WILLIAM FAULKNER AND SHERWOOD ANDERSON:
A STUDY OF A LITERARY RELATIONSHIP

by

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the nature and extent of Sherwood Anderson's influence upon William Faulkner. It demonstrates, through the use of the comparative method, that Anderson's influence is a major and continuous one.

The early *New Orlean Sketches* strongly echo and, at times, imitate Anderson's work. Faulkner's first novel, *Soldiers' Pay*, was not only written at Anderson's suggestion but also published through his influence. In *Mosquitoes*, Faulkner closely modeled his main character after Anderson. Anderson helped Faulkner to organize some of the "folk" material in that novel. Faulkner's early use of negro characters to embody a kind of sane, healthy alternative to the world of the whites may well have been encouraged by Anderson's example.

Furthermore, Anderson played an important role, at a crucial period in Faulkner's development, in directing him to the fictional use of the Yoknapatawpha material. He led Faulkner to realize that universality in art could grow out of regional material. Faulkner's sense of community and his exploration of the individual's search for community so closely resemble Anderson's as to suggest some indebtedness. Faulkner's dramatization of the effects of the destruction of that
community by the forces of modern commerce and industry is rendered in terms similar to Anderson's. Also, Faulkner's creation of an idyllic, rural world in contrast to the mechanistic, urban world resembles that in Anderson's stories of horses and men. And Faulkner uses Anderson's idea that the world of horses is a totally male world elsewhere in his fiction.

There is a strong resemblance, finally, in Faulkner's and Anderson's concept of the grotesque: for both, it concerns truth and its consequences in the individual's isolation and behaviour. In fact, it is argued that Anderson's "theory of the grotesque" provides a rationale for the larger structure of some of Faulkner's most important work.

For these reasons, it is concluded that Anderson was an important force in shaping the form and content of Faulkner's art.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

If the works of William Faulkner once suffered from critical neglect, it is clear the balance has been redressed. The interpretative commentary has reached, as Cowley put it, the proportions of a Mississippi flood. Now, it may be unjust, or at least impolite, to suggest that, of late, the critical returns have not been very great; on the whole, there is not much said that is new. Perhaps, then, it is advisable at this time to turn our attention to other areas of Faulkner study. In this essay I intend to examine the nature and extent of Sherwood Anderson's influence upon the work of William Faulkner and to attempt to discover through the comparative method aspects of Faulkner's work which should be appreciated in any meaningful, interpretative study.

The attempt to establish areas where Anderson's influence upon Faulkner is genuine faces the problems inherent in any influence study. A comparative study may reveal similarities in their work which are entirely fortuitous; one might also discover resemblances which result (say) from literary and psychological influences on them both. But the study seeks to discover Anderson's actual influence upon Faulkner and to describe its character and extent. In the course of the essay I have endeavoured to clarify the kind of claim which