in sin as a goat's." (47) Dr. Mahon is at one point given a golden halo: "'My one sincere parishoner,' murmured the divine. Sunlight was a windy golden plume about his bald head...." (41) And of course there is the color green which reinforces the awareness of spring in the novel. The combination of light imagery and the importance of the season of the year as a setting is perhaps a harbinger of a later title in the Faulkner canon: Light in August.

Although the imagery of darkness and light is not the only color imagery in the novel, it is the most important, for it is closely involved with the characterization and thematic construction of the novel. Without the light-dark contrast Cecily Saunders and Margaret Powers would be virtually without substance, and one of the important themes of the novel is the contrast between the "innocence" of a post-war generation which stayed at home, untouched by the war, and the maturity and disillusion of those whom the war had profoundly touched and altered. Cecily represents the first group; her luminous appearance at the dance is noticed by both

Jones and George Farr, but it is Joe Gilligan who expresses the real significance of Cecily's appearance: "'Say,' Gilligan murmured, watching their retreat, 'you can see right through her.'" (144) Cecily is without substance, and she stands for a whole generation of flappers, a breed of girl not so attractive to the young Faulkner as it was to F. Scott Fitzgerald. Cecily is described in the embrace of Jones:

> Her unseen face nimbused with light and her body which was no body, crumpling a dress that had been dreamed. Not for maternity, not even for love: a thing for the eye and the mind. Epicene, he thought, feeling her slim bones, the bitter nervousness latent in her flesh.
>
> 'If I really held you close you'd pass right through me like a ghost, I am afraid,' he said and his clasp was loosely about her. (156)

Mrs. Powers, on the other hand, has lost her husband in the war, but she wears black not only to grieve for him. She says, in fact, that "even sorrow is a fake now." (31) She and Gilligan are apparently keeping watch at the sickbed of an entire generation, and like Cousin Drusilla of The Unvanquished they have renounced sleep:

> 'But we haven't decided what to do with that poor boy in there,' she said with brisk energy, clasping her blanket. 'That's what I wanted to talk to you about. Are you sleepy?'
>
> 'Not me,' he answered. 'I don't think I ever want to sleep again.'
>
> 'Neither do I.' She moved across the bed, propping her back against the headboard. 'Lie down here and let's decide on something.'
>
> 'Sure,' agreed Gilligan. 'I better take off my shoes first. Ruin the hotel's bed.'
>
> 'To hell with the hotel's bed,' she told him. 'Put your feet on it.'
>
> Gilligan lay down, shielding his eyes with his hand. After a time she said:
>
> 'Well, what's to be done?'
>
> 'We got to get him home first,' Gilligan said.(31)

When Margaret Powers invites soldiers to share her bed, the

act is as devoid of sexual implications as Cousin Drusilla's camping out with the soldiers during the Civil War. Mrs. Powers is a hardboiled saint with no regard for hotel property but a tremendous concern for suffering humanity. Her consistent shunning of physical love (her memories of her brief marriage are ambiguous--"dear Dick: that flesh, that body, which I loved and did not love; your beautiful, young, ugly body"--and she scorns the advances of Jones while gently discouraging even fellow-saint Joe Gilligan) and her insistence instead on spiritual love and compassion combine to make her black attire seem as much the habit of a nun as traditional widow's weeds.

At the end of the novel Faulkner uses the light-dark contrast to stand for the contrast between romantic yearning and earthly reality--the reality which Joe Gilligan must accept after his romantic dream of a perfect life with Margaret Powers has been shattered. The moon, omnipresent in the novel, plays an important part in the final symbolism:

> The road gashed across the land, stretched silent and empty before him, and below the east was a rumorous promise of moonlight. He trod in dust between dark trees like spilled ink upon the pale clear page of the sky, and soon the moon was more than a promise. He saw the rim of it sharpening the tips of trees, saw soon the whole disc, bland as saucer.... (216)

"The church loomed a black shadow with a silver roof" (217) and Gilligan and Dr. Mahon "paced slowly beneath arched and moonbitten trees, scuffing their feet in the shadows of leaves." (219) And in the last two paragraphs Gilligan and Dr. Mahon stand listening to the sound of singing coming from a negro church:

> ...The rector and Gilligan stood side by side in the dusty road. The road went on under the moon, vaguely dissolving without perspective. Worn-out red-gutted fields were now alternate splashes of soft black and silver; trees had each a silver nimbus, save those moonward from them, which were sharp as bronze.
>
> Feed Thy Sheep, O Jesus. The voices rose full and soft. There was no organ; no organ was needed as above the harmonic passion of bass and baritone soared a clear soprano of women's voices like a flight of gold and heavenly birds. They stood together in the dust, the rector in his shapeless black, and Gilligan in his new hard serge, listening, seeing the shabby church become beautiful with mellow longing, passionate and sad. Then the singing died, fading away along the mooned land inevitable with to-morrow and sweat, with sex and death and damnation; and they turned townward under the moon, feeling dust in their shoes. (221)

The conclusion of Soldiers' Pay has been cited by some critics as an indication of the direction which Faulkner's later work was to take; they see the scene as suggesting Dilsey and the negro singing in The Sound and the Fury. They may be right, but the concluding scene is also the capstone of an experiment in the symbolist, impressionist novel--an experiment in which color symbolism is a dominant technique.

iii

The fact that Faulkner was writing in Soldiers' Pay an essentially poetic, impressionist, and symbolist novel has important implications for his experiments with point of view and the handling of time. I have suggested previously that Faulkner does not often assign poetic impressions to particular characters; that is, he takes no pains to create the illusion that such impressions are being filtered through the mind or senses of a character in the novel. This passage

from Chapter VIII is a good example:

> April had become May.
> Fair days, and wet days in which rain ran with silver lances over the lawn, in which rain dripped from leaf to leaf while birds still sang in the hushed damp greenness under the trees, and made love and married and built houses and still sang; in which rain grew soft as the grief of a young girl grieving for the sake of grief. (197)

Here is Faulkner, the omniscient poet-author describing the progress of spring and the passage of time in the novel.

It should not be supposed, however, that Soldiers' Pay reveals the workings of a writer totally indifferent to the possibilities and problems of point of view in a narrative. It is not, I think, indifference, but a willingness to experiment which produced the shifting and multiple points of view in the novel: the point of view often shifts too suddenly, too dramatically, to be the result of chance or indifference.

In the first paragraph of the novel Faulkner introduces Julian Lowe, "late a Flying Cadet, Umptieth Squadron, Air Service." (7) Lowe "regarded the world with a yellow and disgruntled eye" because "they had stopped the war on him" (7) before he could get to France and achieve glory. Throughout the first two sections of Chapter I the point of view belongs largely to Cadet Lowe:

> 'Listen, soldiers,' said the conductor, and Cadet Lowe, thinking of Elba, thinking of his coiling guts and a slow alcoholic fire in him, remarked the splayed official gold breaking the man's cap. New York swam flatly past; Buffalo was imminent, and sunset. (11)

The reader is more often admitted to the thoughts and impressions of Lowe than to those of any other character:

> Cadet Lowe pressed the bell, regarding with a rebirth of that old feud between American enlisted men and officers of all nations the man's insignia and wings and brass, not even wondering what a British officer in his condition could be doing traveling in America. Had I been old enough or lucky enough, this might have been me, he thought jealously. (19)

But Faulkner is by no means consistent, for we are told occasionally what other characters are thinking--the negro porter, for instance: "With the instinct of his race the Negro knew that his unkindness was becoming untactful, yet he ventured again." (21) This perhaps is part of paradoxical White Southern omniscience: The negro is mysterious and irrevocably "different," yet the White Southerner (and only he) can fathom his thoughts and feelings. When Mrs. Powers enters the story, the feelings of both Gilligan and Lowe are recorded as follows:

> She sat down beside Mahon and Gilligan and Lowe sat again. She seemed...she was young; she probably liked dancing, yet at the same time she seemed not young--as if she knew everything. (She is married and about twenty-five, thought Gilligan.) (She is about nineteen, and she is not in love, Lowe decided.) She looked at Lowe. (25-26)

And, of course, Faulkner is not afraid to intrude directly in the narrative to provide a description if the characters seem unsuited for the task, as in the passage quoted earlier in this chapter: "Had Gilligan and Lowe ever seen an Aubrey Beardsley, they would have known that Beardsley would have sickened for her." (24-25) The passage has a quaint nineteenth century flavor, and there are other examples in the novel. When Gilligan and Mrs. Powers go for a walk later in the novel, they surprise Cecily's young brother, nude, about to dive into the old swimming hole. Mrs. Powers asks who it

was and Gilligan tells her:

> 'Young Saunders.'
> 'Oh, was it? Poor boy, I'm sorry I shocked him.'
> And well she might have been, could she have seen his malevolent face watching her retreating figure as he swiftly donned his clothes. I'll fix you! he swore, almost crying.

Fortunately, such passages, which recall Harold Bell Wright and the prose of the dime novel, are not plentiful in Soldiers' Pay.

Sections III, IV, and V of the first chapter are divided in point of view between Margaret Powers and Cadet Lowe, and Faulkner tries some experiments with stream of consciousness. From Mrs. Powers:

> Oh, damn, damn. What a rotten trick you played on me. She recalled those nights during which they had tried to eradicate to-morrows from the world. Two rotten tricks, she thought. Anyway, I know what I'll do with the insurance, she added, wondering what Dick thought about it--if he did know or care. (27)

> Dick, Dick. Dead, ugly Dick. Once you were alive and young and passionate and ugly, after a time you were dead, dear Dick: that flesh, that body, which I loved and did not love; your beautiful, young, ugly body, dear Dick, become now a seething of worms, like new milk. Dear Dick. (32)

And from Cadet Lowe:

> To hell with kee-wees, anyway. I wouldn't be a goddam kee-wee. Rather be a sergeant. Rather be a mechanic. Crack up, Cadet. Hell, yes. Why not? War's over. Glad. Glad. Oh, God. His scar: his wings. Last time.
> He was briefly in a Jenny again, conscious of lubricating oil and a slow gracious restraint of braced plane surfaces, feeling an air blast and feeling the stick in his hand, watching bobbing rocker arms on the horizon, laying her nose o' the horizon like a sighted rifle. Christ, what do I care? seeing her nose rise until the horizon was hidden, seeing the arc of a descending wing expose it again, seeing her become abruptly stationary while a mad world spinning vortexed about his seat. (34)

This is on approximately the same level with the attempts at writing interior monologue in the Picayune fiction; none of the monologues goes very far without the assistance of a "he thought" or a "she thought," and in general the method employed seems to owe more to Sherwood Anderson than to James Joyce.

After Chapter I Cadet Lowe disappears from the novel except for six letters and a postcard which he writes to Margaret from San Francisco. There are several possible reasons why Faulkner might have dropped Julian Lowe, for all practical purposes, from the story. Perhaps he realized that Lowe's young romantic envy would be difficult to sustain for the entire novel:

> Lowe told her youngly: 'I thought of it on the train when I first saw you. When I saw you I knew you were the woman for me. Tell me, you don't like him better than me because he has wings and a scar, do you?'
>
> 'Why, of course not.' She looked at him a moment, calculating. Then she said: 'Mr. Gilligan says he is dying.'
>
> 'Dying?' he repeated and 'Dying?' How the man managed to circumvent him at every turn! As if it were not enough to have wings and a scar. But to die.
>
> 'Margaret,' he said with such despair that she gazed at him in swift pity. (He was so young.) 'Margaret, are you in love with him?' (Knowing that if he were a woman, he would be.)
>
> 'No, certainly not. I am not in love with anybody. My husband was killed on the Aisne, you see,' she told him gently.
>
> 'Oh, Margaret,' he said with bitter sincerity, 'I would have been killed there if I could, or wounded like him, don't you know it?' (37)

It would have been difficult to sustain this kind of posturing for the entire novel, particularly if Faulkner had continued to use Lowe's consciousness as a center for point of view as

extensively as he did in the first chapter. This difficulty, of course, might have been overcome, but Lowe's continued presence in the novel would have remained a problem: his infatuation with Margaret Powers would have added further clutter to an already complicated plot as well as another guest to Dr. Mahon's already crowded rectory.

There is a strong possibility too that Lowe was dropped from the story because he was an autobiographical character and his presence became too painful to his creator. Faulkner apparently told some colossal lies about his own experiences in World War I (he was still at a training field in Toronto when the war ended and never saw combat), including graphic details of wounds incurred and enemy aircraft destroyed.[21]

[21]Sherwood Anderson's sketch, "A Meeting South," presents a picture of a young southerner, who, most critics agree is William Faulkner. Anderson's protagonist was severely wounded in combat and suffers constant pain as a result. The sketch was written shortly after Anderson had met Faulkner, and it seems quite certain that Faulkner must have regaled Anderson with a fanciful embellishment of his war record. A. Wigfall Green's article, (see note 5, above) with its mistaken account of Faulkner's exploits, was written after a visit with Faulkner, and we can only conclude that Faulkner, for one reason or another, deliberately misled Professor Green, as he misled other interviewers; Lawrence Stallings, in fact, complains that Faulkner "told me the damnedest story. All about how he'd been in the Canadian Air Force, and was flying in France, and crashed and got wounded--all in great detail....Now why did he want to sit down there and bother about telling me that damned lie?" (from an interview with the Fullerton Junior College Literary Club, Fullerton, California, January 22, 1960; recorded by H. Edward Richardson and quoted in his dissertation, William Faulkner: From Past to Self-discovery, p. 62.) Richardson deals with Faulkner's deliberate contribution to this legend at some length and concludes (op. cit., p. 66): "Faulkner simply improvised the romantic exploits which circumstances had denied him. He was not only disappointed, but he probably felt cheated by Fate."

Thus Lowe's romantically envious attitude may well have been Faulkner's own post-war pose. Describing Lowe's attitude in Chapter I may have been a kind of catharsis for Faulkner, but it may also have impressed on him the ridiculousness of the attitude and caused him to remove both the attitude and its spokesman from the novel. It is very interesting, however, that in a much later work, the character Julian Lowe (or a character very much like him) is resurrected. The young British flyer in A Fable is also disgruntled because "they... stopped the war on him." He too yearns for combat and danger and glory. Perhaps this reincarnation of Julian Lowe is only another indication that Faulkner seldom wasted anything--even the scraps from his literary workshop--that he had a real mania for reusing his own material.[22] Or it might be a clue to a deeper and more enduring relationship between Faulkner's flying experiences and his fiction.

The decision to drop Julian Lowe from the novel, whatever its motivation, has a considerable effect on the unity of the work; from the first page of the novel to the end of Chapter I Lowe is one of the protagonists, and much of the description comes through his consciousness. After Chapter I Lowe disappears as a protagonist. His voice reasserts itself periodically in the letters, however, and since each letter is dated--the dates running from April 2 to April 27, 1919--they help to establish a sense of the passage of time in the novel.

[22]See, for instance, Edward M. Holmes' Faulkner's Twice-told Tales: His Re-use of his Material (unpublished dissertation, Brown University, 1962).

The letters have in addition a certain comic quality, and they are strategically placed in the novel so that the total irrelevance of anything Lowe can have to say makes an ironic contrast to the problems which Mrs. Powers and Gilligan face. This letter, for instance, immediately precedes the corroboration by the Atlanta specialist that Donald Mahon is indeed dying:

> Dear Margaret--
>
> Well I am at home again I got here this afternoon. As soon as I got away from mother I am sitting down to write to you. Home seems pretty good after you have been doing a pretty risky thing like lots of them cracked up at. Its boreing all these girls how they go on over a flying man if you ever experienced it isn't it. There was a couple of janes on the train I met. Well anyway they saw my hatband and they gave me the eye they were society girls they said but I am not so dumb anyway they were nice kids and they might of been society girls. Anyway I got there phone numbers and I am going to give them a call. Just kidding them see there is only one woman for me Margaret you know it. Well we rode on into San Francisco talking and laughing in there stateroom so I am going to take the best looking of them out this week I made a date with her except she wants me to bring a fellow for her friend so I guess I will poor kids they probably havent had much fun dureing the war like a man can have dureing the war. But I am just kidding them Margaret you mustnt be jealous like I am not jealous over Lieut Mahon. Well mother is dragging me out to tea I had rather I had be shot than go except she insists. Give my reguards to Joe.
>
> With love
>
> Julian

And when Margaret marries the dying Donald Mahon (the specialist had said: "His body is already dead" (107)), thus completing another step in her progress toward sainthood and the renunciation of the flesh, she receives this letter from Lowe:

My dearest sweetheart--

> Just a line to let you know that I have gone into business into the banking business making money for you. To give ourselves the position in the world you deserve and a home of our own. The work is congenial talking to other people in the business that don't know anything about aviation. All they think about is going out to dance with men. Everyday means one day less for us to be with you forever. All my love.
>
> Yours forever
>
> Julian

When Julian Lowe leaves the novel at the end of Chapter I, Januarius Jones enters it; actually a whole new cast of characters enters the novel at the beginning of Chapter II--Dr. Mahon, Emmy, Cecily, and George Farr--but Jones is most important for point of view in the novel, for Faulkner admits the reader to Jones' thoughts:

> Jones bowed with obese incipient grace as she faced him, but at her expression of hushed delicate amazement he knew panic. Then he remembered the rector's cursed trousers and he felt his neck and ears slowly burn, knowing that not only was he ridiculous looking but that she supposed he wore such things habitually. (50)

However, Faulkner never remains with one person's consciousness for any length of time, and his method for most of the novel is a combination of the dramatic point of view (in which dialogue is simply reported with a minimum of stage directions) and the omniscient point of view. The first method is used in the dialogue of ideas between Jones and Dr. Mahon in Chapter II and in subsequent dialogues scattered through the novel, most notably those involving Jones and Margaret Powers (171-172 and 198-202). There is much that rings of Aldous Huxley or Norman Douglas in these dialogues and in Faulkner's narrative method as he indulges in them:

> 'But, my dear boy, this borders on anarchism.'
> 'Anarchism? Surely. The hand of Providence with money-changing blisters. That is anarchism.'
> 'At least you admit the hand of Providence.'
> 'I don't know. Do I?' Jones, his hat over his eyes and his pipe projecting beneath, heaved a box of matches from his pocket. (45)

Faulkner had obviously been exposed to the novel of ideas by the time he wrote Soldiers' Pay, but while the influence is apparent also in his next attempt, the unpublished Elmer, it does not bear real fruit until Mosquitoes, the second published novel. Scattered throughout Soldiers' Pay are little essays of social comment, reminiscent of F. Scott Fitzgerald's early fiction:

> This, the spring of 1919, was the day of the Boy, of him who had been too young for soldiering. For two years he had had a dry time of it. Of course, girls had used him during the scarcity of men, but always in such a detached impersonal manner. Like committing fornication with a beautiful woman who chews gum steadily all the while. O Uniform, O Vanity. They had used him but when a uniform showed up he got the air. (130)

Faulkner makes no effort to create the illusion that these essays are part of any character's consciousness, nor does he make any effort to work them into dialogue. They are simply essays by the author on the social setting of his novel. Sometimes, too, the omniscient author intrudes directly to comment on a character's thoughts, as in the passage in which young Robert Saunders cannot understand why his mother won't let him ask Cecily about Donald's scar:

> He left the room in exasperation. His mamma would have been shocked could she have read his thoughts. It wasn't her especially. They're all alike, he guessed largely, as had many a man before him and as many will after him. He wasn't going to hurt the old 'fraid cat. (67)

Faulkner's mixing and shifting of points of view is not wholly haphazard. In the course of the novel a fairly good picture of Cecily Saunders emerges, for instance, as she is seen alternately through the eyes of Jones, Margaret Powers, Gilligan, and George Farr--and as she is described by direct authorial comment.

The methods for handling point of view which I have been discussing deviate very little from the traditional, and Faulkner employed most of them in the Picayune fiction. There is one technique, however, which Faulkner did not use in the Picayune fiction, a technique which has important implications for Faulkner's later work. This technique may be called the collective consciousness point of view. Faulkner undoubtedly did not originate the idea of forging a group consciousness as a narrative device, but it is the use which he makes of the technique that is significant. In Soldiers' Pay, for the first time, Faulkner undertakes to explore the collective consciousness (and conscience) of a small southern town, and, what is more important, to use that consciousness as fictional point of view. Faulkner describes the town early in the novel:

> Charlestown, like numberless other towns throughout the south, had been built around a circle of tethered horses and mules. In the middle of the square was the courthouse--a simple utilitarian edifice of brick and sixteen beautiful Ionic columns stained with generations of casual tobacco. Elms surrounded the courthouse and beneath these trees, on scarred and carved wood benches and chairs the city fathers, progenitors of solid laws and solid citizens who believed in Tom Watson and feared only God and drouth, in black string ties or the faded brushed gray and bronze meaningless

> medals of the Confederate States of America, no longer having to make any pretense toward labor, slept or whittled away the long drowsy days while their juniors of all ages, not yet old enough to frankly slumber in public, played checkers or chewed tobacco or talked. (78)

In Chapter IV Faulkner suddenly interrupts the narrative to record, briefly, the thoughts of some of the characters. Included is the collective consciousness of the town:

> The Town:
> War Hero Returns....
> His face...the way that girl goes on with that Farr boy....
> Young Robert Saunders:
> I just want to see his scar....
> Cecily:
> And now I'm not a good woman any more. Oh, well, it had to be sometime, I guess....
> George Farr:
> Yes! Yes! She was a virgin! But if she won't see me, it means somebody else. Her body in another's arms....Why must you? What do you want? Tell me: I will do anything, anything....
> Margaret Powers:
> Can nothing at all move me again? Nothing to desire? Nothing to stir me, to move me, save pity?...
> Gilligan:
> Margaret, tell me what you want. I will do it. Tell me, Margaret. (105)

Later, in Chapter VII, Faulkner devotes an entire section of the chapter to "Voices," and again the collective voice of the town is heard commenting on the events of the story:

> The Town:
> I wonder what the woman that came home with him thinks about it, now he's taken another one. If I were that Saunders girl I wouldn't take a man that brought another woman right up to my door, you might say. And that new one, what'll she do now? Go away and get another man, I guess. Hope she'll learn enough to get a well one this time....Funny goings-on in that house. And a preacher of the gospel, too. Even if he is Episcopal. If he wasn't such a nice man....
> George Farr:
> It isn't true, Cecily, darling, sweetheart. You can't, you can't. After your body prone and narrow as a pool dividing....

> The Town:
>
> I hear that boy of Mahon's, that hurt fellow, and that girl of Saunders', are going to get married. My wife said they never would, but I said all the time....
>
> Mrs. Burney:
>
> Men don't know. They should of looked out for him better. Saying he never wanted for nothing....
>
> George Farr:
>
> Cecily, Cecily....Is this death?
>
> The Town:
>
> There's that soldier that came with Mahon. I guess that woman will take him now. But maybe she don't have to. He might have been saving time himself? Well, wouldn't you, if you was him? (180-181)

And still later in the novel Faulkner permits the communal mind not merely to comment on events in the story which have already been narrated by other means, but to relate events for the first time; we had not known, previous to this passage, the details of Cecily's marriage to George Farr:

> Besides, it was all legal now. Miss Cecily Saunders was safely married--though nobody knows where they were from the time they drove out of town in George Farr's car until they were properly married by a priest in Atlanta the next day (but then I always told you about that girl). They all hoped for the worst. And that Mrs. Whats-her-name, that tall black-headed woman at Mahon's, had at last married someone, putting an end to that equivocal situation. (194)

Margaret Powers' marriage to Donald Mahon had been narrated directly in a section just preceding this passage, while Cecily's marriage, much less important, of course, is related in brief summary narrative from the point of view of the community consciousness.

Summary narrative is the exception rather than the rule in Soldiers' Pay, and the scenic method of narration in the novel gives rise also to the most conspicuous feature of Faulkner's handling of time in the novel. Soldiers' Pay is

a novel of the present; each scene has a sense of immediacy, deliberately heightened by language and syntax: "But here came quick tapping feet down the uncarpeted hall and she entered, saying: 'Good morning, Uncle Joe,' in her throaty voice, crossing the room with graceful effusion, not seeing Jones at once." (49) The immediacy of "here" where one would normally expect "there" and the string of present participles contribute to the effect.

Furthermore, the scenes which make up the novel are presented, almost entirely, in strict chronological order, with no hint of the experiments in time sequence of narration which were to come with The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom! There are flashbacks in the novel, as there are flashbacks in the Picayune fiction, but they are curiously unconnected, except in the most tenuous way, with the central events, the present happenings of the novel. Perhaps the most functional of these flashbacks are the ones narrated by Emmy (Chapter III, section VIII, 86-90) and Margaret Powers (112-114), for they at least fill in the past of some of the characters. Emmy tells the story of her pre-war affair with Donald, and Mrs. Powers tells of meeting and marrying her first husband, Dick--of the simultaneous attraction and revulsion he aroused in her. The other flashback in the novel, however, is much less functional and seems to be almost solely a tour de force. The first three sections of Chapter V begin, without explanation, to relate the experiences of a Captain Green and a Sergeant Madden during the war. Green is removed from command of the company, and we are told

that he was later killed. Green and Madden were friends, but Green is connected in no visible way with any of the other characters of the novel. The adventures of Madden continue, however, and a Lieutenant Powers joins the company. Madden becomes friends with Powers, and Powers is eventually killed by one of his own men, hysterical at being in the trenches for the first time:

> Powers and Madden sprang among them as they fought blindly, fumbling and tearing at their gas masks, trampling each other, but they were powerless. The lieutenant laid about him with his fists, trying to make himself heard, and the man who had given the alarm whirled suddenly on the fire-step, his head and shoulders sharp against the sorrowful dawn.
>
> 'You got us killed,' he shrieked, shooting the officer in the face at point-blank range. (124)

Lieutenant Powers, of course, is Margaret's first husband, and Sergeant Madden reappears in the dance scene. And there is a further connection; for immediately after the flashback story of Lieutenant Powers' death, Mrs. Burney is introduced into the story; Mrs. Burney is grieving for her son Dewey who was killed in France. From Madden's reaction to Mrs. Burney (129) it seems clear that Dewey was the man who shot Powers, that Dewey was executed for the murder of Powers. "'We did all we could for him,'" Madden tells Mrs. Burney. The moment of Powers' death is repeated several times during the scene at the dance through the consciousness of Madden: "Powers... a man jumping along a trench of demoralized troops caught in a pointless hysteria. Powers. A face briefly spitted on the flame of a rifle: a white moth beneath a reluctant and sorrowful dawn." (146) There is a certain irony later in a

conversation between Mrs. Powers and Mrs. Burney:

> 'You heard about my boy?' she asked with yearning.
>
> 'Yes they told me, Dr. Mahon did. He was a good soldier, wasn't he?'
>
> 'Yes. And them folks got him killed with just a lot of men around. Seems like they might of took him into a house where women-folks could have eased him. Them others came back spry and bragging much as you please. Trust them officers and things not to get hurt!' Her washed blue eyes brooded across the quiet square. After a time she said: 'You never lost no one you loved in the war, did you?'
>
> 'No,' Mrs. Powers answered, gently.
>
> 'I never thought so,' the other stated fretfully. 'You don't look like it, so tall and pretty. But then, most didn't. He was so young,' she explained, 'so brave....' She fumbled with her umbrella. Then she said briskly:
>
> 'Mahon's boy come back anyway. That's something. 'Specially as he's taking a bride.' She became curious again, obscene: 'He's all right, ain't he?'
>
> 'All right?'
>
> 'I mean for marriage. He ain't--it's just--I mean a man ain't no right to palm himself off on a woman if he ain't--'
>
> 'Good morning,' said Mrs. Powers curtly, leaving her cramped and neat in her meticulous air-proof black, holding her cotton umbrella like a flag, stubborn, refusing to surrender. (178-179)

The irony of this encounter is very effective, but it is the only encounter between Margaret Powers and Mrs. Burney in the novel, and because neither of them learns of the real relationship which exists between them, past and present remain separated in the novel. The flashback is handled well enough technically; it is simply irrelevant to the present action of the novel. It would make little difference, to put it simply, if Lieutenant Powers had been killed falling out of bed.

Faulkner's failure to bring the past and present together is perhaps the greatest technical weakness of the novel, more

significant surely than the sometimes haphazard handling of point of view. Malcolm Cowley, describing Sherwood Anderson's "epiphanies" or "moments at which a character, a landscape, or a personal relation stands out in its essential nature" goes on to say that "the problem he almost never solved was how to link one moment with another in a pattern of causality, or how to indicate the passage of time."[23] This was also Faulkner's problem in Soldiers' Pay--a problem which he did not solve, though he made the attempt.

Faulkner's handling of time in Soldiers' Pay often resembles very closely Anderson's techniques. At one point, for instance, he indicates the passage of time for George Farr who is waiting to make a nocturnal call on Cecily by entitling a series of brief sections "Nine-thirty," "Ten o'clock," "Ten-thirty," and "Eleven o'clock":

> Ten o'clock
>
> Dew on the grass, dew on small unpickable roses, making them sweeter, giving them an odor. Otherwise they had no odor, except that of youth and growth, as young girls have no particular attributes, save the kinship of youth and growth. Dew on the grass, the grass assumed a faint luminousness as if it had stolen light from day and the moisture of night were releasing it, giving it back to the world again. Tree frogs shrilled in the trees, insects droned in the grass. (162)

The method here is too much like Anderson's in Dark Laughter (the novel Anderson was working on when Faulkner met him) and earlier works to be mere coincidence. Faulkner was to

[23]Malcolm Cowley, "Sherwood Anderson's Epiphanies," London Magazine, VII (July, 1960), 61-62.

make even greater use of the method in the second published novel, Mosquitoes.

Soldiers' Pay is an impressionistic novel, and in diction, imagery, and narrative method it is indebted to Anderson--and to the other important impressionist influences on Faulkner's early work, Thomas Beer and Joseph Conrad. Soldiers' Pay is, above all, an important record of Faulkner's development as a craftsman in fiction. Its greatest success is undoubtedly its effective transposition of symbolist imagery to prose fiction; its greatest weakness is the handling of time: the failure to make the past relevant to the present, the inability to unite the two symbolic moments of the novel--Powers' death and Cecily's seduction--the symbols respectively of wartime horror and peacetime luxuriance. It is significant, however, that Faulkner, by using the flashback, attempted to unite the two; that he attempted to make the past relevant. The great novels of his career, of course, cannot be written until he succeeds at this task. His next attempt, the unfinished and unpublished Elmer, reveals, I think, some important steps toward that goal.

Chapter V

Elmer

By the time Soldiers' Pay was accepted by Liveright for publication, Faulkner was bound for Europe aboard the freighter West Ivis; while in Europe he received a check for $250 from Liveright, an advance on his first novel. This first significant financial return from his writing must have seemed to Faulkner an important milestone, for he later confessed that, although nearly penniless, he hesitated for some time to cash that check. His career as a novelist must have appeared to him to be fairly launched, and he wasted no time beginning a second novel. According to Carvel Collins he spent much of his time in the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris working on a novel to be called Elmer.[1]

Elmer was never published. The only extant copy of it—130 pages of typescript and four manuscript pages in Faulkner's almost illegible handwriting--is incomplete and unfinished.[2] It would be foolish to treat Elmer as an important addition to the Faulkner canon, but this unfinished and apparently abandoned work is an important document for the study of

[1]Carvel Collins, ed., New Orleans Sketches (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1958), p. 32.

[2]A brief bibliographical description of the typescript appears in James B. Meriwether's The Literary Career of William Faulkner (Princeton: Princeton University Library, 1961), p. 81. I have examined the typescript in the University of Virginia Library, and my summary in this chapter is based on that examination.

Faulkner's early experiments with narrative techniques and his development into a master of fiction.

Since the contents of the Elmer manuscript have not been discussed, beyond the briefest mention, in Faulkner scholarship, it will be necessary to provide a summary of the story. Apart from the main body of the manuscript there are seven typewritten sheets and four hand-written pages which supply at least five distinctly different fragmentary "beginnings" for the novel; the significance of these I shall discuss later in the chapter. My summary will begin, however, with a segment of the typescript entitled Elmer, Book I, Chapter I.

Elmer Hodge is a young American aboard a freighter bound for Europe, more specifically for Venice; he wishes the ship were bound for Liverpool instead. He muses about the books he has brought along but does not read--Clive Bell and The Outline of Art by Elie Faure--and about his ambition to be a painter. He likes to get out his unused tubes of paint and caress them:

> To finger lasciviously smooth dull silver tubes virgin yet at the same time pregnant....Elmer hovered over them with a brooding maternity taking up one at a time those fat portentious [sic] tubes in which was yet wombed his heart's desire the world itself--thick-bodied and female and at the same time phallic: hermaphroditic. He closed his eyes the better to savour its feel...

He muses too on his past life, and this musing comprises the first long portion of the narrative. As he did in Soldiers' Pay, Faulkner has divided the chapters of Elmer into numbered sections; the first section ends with the passage quoted above, and at the beginning of the second section Elmer opens his

eyes to see that the label on the tube of paint he is fondling says "red"; this immediately summons up a memory from Elmer's childhood in which his family's rented house is burning and he, naked, is being embraced and comforted in the street by a neighbor woman; someone, trying to salvage possessions from the burning house, throws Elmer's tin breadbox into the street where it bursts open and reveals his treasures to the world: a bird's wing, an assortment of cigar stubs, and a screw driver.

Section three of the chapter, continuing the association, begins, "So Elmer disliked red." Elmer's family is described; his father, a lazy, spineless man, is dominated by Elmer's mother whose "fretful energy" keeps the family moving from one town to another across the south. The older children, tired of moving from one squalid rented house to another, begin to desert the family; one boy disappears while the family is living in Paris, Tennessee, and the girl, Jo, disappears in Jonesboro, Arkansas. Elmer is grief-stricken at Jo's departure. She was sixteen, boylike, breastless, hard and scrawny, and Elmer adored her. She had shared a bed with him before her departure, and there is a long impressionistic description of Jo undressing, seen through the child Elmer's eyes. Shortly after her departure, Jo sends Elmer a box of crayons, but "... for a long time he would not use them, would not deface their pointed symmetrical purity. There was a red one in the box."

Chapter Two begins: "Red. Solid and comfortable as a torpedo tube. White, a big one. You'll need lots of white that bright cold saleswoman had told him." Elmer, of course,

is back aboard ship in the present, among his unused tubes of paint. He begins to think about Myrtle (one of the alternate beginnings of the novel is entitled Elmer and Myrtle) and Myrtle's mother. He also thinks briefly about his "bastard son in Houston," but his thoughts do not linger there long because "he had met Myrtle in the meantime, but Myrtle was like a star, clean and young and unattainable for all her--Henry James would have called it vulgarity--humanness." There follows a description of Myrtle's well-heeled father, and (in section two of the chapter, which is less than a page long) a brief account of Elmer's proposal to Myrtle and of his parting from her when she and her mother leave for Europe. Section three relates Elmer's return from World War I to Houston, Texas, where his father is living. Elmer has been wounded and has a limp and a walking stick. His mother has died and he visits her grave; he resolves to become a painter.

Chapter Three returns abruptly to Elmer at the age of fourteen. Because of the family's nomadic life he is only in the fourth grade, and, a head taller than all the other pupils in his class, the object of ridicule. Elmer worships "an older boy, tall and beautiful as a young god," and experiences both exaltation and humiliation when the older boy deigns to notice him by tripping him on the playground. At the beginning of this incident Faulkner had typed, "When he was fourteen in Jonesboro...," but "Jonesboro" was crossed out and "Little Rock" written in above it; "Little Rock,"

however, has also been crossed out and nothing written in its place. One of the hand-written sheets, which contains a fragmentary beginning entitled Growing Pains, has the same incident and begins: "In Jefferson, Mississippi Elmer was in the fourth grade...." Here, however, the entire paragraph is crossed out. Nonetheless, it is the first appearance of the mythical Jefferson in Faulkner's prose, and it is the more noticeable because all of the other cities and towns in the Elmer manuscript are given actual place names. The second section of Chapter Three tells of Elmer's receiving a box of paints for Christmas at the age of fourteen.

At this point in the typescript there is an hiatus; page 33 breaks off in mid-sentence, and the next page is numbered 44. Chapter Four begins on this page ("Three" having been typed but crossed out, and "Four" printed above it) and supplies more details of Elmer's childhood, particularly his fondness for cigar stubs (he likes their shape), whips in their sockets, and factory smoke-stacks. He also likes to stand before the windows of hardware stores and admire "shining nickel joints and slim pipes at the end of which shower bath sprays bloomed like perishable flowers." He likes "tall simple glass vases filled deliciously with red and green...he would like to touch them, to stroke them as you might a dog." With his new set of paints he paints smoke-stacks and armless cylindrical human figures. After this thorough explication of Elmer's fondness for phallic shapes, there is the briefest mention of his passing through puberty and his "discovery" of sex.

The next section of Chapter Four leaps forward in time to describe how Elmer's father came into a small inheritance and bought a house in Texas so that his wife could not make him move any more. This broke Elmer's mother's spirit, and she died. Now his father sits alone in the house he has bought and spits tobacco juice out an open window into the dust.

There is another gap in the typescript here, and apparently fifteen pages are missing, for the last numbered page of the typescript is 51 and the next numbered page, 66, begins in mid-sentence. Before resuming the summary at page 66, however, there are nineteen consecutive but unnumbered pages to be considered. The material in these pages appears to belong at about this point in the narrative. These pages give an account of Elmer's affair with a girl named Ethyl in Houston before the war. (Ethyl and Elmer's "bastard son" had been mentioned in an earlier section.) Ethyl announces, after she is pregnant with Elmer's child, that she is going to marry a well-to-do middle-aged gentleman named Grover. Elmer's self-pity is described as Ethyl tells him to go away. He decides to go far away--to the war in Europe. He imagines Ethyl imagining him dead.

Elmer's war experiences are not described in this part of the narrative, and the next section describes his return to Houston. An earlier passage has described this homecoming too, telling of Elmer's visit to his father and of his visit to his mother's grave. In the unnumbered segment of the

typescript, however, these details are omitted, although in both accounts Elmer is described as suffering recurrent back pains, the result of a war wound. Elmer takes a job pumping gas at a Houston service station and dreams of meeting Ethyl again:

> And then he really did meet her--naturally in a way and at a time when he least expected it. He knew it was she, for even as the car slowly drew up toward the gasoline station, ere while the front of it was an idiotic vibration of glass that obscured the occupants, his whole being seemed to disintegrate.

Elmer has daydreams of a rekindled mutual passion but "In the meantime he met Myrtle." Myrtle, however, leaves for Europe with her mother:

> After a year Myrtle's image had gone almost entirely, leaving the other image in undisputed possession of a field become dull with sheer security; and the gaps becoming smaller and further between, the unemphatic mellow tunnel like an afternoon into which his life had got was almost as before. Until something happened which shattered it forever, almost obliterating the slim silver Diana arrogant and virginal and proud.

We never find out what the "something" was, except that it brought Elmer a great deal of money. There can be no doubt that Faulkner intended the exact source of the new wealth to remain (at least for a time in the narrative) a mystery, for there is no possibility of a hiatus here since the end of section nine and the beginning of section ten are on the same page. Section ten begins:

> His first impulse was to give some of it to her whom he had injured long ago and who had eliminated him from her life so casually. And in this impulse was just a dash of that perfectly natural desire to say I told you

> so. Just a faint dash.
>
> Elmer, arrogant with cash and the knowledge that all doors were now open to him the obscure, went straight to her home, mounting the steps with a firmness that would have dismayed him had he not been temporarily drunk with money and a natural impulse.

Ethyl does not fly into Elmer's arms, however; and for his part, Elmer realizes that she is getting fat. He asks to see his child who is now five years old and a spoiled brat. This scene is unfinished in the typescript, breaking off in mid-sentence with "The child screamed, tearless above its gaping mouth, watching him with the blankness of a carven idol. 'Want your ball?' he said." Here the unnumbered nineteen page segment of the typescript ends; however, around the left, right, and bottom margins of this last page Faulkner has written a further description of the room with an arrow indicating that it is to be inserted between the sentence, "He did not even watch her as she crossed the room and mounted the stairs" and the next paragraph, which begins, "The child descended the stairs with a spoiled exasperated slowness." Part of this added description reads: "The room reeked of a heavy transcient prosperity, like stale cigar smoke. He could imagine Ethyl receiving her identical women friends in a mindless and terrible pride." The insertion of the descriptive passage shows Faulkner's continuing concern for setting the scene in an impressionistic fashion. The phrase "mindless and terrible pride" anticipates, I think, some of the cadence of Faulkner's later prose.

Returning now to the numbered portion of the typescript,

page 66 begins in mid-sentence with the words "pin back." The material on the rest of the page makes it clear that the pin is the pin of a hand grenade which is being passed around by a sergeant on the deck of a troop ship as part of a training session. Elmer is supposed to throw the grenade, apparently overboard, but when he attempts to do so his arm strikes a stanchion and the grenade explodes on deck, killing the man next to him and wounding Elmer severely in the back. The action is narrated in one page with the same kind of impressionistic treatment which characterized the combat scenes in Soldiers' Pay:

> His hand suddenly decided to obey him and swung swiftly backward striking a stanchion ere reaching the top of the arc; and Elmer saw the face of the man beside him like a suspended mask at his shoulder, completely expressionless, and that dull oval object in the air between them growing to a monstrous size, like a huge obscene coconut.

Elmer arrives, wounded, in England. "How green it looks! Elmer thought sickly." His stay in a British hospital is very briefly described, and his departure from England: "It was greener than ever when he saw it once more from the deck of a ship as they dropped down with the tide."

He arrives in New York, spends his back pay, and visits art galleries. He then goes south and stays for a time in New Orleans. There follows a description of the city which is reminiscent of the Double Dealer sketch, "New Orleans," and indicates that the city had made a strong impression on

the young writer's consciousness:[3]

> Its voluptuous inertia mocking all briskness with a mild polite derision; its atmosphere that made even those who had the virus of progress in their blood go through their ritual of efficiency with tongue in cheek; its quiet vitiating twilight soft and oppressive as smoke in the street, hanging over the hushed eternal river and about the docks where he walked smelling the rich smells of earth in a quick hastened fecundity, an overripeness: sugar and fruit, resin and dusk and warmth, like the sigh of a dark and passionate woman no longer young.

In New Orleans Elmer also sees his sister Jo again, on the far side of a street corner crowd which is listening to the patriotic harangue of an orator trying to sell war bonds. Elmer tries to elbow his way through the crowd to reach her, but by the time he is able to get through the crowd she is gone.

On page 72 of the typescript the narrative shifts back to Elmer aboard ship thinking about his unopened paint tubes, his unread books, and Myrtle. Elmer is also lamenting the fact that he must go back to "plans, hotels, train schedules, where to eat and what." Then, with one sentence, Faulkner ties this page neatly up with the first page of the typescript: "That was why Elmer spitting on the Tyrrhenian Sea wished the boat was going to Liverpool, going anywhere that would prolong that day on which he must espouse his own personal fate, even back to America."

At the top of page 73 of the typescript "Book Two" had

[3]New Orleans is important as a setting in Pylon and The Wild Palms and, to a lesser degree, in Absalom, Absalom!

been typed, but the "Two"has been crossed out and a "Three" written in its place. The reason for this change becomes clear later in the typescript: a segment which had originally been designated as "Book Three" has been changed to "Book Two." Faulkner has also crossed out the typed numerals at the bottom of pages 73 and 74, but no new numerals are written in their place, indicating perhaps that Book Two (which is unfinished in the typescript) was never finished to Faulkner's satisfaction.[4]

The first sentence of section one on page 73 is "Venice looked like voluptuous lace," and the section goes on to describe Elmer's landing in Venice. At the beginning of section two Elmer is again thinking in terms of colors. "Green. How green that water was." We learn that Elmer is in a prison:

> ...walking that constricted damp stone floor, staring up to where freedom and space was intimated beyond a narrow window forty feet away as the crow flies and barred for some obscure reason with steel, he wondered if colors were never to have any significance to him who wanted so much to paint pictures with them, save as mementoes of bitter discomfort. Red: fear and nakedness; green: incarceration. He tramped back and forth as in a dream....

The reason for Elmer's incarceration is not immediately revealed; the next four sections deal with the events which led up to his arrest as he recalls them in his damp cell.

[4]It is interesting to note further that the numerals 73 and 74 have been crossed out with a pencil while the change at the top of page 73 was done in ink, indicating that Faulkner probably worked on the revision of this part of the novel more than once.

A brief scene describes his cashing a traveler's check; the clerk who cashed it is frightened by the size of it and suggests that he cash a smaller one, to which Elmer replies, "But they are all like that." Thus, we are again reminded of Elmer's wealth (mentioned first in the section of unnumbered pages) but the source of it remains a mystery. Elmer meets the ship's second officer, and it is hinted that this meeting is the first step in the chain of events which put Elmer in the jail cell. "Elmer thought later that had he been a minute longer getting his money, had the agent's office been anywhere else in Venice, he could have stayed out of jail." Elmer has dinner and a great deal to drink in the company of the second officer and a nameless woman. The description is impressionistic and attempts to create the effect of a drunken consciousness:

> Dinner, much dinner, a magnificent dinner. I like Italy. I like Italian food and wine. Pavement, stone under his feet, but his knees gave to it as he put his feet down. Walking. One after another. Clever. Men can do anything. Conquer earth and then walk on it. His insides turned slowly counter clockwise, as if he were descending a circular staircase....Lights hurrying look overside see gold teeth feel wind trying to unbutton his overcoat. Lights going everywhere gone not all gone though big one like a woman's belly with an incandescent baby inside of it Jesus.

Then, suddenly, they are indoors again at a table, drinking and Elmer's preoccupation with phallic shapes returns:

> Glass in hand, tall full, and virginal, smooth, wet and phallic turning this hand. That hand cloth. Beneath the cloth heavy as old bread turning warm and stale inward. Another. Twin and smooth, lifeless and latent as torpedoes. Close together spent and challenging valleying his hand. Not far though. A wall rising soft

> too soft ever to be conquered cleanly. Soft with many assaults. The mate said Here Here sharply picking up Elmer's hand as though it were a rag and putting it back on the table. The woman laughed. He smelled her.

There is really little resemblance here to the drunken meanderings of Julian Lowe's mind in Soldiers' Pay; Faulkner's method here is more psychological, in a consciously clinical sense. Elmer's life history, in the selection of details and events to be stressed, reads more like a psychological case history than that of almost any other character in Faulkner's novels.[5] More than anything in Soldiers' Pay, the method resembles, anticipates perhaps, the first section of The Sound and the Fury in which Faulkner contrives to create the consciousness of an idiot with a simplicity of diction and the association of direct sense impressions (Caddy smelled like leaves, etc.).

Elmer passes out in a gondola and has an elaborate fantasy in which he sees a torch-lit procession passing the form of an unconscious beggar:

> Spring was in the world somewhere; somewhere beyond walls ancient when Columbus put out with egg-fostered optimism....
>
> Unreproved they [the rats] swarm about his motionless shape [the antecedent of the pronoun "his," is not revealed until much later in the passage] exploring his clothing in an obscene silence, dragging their hot bellies over his lean and age-chilled body, sniffing his intimate parts. Then as one rat they flash away, and secure and still again they become a row of cigarettes poised unwinkingly at a single

[5]With the possible exception of Joe Christmas in Light in August; Elmer's unopened tubes of paint and Joe's toothpaste tubes have essentially the same function.

> level. The beggar whose empty hand yet shapes his stolen crust, sleeps beneath the stone gate.

Torchbearers appear and heralds blowing trumpets. "The rats are supercilious as cigarettes of poets at La Rotonde at six o'clock." More of the procession passes, among which "a young naked boy whose skin has been daubed with vermillion passes carrying casually a crown." Among the other hallucinatory monsters is an elephant bearing in a "brass howdah the naked headless body of a black woman." Eight black slaves carry her head in an open ivory litter. The beggar is still sleeping and the rats still watching "like a row of curious cigarettes."

> ...there passes a white ass on which in a glass coffin lies a young man. He is still as pale amethyst marble, beautiful and cold in the light of torches; and as the procession passes windows open like eyes in the blind walls and young girls leaning their soft breasts on the window-sills cast violets. Then the windows close one by one like eyes going to sleep and the chained women raise their voices lamenting; and shadows and echoes and perfumes whirl away.

The procession passes by, and the priests approach the beggar and ask him, "Do you require aught of man, brother?" The beggar does not answer. "Then one of the priests, becoming bold, leans closer yet and slips his hand beneath the beggar's sorry robe, against his heart. It is cold." The priests cross themselves and leave; the rats return: "the rats are arrogant as cigarettes in a cafe in the afternoon. After a while they steal out again, climbing over the beggar, dragging their hot bellies over him, exploring unreproved his private parts...." The dream ends at this point and Elmer awakens

to find his hand "crouched like a cat in her [the unnamed slut who is still with them in the gondola] receptive stale lap."

There is much in the imagery of this passage which recalls the early poems of T. S. Eliot. The rats, for instance, in the third section of The Wasteland drag their bellies through a similarly macabre setting:

> A Rat crept softly through the vegetation
> Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
> While I was fishing in the dull canal
> On a winter evening round behind the gashouse
> Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
> And on the king my father's death before him.
> White bodies naked on the low damp ground
> And bones cast in a little low dry garret,
> Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.
> (lines 187-195)

The "young girls leaning their soft breasts on the window-sills" resemble, at least in their posture, the "lonely men in shirt sleeves, leaning out of windows" of "Prufrock," and the fact that Elmer discovers his hand "crouched like a cat" suggests the feline imagery of that poem.[6]

Virtually the whole of Elmer's dream reappears in Faulkner's next published novel, Mosquitoes (pp. 277-281, Dell ed., 1962), demonstrating once again Faulkner's habit of reusing and reworking his material. In Mosquitoes, however, the dream is related in a series of italicized paragraphs which

[6]Frederick L. Gwynn has discussed Faulkner's debt to Eliot in "Faulkner's Prufrock and Other Observations, LII (January, 1953), 63-70. Gwynn's article deals with an Eliot influence on Mosquitoes; many of his observations are valid, but some of the parallels he purports to find are misleading and far-fetched. He does not discuss the dream material from Elmer which Faulkner included verbatim in the last section of Mosquitoes.

are interspersed with the account of the final debauch of Fairchild, Julius, and Gordon. A kind of ironic thematic counterpoint is established in which the drunken artists talk of "form solidity color," beauty and proportion, while the vision offers its comment of death, squalor, and disarray. In the Elmer typescript the dream material has no such broad thematic function but is related only to the psychic life of the character Elmer. There is, however, a further relation between the use of these materials in Elmer and Mosquitoes: the character Elmer is an obvious prototype for the sculptor Gordon in Mosquitoes, and the "young naked boy daubed with vermillion," which represents the child Elmer in the firelight outside the burning house, is retained in Mosquitoes, as is the "headless, armless, legless torso of a girl, motionless and virginal and passionately eternal" which becomes for the sculptor Gordon the shape of his ideal. This relationship between the unpublished Elmer and the novel Mosquitoes must be treated in greater detail in the next chapter.

The next section of the typescript reverts to Elmer in his prison cell and relates his release from prison, accomplished with the aid of Angelo, a young Italian whom he meets there. Elmer decides to go to Paris to look for Myrtle; Angelo will accompany him. As they leave Venice Elmer declares melodramatically, "I'll never go to Venice again. Never." Chapter Two of this segment of the typescript consists of only three pages--an unfinished comic scene in a railway compartment. Angelo has bought a new suit with Elmer's money, and Elmer is trying to find out what he did with the old

one. Here Elmer's part of the narrative breaks off, although there are seven typed pages which deal with Elmer and Angelo in Paris. However, these were apparently written later and are attempts to provide a new beginning for the novel rather than fragments of a continuation of the story as it is unfolding in pages 73-94.[7]

The next, and last, continuous portion of the typescript was first designated by Faulkner as "Book Three"; the "Three" has been crossed out, however, and a "Two" printed in its place. The pages of this segment of the typescript have been numbered 73-106, and since the preceding segment is numbered 73-94, there is a certain overlapping of page numbers. This can be explained, however, by the fact that the page numbers 73-106 are written at the bottom of each page. Since there is no indication that typed numbers have been erased on these pages, Faulkner was obviously not sure where this part of the narrative was to fit while he was typing it from his handwritten copy. He apparently began the pagination with 73 after he decided to make this segment, rather than the account of Elmer's adventures in Venice, "Book Two" of the novel. The crossing out of the first few typed page numbers in the Venice section corroborates this; the fact that no new page numbers were provided indicates that Faulkner was far from finished with his structural revisions when he abandoned the task.

[7]These pages have a title, Portrait of Elmer Hodge, and the pagination begins with the numeral 1.

The structural revision which he did complete on the typescript, however, is illuminating. His decision to make the Venice segment Book Three and insert another part of the narrative as Book Two shows that he was attempting an experiment in thematic counterpoint much more ambitious than that of Soldiers' Pay. Elmer disappears completely from this last part of the typescript; the first two sections relate the experiences of Mrs. Monson and Myrtle aboard ship, and are concerned chiefly with Mrs. Monson's attitude toward drinking wine. Since Elmer has disappeared from the narrative, the events can no longer be channeled through his memory; Faulkner shifts, in these two sections, to an omniscient narration in which he communicates the thoughts of both Mrs. Monson and her daughter.

The next two sections (3 and 4), however, are told from Myrtle's point of view. "It was a spiffy ship. Running from perfect day after day, seeming to jump from one blue wave to another as the flying fishes do." Myrtle's naive and innocent flirtations with the ship's captain and a younger officer are described from Myrtle's point of view; and, sitting at her dressing table, she worries about putting on weight. It is Myrtle's point of view which ends section four of Chapter One: "It had been a spiffy voyage."

The first section of Chapter Two returns to the point of view of Mrs. Monson and her desire for "getting on" socially in Rome. At this point the narrative becomes social comedy, and with several new characters entering the story abruptly, the order and significance of events become

somewhat difficult to follow. Mrs. Monson is determined to join the church which will most enhance her social position, and she decides on the Church of England after talking to the canon, "an old man with a grey and dull Anglicism." She meets a younger Anglican clergyman, however, who is apparently also a canon as well as something of an amatuer tennis player. He advises her to join the Church of Rome.

In section two the narration returns to the omniscient point of view. "A remote female connection," hitherto unmentioned, writes to the young canon's father in England to inform him that his son is very attentive to a "rich American hag." The canon, whose name, we discover for the first time, is Bleyth, gets a wire from his father: MRYHR FOOL. WYSBROKE." He immediately wires back: "MARRY WHO. BLEYTH." Lord Wysbroke (for such is his title) is enraged by this reply and decides to go to London to see his other son.

Subsequent sections describe his trip to London, his extreme niggardliness, and his meeting with his other son, Lord Wohlendon, whom he commands to go to Rome and marry the "rich American hag." One wonders where Faulkner could have learned about the ways of English lords and clergymen, and one suspects it might have been from the comic novels of Huxley and Norman Douglas. At any rate, after this scene of social farce there follows a section which contains a brief history of George Bleyth:

> All he desired anyway was quiet and dull peace and a few women, preferably young and fairly good-looking and good tennis players, with whom to indulge in lazy and harmless intrigues. But he was

> human enough to gain a mild satisfaction from the knowledge that his father lacked the moral courage to sell the living of Wysbroke over his head and so leave him to shift for himself.

We are given, in a flashback, the scene of George Bleyth leaving Cambridge, followed by an account of how his grandfather got him the appointment at Rome. The meeting of the two brothers in Rome and their mutual dislike for each other is described.

The next section shifts from the omniscient to Mrs. Monson's point of view. She writes the canon a note asking him to "come to tea...and bring your brother. I want you to meet my daughter." Mrs. Monson thinks with disgust of some "fast" people she has seen cavorting on the beach, and she thinks, as she lies in bed, of her daughter Myrtle and of what she wants to get out of Europe.

The last section of this part of the typescript returns to Myrtle's point of view. She does not want to come to tea to meet the lord and the canon. She is tired and wants to go to bed. Her mother is insistent that she come to tea, but as the typescript breaks off on page 106, we are uncertain whether her efforts to persuade Myrtle will succeed.

This, then, is the novel Elmer, or as much of the story as has survived, for the typescript indicates almost certainly that parts of this first draft of the work are missing. Enough remains, however, to provide an interesting picture of what Faulkner was trying to accomplish. There are in addition seven pages of typescript and four manuscript sheets which are not part of any of the "books" of the novel described above.

These eleven pages are at the same time a puzzle and a further revelation of Faulkner's intentions and methods at this stage of his career. It seems worth while, therefore, to describe these fragments in some detail.

Four of the typewritten pages have unmistakably been typed on a different machine from the one Faulkner used for the rest of the typescript. This fact, in itself, may mean that these four pages are of later composition or it may mean nothing.[8] Two of these pages are unnumbered, and two of them are numbered 1 and 2; but the material on page 2 does not follow page 1, while one of the unnumbered pages does follow from page 1. Thus, two of the pages are consecutive, but the page numbered 2 and the other unnumbered page do not follow directly from any other page. In all four of these pages, however, the narration is in the present tense ("Elmer and Angelo are drinking beer"), and the material on all four pages is obviously part of a single scene: Elmer and Angelo drinking in a Paris café.

> It is afternoon: a gray afternoon; across the boulevard Montparnasse, the boulevard Raspail, the opposite building is potted with smug tile against a sky as gray as the long gray surge and heave of the Atlantic itself dividing him from home, from that Texas scene onto which his mother's unselfish and unflagging ambition

[8]The typescript of Soldiers' Pay, which I have also examined, was apparently typed with the same machine which typed all but four pages of Elmer. Faulkner had, he said, "an old portable" (see note 64, Chapter I). It may be that Faulkner took this typewriter to Europe with him and that he typed the four pages on a different machine after he returned. But this is just conjecture. After all, he may as easily have borrowed someone else's typewriter while in Paris.

> had at last haled his father's resigned and static being; that scene upon which, like a rebuilt automobile's ultimate mile, the family's integrity had at last collapsed, leaving upon the broad plain the quiet skeleton of Elmer's childhood.

This passage from the page numbered 1 is of course partly a summary of Elmer's life history. Nonetheless, the passage is not part of an epilogue or conclusion, but of an experimental new beginning for the novel. This is shown not only by the page number but by the title at the top of the page: Portrait of Elmer Hodge.

Angelo has been with Elmer for a year and Elmer does not know how to get rid of him. A passage on the unnumbered page which follows from page 1 describes the situation and appears almost verbatim on the page numbered 2 and on the second unnumbered page:

> Angelo's extreme vest V's the kaleidoscopic buldge of his three franc cravat. He has a thin purple[9] drink before him. He continues to form his fine musical periods. Meaningless, his words seem to possess[10] an aesthetic significance, like hearing someone recite a sixth century sonnet beyond a[11] wall; again Elmer watches him with baffled and fretted dismay. 'To meet Myrtle on the street on the Day,' he thinks. 'To have her see me with Angelo, learn that we are inseparable,

[9]Page 2 and the other unnumbered page have "purplish" here.

[10]The other unnumbered page has "have" here.

[11]The first unnumbered page breaks off here; page 2 and the other unnumbered page continue identically with the word "wall."

> that in a year I have not learned enough Italian to send him back home, get rid of him. Even if I dared. To learn that I have to depend on him to order food to eat or buy a toothbrush or get a bath.'[12]

The other three typewritten sheets, none of them numbered, contain much the same material as the four sheets just described.[13] However, they are typed with the same machine which typed the rest of the typescript, and the narration is in the past tense. These three pages are continuous, and a passage from one of them will illustrate, I think, how closely they are related to the four pages of present tense narration:

> Angelo with his extreme vest v-ing the kaliedoscopic buldge of his tie, Angelo with a thin purplish drink before him continued to form his periods with a fine high obliviousness of the fact that his patron had learned no Italian whatever. Meaningless, his words seemed to possess an aesthetic significance, passionate and impersonal as a 12th century love song, and Elmer regarded him with a sort of helpless dismay.

It seems possible, in fact, that the present tense version was a revision of the three page past tense segment.

[12]After the word "dismay," page 2 has a comma and continues: "thinking of Myrtle, of the day when he would meet her in the street and of what she would think of Angelo, of whom he could not rid himself, knowing no Italian, even if he dared; learned that they were" end of page 2 . The word "sixth" is possibly a typing error, and Faulkner meant "sixteenth century." It is also possible that he had a hazy conception of the history of verse forms. In another version (see above) Faulkner calls it a "12th century love song."

[13]Although they have no title, these pages also have Elmer and Angelo seated in a Paris cafe and Elmer musing on his past, his future, and the problem of getting rid of Angelo.

The four pages in Faulkner's handwriting, which remain to be considered, comprise apparently further alternative beginnings for the novel. Two sheets, unnumbered, are both entitled Elmer. One of them has two paragraphs and the beginning of a third; each paragraph has a separate title: "Montparnasse," "Texas," and "Rome." The second sheet has two longer paragraphs, without the place titles, but the material on it is much the same as that on the first sheet: impressionistic sentence fragments from Elmer's point of view which reflect on his present situation in Paris and on his past life.

The other two hand-written pages are both numbered "1." One of them is entitled Elmer and Myrtle and begins '...and Elmer patted Myrtle's hand....' It then goes on to describe the burning of the house in Johnson City, Tennessee, and Elmer as "he clung to his mother's thin galloping body... while her flat breasts jammed against him." In the typescript version of this incident it is a neighbor woman and not Elmer's mother who holds him. The second sheet with a numeral one is entitled Growing Pains and begins: "In Jefferson, Miss. Elmer was in the fourth grade...none of the boys in the fourth grade reached his shoulder." The next paragraphs go on to describe how he was tripped on the playground by a boy "with a soul of cruel beauty in his face." The reverse side of this sheet also begins to relate this incident, and "Jefferson, Miss." reappears.

ii

It is no exaggeration to say that the problem of time is closely involved with the structural changes which Faulkner made in the Elmer typescript. The four typed pages in which the narration is in the present tense are a striking example. Throughout the Picayune fiction and in his first novel, Soldiers' Pay, Faulkner had, as I have pointed out in preceding chapters, experimented with shifts in time to lend either immediacy or a static quality to an impressionistic scene. The four pages of present tense narration are entitled Portrait of Elmer Hodge, and Faulkner apparently intended them to be a new beginning for the novel; such a strategy would have the effect of providing a static starting point in time and space, from which movement, both back and forward in time, will flow. The movement forward in time from that static starting point in the Paris cafe is the part of the novel which Faulkner never completed (or if he did, the record of it has not been preserved). The movement forward in time must unite the two plots of the novel: the adventures of Elmer and the adventures of Myrtle.[14]

The four manuscript pages, each prefixed with a title and each therefore representing presumably a separate attempt at providing a beginning for the novel, reveal similar attempts to range back and forward in time. The unnumbered

[14]It might well be, in fact, that the difficulty of bringing the two plots together in time is what stymied Faulkner in the novel.

manuscript page with the three headings, "Montparnasse," "Texas," and "Rome" illustrates this.[15] The page entitled Elmer and Myrtle begins with Elmer and Myrtle together and then reverts in the next paragraph to Elmer's childhood. Another page begins with Elmer at the age of fourteen.

It is not just in these attempts to write a new beginning for the novel that the typescript reveals Faulkner grappling with the problem of time in narration. His decision to change what was originally designated as Book Three to Book Two effectively breaks up any direct time sequence in the novel, for what had originally been Book Two followed directly in time from Book One. Moreover, within Book One itself Faulkner frequently abandons the direct chronological method, as he does, for instance, at the beginning of Chapter Three: the previous chapter had described Elmer returning from the war, and Chapter Three reverted abruptly to his adventures at the age of fourteen.

In fact, the flashback, which had been used sparingly in the Picayune fiction and in Soldiers' Pay, would obviously become, if Faulkner had carried out his revisions of Elmer, a dominant device. As it is, the flashback is a dominant device throughout Book One in which the events of the past are reconstructed and narrated through Elmer's memory. The technique was to be used later, with much more complete mastery, in Absalom, Absalom!

[15]Elmer dreams of a future with Myrtle and also muses about the "confluence" of the events of his past life.

Compared with Soldiers' Pay, the Elmer typescript shows much more experimentation with summary narrative as opposed to the scenic method. There is evidence, of course, of a lingering impressionist influence: "Outside in George Street motors went ceaselessly beneath the overcast sky in which the sun was a wan and impotent ball." But there is also evidence that Faulkner is no longer preoccupied with impressionism as a dominant device for giving structure and shape to a novel. Effective impressionistic scenes remain, but there are also long stretches of summary narrative--Elmer's childhood and family history being a prime example.

Soldiers' Pay was the product of a young symbolist poet turning, reluctantly perhaps, to the novel. The Elmer manuscript, on the other hand, is the work of a fledgling craftsman in prose, committed now to the novel and experimenting more widely with the techniques peculiar to prose narrative. This is apparent not only in the more extensive use of summary narrative but in the handling of point of view as well. The most consistent point of view in Soldiers' Pay had been the detached poetic voice hovering over the scene; if the consciousness of a character was used as the point of view for narration, Faulkner was never content to use the same character for any length of time. In Elmer, however, the point of view is confined to the character Elmer for most of the first two books of the narrative.[16] Even when, in the

[16]An exception occurs in the unnumbered nineteen page segment in which Faulkner occasionally supplies authorial comments on Elmer's actions.

Myrtle-Mrs. Monson portion of the typescript, the point of view shifts from one character to another, there is still an attempt to keep the point of view consistent within each section. Thus, the point of view will be Mrs. Monson's in one section and Myrtle's in the next.

It is possible that Faulkner had read Lubbock's Craft of Fiction at this stage.[17] There are references to Henry James, albeit unfavorable ones, in both Soldiers' Pay and the Elmer typescript, and it is certain that Faulkner had read Joseph Hergesheimer's Cytheria, a novel in which the point of view is limited throughout to a single character.[18] There can be no doubt, at any rate, that the Elmer typescript shows a sophisticated awareness of point of view as a key concept for narrative composition.

This awareness, along with Faulkner's practice of limiting the point of view to a single character throughout the first part of the Elmer typescript, makes the shift in the last portion to an omniscient narration all the more striking. There is an important difference, however, between the omniscient narration in this manuscript and that employed in Soldiers' Pay. In Soldiers' Pay the voice of the poet hovers over the scene and contributes an impressionistic description;

[17]See note 33, Chapter I.

[18]Cytheria was one of three Hergesheimer novels which Faulkner reviewed in The Mississippian. The review has been reprinted in Early Prose and Poetry, ed. Carvel Collins, pp. 101-103.

in the last part of the Elmer typescript the omniscient narrator assumes the voice of a satiric essayist. It is a more cerebral voice than the voice of Soldiers' Pay, and it is unmistakably the voice of the novel of ideas. I have noted in Chapter IV that some of the dialogues of Faulkner's first novel have the ring of the cerebral exchanges commonly associated with the novels of Huxley and Douglas. It is not a complete surprise, therefore, to find that the last portion of the Elmer typescript has all the characteristics, both in subject matter and method, of the novel of ideas.

There is clearly another major influence at work on Faulkner's early prose besides the Beer-Conrad-Anderson brand of impressionism. It is the influence of the Huxley-Douglas novel of ideas, and it is an influence apparent, as I have pointed out, in both Soldiers' Pay and the unpublished Elmer. Moreover, what Faulkner began in the last portion of Elmer he continued in his next novel, Mosquitoes. It is in Mosquitoes, therefore, the subject of the next chapter, that the influence of the novel of ideas becomes most pervasive.

Chapter VI

Mosquitoes and the Novel of Ideas

In Elmer Faulkner tried to write a serious novel about art and the artist; he was apparently not satisfied with the result, and the work was abandoned. In Mosquitoes he attempted a comic novel on the same subject. The result this time was a published novel; Liveright published Mosquitoes in 1927. Like Soldiers' Pay this second novel failed to sell well, but unlike the first novel, Mosquitoes failed to win widespread critical approval. The most consistently espressed criticism condemned it as an inferior novel of ideas modelled unsuccessfully on Huxley and Douglas.

Mosquitoes is not, of course, the first indication in Faulkner's writing that he was familiar with the novel of ideas. As I have pointed out in the two preceding chapters, there are overtones of the method in Soldiers' Pay, and the last section of the Elmer manuscript takes the direction of the comic novel of ideas. In Mosquitoes, however, the influence of the novel of ideas becomes most pronounced--a fact which has been remarked many times, from the first reviews of the novel to later books and essays. Ruth Suckow, reviewing the novel for the New York World, wrote:

> Some of the writing is good when it isn't Joyce. Some of the characterization is clever, although obvious. Bits of the conversation here and there are amusing. But the all too recognizable mixture of sauvity, brilliance, cynicism, tragedy, philosophy, obscenity, pure nature and thoughts on art into which the English attitude seems to either ascend or degenerate, as the case may be, when south winds blow upon it does not manage to acclimate itself

to the climate of New Orleans.[1]

A reviewer for the New Republic observed:

> It was an unfortunate inspiration which permitted the publishers to say, 'one is irresistably reminded of "South Wind" by this book....'
>
> Mosquitoes demonstrates again the curious truth that our authors seem to lack the flair for satire and foamy brilliance possessed by a Huxley, a Douglas, or a Firbank. The sophistication of the novel is labored, and the smoothness of the effect marred, by Joycean passages and bursts of purple lyricism....[2]

The only reviewer to compare the novel at all favorably with Huxley's work was Conrad Aiken:

> ...he has that gift, rare enough in writers of fiction, of making scenes and people come vividly alive before us, with something of Katherine Mansfield's sense of light and texture, and a good deal of Mr. Huxley's erudition.

Aiken's review, however, was not all praise:

> One positively faints when he indulges himself (as all too frequently) in romantic fantasy, usually couched in italics, as part of the interior monologue of a character who is undergoing stress of emotion. On these occasions he gets off into a mawkish and morbid world that reeks of patchouli and Beardsley and anemic Bakst and a kind of morbidezza that has a sickly flavor as of Baudelaire and rose water.[3]

[1]Ruth Suckow, review of Mosquitoes, New York World (June 12, 1927), 7.

[2]Review of Mosquitoes, New Republic (July 20, 1927), 236. The review is signed with the initials, "E. H. W.," probably Elinor Wylie.

[3]Conrad Aiken, review of Mosquitoes, New York Post (June 11, 1927), 198-199.

Aiken's criticism of the interior monologues (which, as a matter of fact, do not occur very often in the novel) and the allegation of a marked Joycean influence are concerns which later commentators on the novel have largely discarded. The diligence of the reviewers in finding a Joycean influence may perhaps be explained by the fact that in the twenties Joyce bestrode the world of fiction like a colossus. In fact, however, there appears to have been little Joycean influence on Faulkner's earliest fiction.[4]

The ideas of a Huxley influence has lived on into the latest scholarship. Waggoner speaks of the novel's "satire in the manner of Aldous Huxley's 'novel of ideas.'"[5] Frederick Hoffman says of Mosquitoes: "In this avowed imitation of Aldous Huxley, Faulkner tried to do what Huxley did with a number of half-comical and serious types in his early novels."[6] Olga Vickery has summed up the novel's reputation

[4]See Chapter III, pp. 90-92, in which I discuss a possible Joycean influence on the Times-Picayune fiction. There is little evidence, it seems to me, that Joyce's work had much technical influence on Faulkner before The Sound and the Fury.

[5]Hyatt H. Waggoner, William Faulkner: From Jefferson to the World (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1959), p. 14.

[6]Frederick Hoffman, William Faulkner (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1961), p. 42. Hoffman's use of the word "avowed" seems to imply that Faulkner at some time admitted he was imitating Huxley in writing Mosquitoes. Since I was unable to find such an avowal in any of Faulkner's non-fiction prose or in any of the interview material, I asked Prof. Hoffman in a telephone conversation with him in Milwaukee, August 7, 1965, what he meant by an "avowed imitation." Prof. Hoffman referred me to Sherwood Anderson's Memoirs. However, a reading of the Memoirs failed to reveal any such avowal.

quite accurately: "Mosquitoes is generally considered to be Faulkner's weakest novel, probably because both the intention and the content seem superficial. Most frequently it has been dismissed as a bad imitation of Aldous Huxley."[7] Faulkner himself in later years seemed to share the consensus about Mosquitoes; "That one, if I could write that over, I probably wouldn't write it at all."[8]

ii

Although much as been written about the imitative nature of Mosquitoes and the influence of the novel of ideas, there has been no attempt to show specific parallels between Faulkner's second published novel and any of the Huxley or Douglas novels. Hoffman does mention Point Counterpoint in passing,[9] but that novel was not published until 1928 and could not have influenced the composition of Mosquitoes which was completed by late summer of 1926. The Huxley novel which seems most likely to have been the model for Mosquitoes is Those

[7]Olga Vickery, Novels of William Faulkner (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), p. 8.

[8]Faulkner in the University, ed. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1959), p. 257. In the next sentence Faulkner added, "I'm not ashamed of it, because that was the chips, the badly sawn planks that the carpenter produces while he's learning to be a first rate carpenter, but it's not a--not an important book in my list."

[9]Hoffman, William Faulkner, p. 45.

Barren Leaves (1925).[10]

Like Mosquitoes, Those Barren Leaves presents a collection of intellectuals, artists, and writers living as parasites at the expense of a wealthy lover of the arts and collector of artists. Both novels feature isolated settings: an Italian villa and a yacht on Lake Ponchartrain. Mrs. Aldwinkle of Huxley's novel and Mrs. Maurier of Mosquitoes are strikingly similar. Both women worship art: "'Art's the great thing,' Mrs. Aldwinkle was saying earnestly, 'the thing that really makes life worth living and justifies one's existence.'"[11] Mrs. Maurier tells Talliaferro and the sculptor Gordon, "'You both know how sensitive to beauty I am, though I have been denied the creative impulse myself.'"[12]

Huxley describes Mrs. Aldwinkle's constant fear:

> Mrs. Aldwinkle was perpetually haunted by the fear that she was missing something. For a number of years now the universe had always seemed to be conspiring to keep her away from the places where the exciting things were happening and the wonderful words being said. She had been loth enough, this morning, to leave Miss Thriplow behind at the palace; Mrs. Aldwinkle didn't want her guests to lead independent existences out of her sight. (23)

[10]For the original suggestion that parallels might be found between Those Barren Leaves and Mosquitoes I am indebted to Prof. Joe Lee Davis.

[11]Those Barren Leaves (Avon paperback edition), p. 23. All subsequent page references are to this edition.

[12]Mosquitoes (Dell paperback edition, 1962), p. 20. Subsequent page references to Mosquitoes are to this edition of the novel.

Faulkner's Mrs. Maurier has the same sort of fear about the artists and intellectuals with which she surrounds herself. The males of her party are forever going below to drink her whiskey instead of remaining on deck where she can drink at the fountainhead of their wisdom. Both women, however, are often upset by the things they hear when their guests do favor them with their presence:

> 'But I entirely agree with you,' said Mr. Cardan. 'I unequivocally admit the existence of Artemis. I could even prove it to you empirically.'
>
> 'That's very good of you,' said Mrs. Aldwinkle, trying to be sarcastic.
>
> 'The only figure on Olympus whom I have always regarded as being purely mythical,' Mr. Cardan went on, 'as having no foundation in the facts of life, is Athena. A goddess of wisdom--a goddess!' he repeated with emphasis. 'Isn't that a little too thick?'
>
> Majestically Mrs. Aldwinkle rose from the table. 'Let us go out into the garden,' she said. (46-47)

In Mosquitoes the luncheon discussion revolves around the scheme of the Englishman, Major Ayers, for selling fancy little bottles of salts in America on the theory that all Americans are constipated and could "do with a bit of salts in a tumbler of water in the morning." Mrs. Maurier is not pleased with the subject:

> 'What kind of a jar will you put 'em in?' asked the nephew, his mind taking fire.
>
> 'Some tweaky sort of thing that all Americans will buy--'
>
> 'The American flag and a couple of doves holding dollar marks in their bills, and a handle that when you pull it out, it's a corkscrew,' suggested Fairchild. The florid man glared at him with interest and calculation.
>
> 'Or,' the Semitic man suggested, 'a small condensed table for calculating interest on one side and a good recipe for beer on the other.' The

> florid man glared at him with interest.
> 'That's just for men,' Mrs. Wiseman said. 'How about the women's trade?'
> 'A bit of a mirror would do for them, don't you think?' the florid man offered, 'surrounded by a design in colors, eh?' Mrs. Wiseman gave him a murderous glance and the poet added:
> 'And a formula for preventing conception and a secret place for hairpins.' The hostess moaned....
> 'But tell 'em how you know all Americans are constipated,' Fairchild suggested. Mrs. Maurier rang the service bell furiously and at length....
> Mrs. Maurier put an end to that luncheon as soon as she decently could. (53-54)

Both Mrs. Aldwinkle and Mrs. Maurier are taken advantage of by their guests; both have amorous designs, Mrs. Aldwinkle on the poet Francis Chelifer, and Mrs. Maurier on Talliaferro. Neither of them is successful in establishing a romantic relationship. Both women have nieces who rebel against the wishes of their aunts, but Mrs. Aldwinkle's does so timidly and demurely, while Mrs. Maurier's, an American flapper, does so flamboyantly. Both women have romantic illusions, and in both novels these illusions are destroyed:

> Mrs. Aldwinkle shuddered. I'm getting old, she thought; and the little clock on the mantlepiece, ticking away in the silence of her huge room, took up the refrain: Getting old, getting old, getting old, it repeated again and again, endlessly. Getting old--Mrs. Aldwinkle looked at herself in the glass--and that electric massage machine hadn't arrived. True, it was on its way; but it would be weeks before it got here. The posts were so slow. Everything conspired against her. If she had had it before, if she'd looked younger ...who knew? Getting old, getting old, repeated the little clock. In a couple of days from now Chelifer would be going back to England; he'd go away, he'd live apart from her, live such a wonderful, beautiful life. She'd miss it all.... Getting old, getting old. She took her hat and tossed it on the bed. It seemed to her that she was the unhappiest woman in the world. (352-353)

Mrs. Maurier's disillusionment is still more brutal. The sculptor, Gordon, seized by an aesthetic passion for the niece, confronts her aunt:

> ...he faced the old woman again, putting his hand on her and turning her face upward into the moonlight. Mrs. Maurier knew utter fear. Not fright, fear: a passive and tragic condition like a dream. She whispered, Mr. Gordon, but made no sound.
>
> 'I'm not going to hurt you,' he said harshly, staring at her face as a surgeon might. 'Tell me about her,' he commanded. 'Why aren't you her mother, so you could tell me how conceiving her must have been, how carrying her in your loins must have been?'
>
> Mr. Gordon! she implored through her dry lips, without making a sound. His hand moved over her face, learning the bones of her forehead and eyesockets and nose through her flesh.
>
> 'There's something in your face, something behind all this silliness,' he went on in his cold level voice while an interval of frozen time refused to pass. His hand pinched the loose sag of flesh around her mouth, slid along the fading line of her cheek and jaw. 'I suppose you've had what you call your sorrows, too, haven't you?'
>
> 'Mr. Gordon!' she said at last, finding her voice. (126-127)

After this experience "Mrs. Maurier lay in her easy bed, within her comfortable room, weeping long shuddering sobs: a passive terrible hysteria without a sound." (134)

There are resemblances also among the other characters of the novels. The erudite and cynical Mr. Cardan of Those Barren Leaves, with his tendency to turn every conversation into a monologue, finds a counterpart in "the Semitic man," Julius Wiseman, of Mosquitoes. Eva Wiseman and Dorothy Jameson, the poetess and the painter, are treated by Faulkner in much the same manner that Huxley treats Mary Thriplow, the girl novelist, in Those Barren Leaves. Mark Frost, the

poet of Mosquitoes, in some ways resembles Francis Chelifer, Huxley's dillettante poet. Chelifer resists the advances of Mrs. Aldwinkle, and Frost is indifferent to the overtures of Dorothy Jameson. Faulkner's Jenny Steinbauer, with the "vague pinkish region which was her mind," is somewhat like Huxley's simpleminded Miss Elver, although it is unwise to push the parallel too far: Jenny, after all, represents earthy sexuality, which Miss Elver certainly does not. In both novels, however, the novelist has deliberately introduced characters--Jenny and Pete in Mosquitoes, Miss Elver and her brother in Those Barren Leaves--whose commonness and vulgarity is an antidote to the sparkling sophistication of the rest of the characters.

The themes which dominate conversation in both novels are also similar; perhaps the most significant is the futility of art. Huxley's Francis Chelifer reports:

> Religion, patriotism, the moral order, humanitarianism, social reform--we have all of us, I imagine, dropped all those overboard long ago. But we still cling pathetically to art. Quite unreasonably; for the thing has far less reason for existence than most of the objects of worship we have got rid of, is utterly senseless, indeed, without their support and justification. Art for art's sake--halma for halma's sake. It is time to smash the last and silliest of the idols. (89-90)

More specifically, Huxley's characters discuss the difficulty of communication between the writer and audience. When the novelist, Mary Thriplow, complains of being misunderstood, Cardan tells her:

> ...the reader of a book who happens to be out of tune with the author's prevailing mood will

> be bored to death by the things which were written with the greatest enthusiasm. Or else, like the far-away correspondent, he may seize on something which for you was not essential, to make of it the core and kernel of the whole book. And then, you admitted it yourself, you make it very hard for your readers. You write sentimental tragedy in terms of satire and they see only the satire. Isn't it to be expected? (60)

Lack of communication and the futility of words are also important themes in Mosquitoes; Faulkner, at the beginning of one of the sections of the novel, describes the conversations of his characters:

> Talk, talk, talk: the utter and heartbreaking stupidity of words. It seemed endless, as though it might go on forever. Ideas, thoughts, became mere sounds to be bandied about until they were dead. (153)

The novelist Dawson Fairchild, however, is somewhat more optimistic:

> 'Well, it is a kind of sterility--Words,' Fairchild admitted. 'You begin to substitute words for things and deeds, like the withered cuckold husband that took the Decameron to bed with him every night, and pretty soon the thing or the deed becomes just a kind of shadow of a certain sound you make by shaping your mouth a certain way. But you have a confusion, too. I don't claim that words have life in themselves. But words brought into a happy conjunction produce something that lives, just as soil and climate and an acorn in proper conjunction will produce a tree. Words are like acorns, you know. Every one of 'em won't make a tree, but if you just have enough of 'em, you're bound to get a tree sooner or later.'
>
> 'If you just talk long enough, you're bound to say the right thing some day. Is that what you mean?' the Semitic man asked. (173)

The Semitic man's skepticism about words, rather then Fairchild's naive confidence in them, is the prevailing note of Mosquitoes. In this it has much in common with Huxley's

novel.[13]

iii

Another novel of ideas often mentioned as an influence on Mosquitoes is Norman Douglas' South Wind. There are several good reasons why this should be so. Douglas, whose reputation has not at all kept pace with Huxley's, was at the peak of his popularity in the mid-twenties; and some inspired Liveright employee was moved to observe on the dust jacket of Mosquitoes that "one is irresistably reminded of South Wind by this book." A reviewer with a copy of the book before him did not have to make the inference; Faulkner's publisher had made it for him. [14] Although there is no way of knowing if Faulkner ever read South Wind, there was a copy of the 1925 edition of the novel in his personal library.[15]

South Wind is a more complex novel than either Those Barren Leaves or Mosquitoes; it is a deeper ironic statement on human behavior rather than superficial social satire.

[13]Olga Vickery has devoted an interesting chapter of her Novels of William Faulkner to this theme of the impotence of words in Mosquitoes.

[14]At least two of the reviewers took advantage of it. See the passages from Ruth Suckow and the New Republic reviewer quoted on pp. 174-175 of this chapter.

[15]Joseph L. Blotner, William Faulkner's Library: A Catalogue (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1964), p. 66.

There are conversations about art, but there is also a deeper theme: a questioning of moral values and an examination of the concept of justice. If Faulkner borrowed anything from South Wind for his novel Mosquitoes, it was, I think, mostly from the surface of the novel that he borrowed. On the surface the novel has much in common with both Those Barren Leaves and Mosquitoes. Douglas' Madame Steynlin might well have inspired both Mrs. Aldwinkle and Mrs. Maurier.[16] South Wind too has an isolated setting, and Douglas has made the south wind itself a force in the novel by attributing the actions of the characters to its influence. The mosquitoes in Faulkner's novel function in much the same way.

Faulkner's erudite Mr. Wiseman, the Semitic man, is somewhat similar to Douglas' Mr. Kieth; and the millionaire, van Koppen, who "had both the wit to realize the hygenic importance of a certain type of goods and the pertinacity to insist on cheapening their price, in the interests of public health," sounds like a more successful forerunner of Faulkner's Major Ayers who wants to market bottles of salts on the theory that all Americans are constipated. In addition, the final scene of South Wind, in which the characters "discourse like sages and drink like swine," may have inspired the drinking scenes of Mosquitoes.

Perhaps the most important influence, however, which

[16]Dorothy Scarborough in her introduction to South Wind notes that Douglas had a considerable influence on Huxley. South Wind, (Book League of America, 1929), xiii. Subsequent page references to South Wind will be to this edition of the novel.

South Wind exerted on the young Faulkner came from the ideas on art and literature which Douglas' characters bandy about in the novel. Count Caloveglia, for instance, shows young Denis his Locri Faun, a classical statue: "The man who wrought this did not trouble about you, or me, or himself. He had no moods. His art is purely intellectual; he stands aloof like a glacier." (150) All of this, however, Count Caloveglia implies, has changed. "The impersonal note has vanished. Why has it gone, Mr. Denis?" Denis does his best to answer:

> 'I suppose you could trace its disappearance to the days of which you spoke, when artists began to display their moods to the world. Perhaps further still. Some Roman writers were fond of talking about their own affairs. If they do, the public naturally becomes interested. People like Byron must have had a good deal to do with it. He was always harping on his private life.'
>
> He paused, but the Count merely asked:
>
> 'No further back than that?'
>
> 'I don't know. Christianity made us interested in other people's feelings. Brotherliness, you know. That must have helped. So did Socrates, by the way. Of course it lowers the general standard. Where everybody can read and write, there's an end of good taste. No, I don't mean that exactly,' he added, feeling that he was expressing himself very stupidly.
>
> 'Well?'
>
> 'Oh, everything! The telegraph and society papers and interviewing and America and yellow journalism...and all those family memoirs and diaries and autobiographies and Court scandals.... They produce a new kind of public, a public which craves for personalities rather than information. They want to learn about our clothes and incomes and habits. Not a questioning public I mean; a prying public--'
>
> 'A cannibalistic public,' said the Count, quietly. (151-152)

Here, of course, is the same theme which so intrigues the characters of Those Barren Leaves and Mosquitoes: the relation between the writer's personality and his composition, the

problem of communication between writer and audience. Faulkner, for instance, has the novelist Dawson Fairchild say:

> 'The trouble with modern verse is, that to comprehend it you must have recently passed through an emotional experience identical with that through which the poet himself has recently passed. The poetry of modern poets is like a pair of shoes that only those whose feet are shaped like the cobbler's feet, can wear; while the old boys turned out shoes that anybody who can walk at all can wear--' (207)

The Semitic man says that Gordon, the sculptor, "is not an artist only when he is cutting at a piece of wood or stone." Because of this, Gordon finds it difficult to get along with people; as the Semitic man says, "Other artists are too busy playing with their own egos, workaday people will not or cannot bother with him, so his alternatives are misanthropy or an endless gabbling of esthetic foster sisters of both sexes." (43) The theme of the artist's ego and the necessity of escaping from subjectivity to achieve a "clear impersonality" had appeared in Faulkner's earliest critical essays.[17] It is particularly significant, however, that the theme should become prominent in Mosquitoes.

[17]See, for instance, Faulkner's comment that Conrad Aiken's "clear impersonality will never permit him to write poor verse." Review of Conrad Aiken's Turns and Movies, The Mississippian, Feb. 16, 1921; reprinted in Early Prose and Poetry, p. 75. In another early essay he lamented the fact that "Writing people are all so pathetically torn between a desire to make a figure in the world and morbid interest in their personal egos--the deadly fruit of the grafting of Sigmund Freud upon the dynamic chaos of a hodge-podge of nationalities." "American Drama Inhibitions," The Mississippian, March 17, 1922; reprinted in Early Prose and Poetry, p. 93.

iv

It is significant that clear impersonality in art should be one of the themes of Mosquitoes, for the novel itself is an attempt to achieve a more impersonal form and technique. The novel of ideas lends itself to a cerebral, intellectualized point of view which contrasts sharply with the poetic, symbolist, impressionist techniques of Soldiers' Pay. It is not surprising that Hyatt Waggoner should observe:

> In Mosquitoes the voice of Faulkner is not heard except as we may discern its accents and sentiments in the words of Mr. Wiseman, the sculptor Gordon, and the poet Mark Frost. Faulkner has ceased to philosophize and begun to dramatize, ceased telling us about and begun to show us; just as important, he has stopped oversimplifying and begun to criticize his own insights. Without taking this step Faulkner could not have kept The Sound and the Fury free of sentimentality; it would have become a simple elegy, a heart-felt lament. Without this step we could never have had the opening of Absalom, Absalom!, with its complex recreation of past-in-present, a past at once heroic, absurd, solid, false. Without it we could not have had the tragi-comedy of As I Lay Dying.[18]

Waggoner has made the break seem more absolute than it actually is; Faulkner's voice is still heard occasionally, most notably in the descriptions and evaluations of his characters. When he confides that "Mr. Talliaferro believed that Conversation--not talk: Conversation--with an intellectual equal consisted of admitting as many so-called unpublishable facts as possible about oneself," he is obviously telling, not showing; just as when he comments on the conversation of his characters: "Talk, talk, talk: the utter and heartbreaking stupidity of

[18]Waggoner, op. cit., p. 16.

words."

Waggoner is certainly right, however, in sensing that Mosquitoes is an attempt to objectify. One of the peculiar features of the novel, for instance, is Faulkner's injection of himself, as a character, into the novel. The incident is mentioned in a conversation between the earthy Jenny Steinbauer and Mrs. Maurier's niece Patricia. Jenny describes an encounter on the beach:

> '...I got to talking to a funny man. A little kind of black man--'
>
> 'A nigger?'
>
> 'No. He was a white man, except he was awful sunburned and kind of shabby dressed--no necktie and hat. Say, he said some funny things to me. He said I had the best digestion he ever saw, and he said if the straps of my dress was to break I'd devastate the country. He said he was a liar by profession, and he màde good money at it, enough to own a Ford as soon as he got it paid out. I think he was crazy. Not dangerous: just crazy.'
>
> The niece lay quiet. She said, contemplatively, 'You do look like they feed you on bread and milk and put you to bed at sunset every day....What was his name? Did he tell you?' she asked suddenly.
>
> 'Yes. It was--' Jenny pondered a while. 'I remembered it because he was such a funny kind of man. It was...Walker or Foster or something.'
>
> 'Walker or Foster" Which one was it?'
>
> 'It must be Foster because I remember it began with a F like my girl friend's middle name--Frances. Thelma Frances, only she don't use both of them. Only I don't think it was Foster, because--'
>
> 'You don't remember it, then.'
>
> 'Yes, I do. Wait...Oh, yes: I remember--Faulkner, that was it.'
>
> 'Faulkner?' the niece pondered in turn, 'Never heard of him,' she said at last, with finality. (119-120)

One of the most striking things about this passage is the deflating picture which Faulkner paints of himself as "a liar by profession." Faulkner, writes Waggoner, has "begun

to criticize his own insights." Perhaps so, if the incident may be taken that seriously. Faulkner may also, however--by naming himself as a character in the novel and relegating himself to such a small role--be informing the reader: here is the author intruding into his novel, specifically identified by name so that you cannot miss him, and this is the only place in the novel where you will find him. In other words, Faulkner is by implication renouncing autobiographical fiction, a renunciation which is also reflected in his decision to adopt the form and conventions of the novel of ideas. As a result, Mosquitoes is a more disciplined objective novel than Soldiers' Pay, and a more tightly constructed novel than either Soldiers' Pay or the unfinished Elmer.

Compared with the elaborate experiments of Elmer, Faulkner's handling of time in Mosquitoes is remarkably simple, with none of the attempts to range forward and backward in time. This is not to say that time is unimportant in the construction of Mosquitoes. On the contrary, it is very important; it is time which gives the novel its tight construction. Symmetrical and simple in its form, Mosquitoes is probably the closest thing to a "well-made novel" that Faulkner ever wrote. The first section of the novel, "Prologue," describes the afternoon and evening which precedes the yacht excursion; and the last section of the novel, "Epilogue," describes the afternoon and evening following the excursion. The two sections treat, respectively, the gathering and the dispersal of Mrs. Maurier's guests. The central portion of

the novel, of course, is the yachting party itself, and here the sections are entitled, "First Day," "Second Day," "Third Day," and "Fourth Day"; these sections are further subdivided by use of hours of the day. Such a chronological scheme sets definite time boundaries for the novel, and Faulkner's narrative does not venture beyond them. The flashbacks of Soldiers' Pay and the more elaborate experiments of Elmer are missing, and the result is a chronologically straightforward novel.

The carefully controlled time scheme of Mosquitoes has certain advantages. One of the weaknesses of Soldiers' Pay had been the failure to unite key symbolic moments from the past with those from the present. The flashbacks to the war, instead of illuminating the post-war present, were largely irrelevant. In Mosquitoes Faulkner has found a new device for making use of the past. Dawson Fairchild tells an anecdote from his childhood of himself and a girl with golden tresses in an outhouse. It is an anecdote which tries to recapture the emotions of childlike innocence, curiosity and yearning. (191-193) After he has told the story, he sees David, the young ship's steward, with whom Patricia, Mrs. Maurier's niece, has run off. The mosquitoes and the mud have forced them back to the yacht. Now David sits disconsolately, holding one of Patricia's slippers:

> When Fairchild stopped beside him David raised his face slowly into the moonlight and gazed at the older man, making no effort to conceal that which he held. Fairchild leaned nearer to see. It was a slipper, a single slipper, cracked and

> stained with dried mud and disreputable, yet seeming still to hold in its mute shape something of that hard and sexless graveness of hers. (194)

Fairchild's story from his own past has set the stage for David's night watch over the symbol of his lost and futile youthful love. The past has been used to illuminate and heighten one of the important themes of the novel: the theme of a sexless and innocent youthful love--"The spirit of youth, of something fine and hard and clean in the world." (22)

The tight construction of Mosquitoes, which both results from and affects Faulkner's treatment of time in the novel, is also reflected in his handling of point of view. The shifting points of view of Soldiers' Pay and Elmer have been replaced by a much more consistently objective point of view. With a few exceptions (most notably Gordon's interior monologue early in the novel) Faulkner is content to let the characters' actions and words speak for themselves, while the point of view remains that of the rational, often ironic, observer. It is a point of view, in other words, far removed from the poetic-impressionist voice of Soldiers' Pay or the psychological, emotional reminiscences of Elmer's consciousness. In Mosquitoes the symbolist poet has been submerged in the method of the novel of ideas. Fragments of verse which later appeared in The Green Bough do appear in Mosquitoes as they had in Soldiers' Pay, but while in Soldiers' Pay they had been an intrinsic part of the novel (Januarius Jones spoke and acted Faulkner's poetry), in Mosquitoes the

function is more extrinsic. One of the characters reads a poem, and it serves as a starting point for a discussion of modern verse. Similarly, the long symbolic, poetic passage in the last section of the novel, which Faulkner imported almost verbatim from the Elmer manuscript, has a much more extrinsic function. In Elmer the dream had been a part of Elmer's consciousness; in Mosquitoes it is divorced from the consciousness of any of the characters and is used instead as a general comment on the last scene of the novel.

The reporting of characters' thoughts and use of the interior monologue is sparing in Mosquitoes, but where it is used there is a noticeable improvement over earlier attempts (those in "Home," for instance, and in Soldiers' Pay). Gordon's soliloquy is an example. (39-40) Even more striking is the passage in which Dorothy Jameson muses on the appeal of the earthy Jenny:

> Even she felt Jenny's appeal--an utterly mindless rifeness of young, pink flesh, a supine potential fecundity lovely to look upon: a doll awaiting a quickening and challenging it with neither joy nor sorrow. She had brought one man with her....No, not even brought: he had followed her in her blond troubling orbit as a tide follows the moon, without volition, against his inclination, perhaps. (85)

There is something about this passage which strongly reminds one of Faulkner's later work. Undoubtedly, the diction--"supine potential fecundity"--is part of it, as is the fact that Jenny is such a perfect prototype for Eula Varner of The Hamlet. There is, however, something more: the beginning of a device which is an unmistakable hallmark of the later

Faulkner rhetoric. This device might be called qualification by negation: "She had brought one man with her....No, not even brought...." Whatever the device is called, it appears first in Mosquitoes. Moreover, it is essentially a ratiocinative device, and it is not surprising that it evolved from Faulkner's attempt to use the novel of ideas as a model.

The most important result, in fact, of Faulkner's experiment in Mosquitoes was the movement from a reliance on the sudden flash of impressionistic insight--the method of all the earlier fiction--to a more elaborate intellectualized examination of character and incident. This tendency, of course, characterizes Faulkner's fictional method in the later work. Faulkner was to abandon the novel of ideas form, but the lessons learned were not forgotten.

Conclusion

In the period of narrative experiment beginning with the Times-Picayune fiction early in 1925 and ending with Mosquitoes late in 1926, the unpublished and unfinished novel Elmer holds the key to Faulkner's early development as a craftsman. Elmer is Faulkner's first "great failure," a description he was later to give The Sound and the Fury. When Faulkner abandoned Elmer to write Mosquitoes, he turned from a radical structural and technical experiment to a much more conventional narrative form; and in doing so he initiated a pattern of technical experiment followed by reaction which was to last to the end of his career.

This pattern of alternation is clearly established in the apprenticeship period. Elmer is a radical departure in method from Faulkner's first novel, Soldiers' Pay, for where Soldiers' Pay had been conventional in its treatment of time, Elmer attempts some experimental timeshifts and chronological displacement in its use of the past. Faulkner's experiments in time displacement may be seen in his rearrangement of the structural design in Elmer. (See the description of the Elmer typescript in Chapter V.) Elmer is experimental too in its use of psychological devices and in its use of the interior monologue. The fact that Faulkner never finished Elmer indicates that the experiments, though instructive, were not entirely successful--that Faulkner in fact could not forge a unity from the kaleidoscopic shifting of time sequences which he attempted in the novel. Mosquitoes is,

by contrast, a strategic and technical retreat to a more conventional narrative form. In adopting the conventions and basic format of the novel of ideas, as it had been practiced successfully by Douglas and Huxley, Faulkner was on "safe ground"--as he had been in writing Soldiers' Pay, which required really no structural or formal experiments beyond what he had already used in the T mes-Picayune fiction.

The pattern of alternation continues. The first version of the novel Sartoris, entitled Flags in the Dust (the typescript of which I have examined in the University of Virginia's Faulkner collection), follows Mosquitoes in composition. It contains a far more ambitious experiment in technique and shows quite clearly Faulkner's technical problem in writing the novel: the same problem which he had faced in Soldiers' Pay and Elmer of uniting past with present. In the Flags in the Dust typescript Faulkner devoted much more space to flashbacks detailing the adventures of aviators John and Bayard Sartoris in France. These adventures, particularly John's recklessness and consequent death, were obviously intended to parallel the deeds of the Civil War Bayard--also treated at some length in Flags in the Dust. The two adventures, one from the distant and one from the more recent past, must serve as explanation for the recklessness of the surviving Bayard in the present. However, Faulkner failed to show the interrelatedness of past and present, and Liveright rejected this first version. After extensive revision it was republished, as Sartoris, by Harcourt, Brace. In Sartoris, Faulkner greatly reduced the length of the World War I flashbacks,

and channelled them all through the consciousness of Bayard. The exploits of the Civil War Bayard are always related by Aunt Jenny; the result is not a perfect fusion of past and present, but a considerable improvement over Flags in the Dust.

It is probable that the related short stories later to be published as The Unvanquished were written between the composition of Sartoris and The Sound and the Fury. Faulkner's narrative technique in these stories is very conventional--so much so that in style and method, simplicity of diction and chronological directness, these stories resemble the Times-Picayune fiction much more than they resemble such later tales as A Rose for Emily or The Bear.

Once again, however, the return to conventional narrative method was followed by radical technical experiment. The next novel to be composed was The Sound and the Fury. Faulkner himself called this work his "greatest failure," but most students of Faulkner would agree that in many ways it is a conspicuous technical accomplishment. The use of interior monologue, which Faulkner had attempted in the Times-Picayune fiction, in Soldiers' Pay, Elmer, and in Mosquitoes, is brought to a high degree of perfection in The Sound and the Fury. The treatment of time is an integral feature of this novel as well; and Faulkner achieved in the monologues of Benjy and Quentin Compson what he had failed to achieve in Elmer and Flags in the Dust: an effective fusion of past and present.

Again the radical experiment in technique was followed

by reaction, for in his next composition, Sanctuary, Faulkner returned to technical simplicity. Much has been written about Faulkner's deliberate choice of sensational subject matter to gain a wider reading public and to make money; perhaps Faulkner's reaction to the critical acclaim but poor sale of The Sound and the Fury also accounts for the simplicity of style and method in Sanctuary.

In each of the next two novels, As I Lay Dying and Light in August, Faulkner attempts a separate technical experiment. As I Lay Dying is largely an exercise in point of view and interior monologue, in which the narrative point of view shifts from one character's consciousness to another. Light in August, while more conventional in its handling of point of view, is more ambitious in its treatment of time. The flashbacks and chronological displacement of narrative segments which Faulkner uses to narrate the boyhood of Joe Christmas resemble those he had attempted in Elmer, just as Joe's passion for full tubes of toothpaste resemble Elmer Hodge's passion for full tubes of paint.

Pylon (1935) returns to a simpler narrative method. Its time scheme is simple and straightforward, and it is essentially an impressionistic novel--a return to the form of Soldiers' Pay. However, in the novel published the following year technical complexity and the experimental craftsman are again in evidence. In Absalom, Absalom! Faulkner experimented brilliantly with point of view and treatment of time, achieving in the consciousness of Quentin Compson his most

successful fusion of present with past time.

By contrast Wild Palms (1939), The Hamlet (1940), and Intruder in the Dust (1948) are conventional narratives. But in 1954 Faulkner published A Fable, a novel which had taken nine years to write. The technical experiments of this allegory, like those of the earlier abortive Elmer, involve the deliberate shifting of time sequences--the purposeful disordering of chronology--and also the shifting of geographical locale from Europe to America and back to Europe. Despite the time he spent writing it and the obvious enthusiasm and high hopes he entertained for this work, A Fable is truly Faulkner's greatest failure. Following its publication, moreover, Faulkner once again abandoned such experiments. The Town (1957) and The Mansion (1959) complete the Snopes trilogy which he had begun with The Hamlet, and in these novels, as well as in his last book, The Rievers, Faulkner returned to more conventional narrative methods. The setting is limited to Yoknapatawpha County, and the treatment of time is chronologically straightforward. The pattern of alternation--radical experiment followed by reaction--repeated itself from the beginning to the end of Faulkner's career.

Faulkner's earliest experiments in narrative techniques had one other enduring effect on his career: the evolution of a prose impressionism peculiarly suited to his own genius as a writer of fiction. This evolution is largely a story of literary influence and adaptation, of Faulkner's learning to modify the tools and techniques of other writers to meet his own needs. Essentially too, the evolution was from a

poetic impressionism to a more cerebral method suited to the needs of the novel; the sudden flash of impressionistic insight was replaced by a more elaborate intellectualized examination of character and incident.

The story of Faulkner's earliest experiments, in fact, is the story of his development from young symbolist poet to novelist. Faulkner's early reading of Swinburne and the French Symbolists was soon complemented by his discovery of Housman and T. S. Eliot--with two important results. Faulkner began to turn to his poetry from the purely lyric to the narrative and dramatic; more importantly, Faulkner learned to apply the devices of poetry to the narrative sketch. In addition, Housman's pastoral portraits gave Faulkner a first indication of the rustic character's possibilities in fiction.

There is a close connection between symbolist poetry and impressionist prose. It is not surprising then to find that the Times-Picayune fiction, written at the time that Faulkner was turning from poetry to prose fiction, shows considerable symbolist influence. At the same time, the Times-Picayune fiction reveals that Faulkner was learning from the example of other prose writers, chiefly impressionists: Sherwood Anderson, Joseph Conrad, and Thomas Beer. The most important single technical influence at this point appears to have been the impressionist fiction of Beer, who provided him, as Faulkner later avowed, with some of the useful "tools" of the fiction writer's craft. Some of these tools were point of view, treatment of time, and interior monologue. The impressionist influence of these writers is also

apparent in Faulkner's first novel, Soldiers' Pay, a thoroughly impressionistic novel in structure and style. Structurally, the novel is a series of brief impressionistic, dramatic scenes; there is almost no summary narrative, and Faulkner's attempt to use the past in the novel is not wholly effective. Furthermore, Soldiers' Pay is replete with symbolist imagery, and the point of view in the novel is still the voice of the lyric poet hovering over the story.

In Elmer Faulkner made much more extensive use of summary narrative, and in Elmer the first traces of the influence of Douglas and Huxley began to appear. When he turned in earnest to the novel of ideas form in Mosquitoes, Faulkner produced a more objective, tightly knit novel. While Soldiers' Pay had been the work of a poet who condescended to write fiction, Mosquitoes was the work of the novelist not afraid to be lyrical when it suited his purpose.

It is not difficult to see how this tension between the lyric feeling of impressionism and the more detached objectivity of the novel of ideas was a crucial experience for the beginning craftsman. For none of Faulkner's later fiction lacked either the lyricism or the cerebral quality; and when the most nearly perfect balance between the two was achieved--as in The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom!--the result was his greatest work.

APPENDIX

Faulkner's Whereabouts and Probable Working Schedule: 1925-1930

January, 1925-July, 1925: New Orleans

Soldiers' Pay; most of the *Times-Picayune* sketches

July, 1925-December, 1925: Faulkner's European trip

Elmer; a few sonnets later published in *A Green Bough*; at least two of the *Times-Picayune* sketches, "The Liar" and "Yo Ho and Two Bottles of Rum."

January, 1926-Summer, 1926: Oxford

Attempting to revise *Elmer*? Giving it up? Beginning on *Mosquitoes*?

Summer (May? June?), 1926-September, 1926: Pascagoula, Miss.

Mosquitoes

September, 1926-September 29, 1927: Oxford? (The *New Orleans Item* stated in September, 1926, that Faulkner planned to return to Oxford for a brief visit before returning to New Orleans to write during the winter. However, Faulkner may have remained in Oxford during the winter.)

Sartoris; short stories?

September 29, 1927-October, 1928: Oxford

The Sound and the Fury; short stories?

October, 1928-May 1929: Oxford

Sanctuary; short stories.

May, 1929-October 25, 1929; Oxford

Exclusively short stories.

October, 1929-January, 1930: Oxford

As I Lay Dying

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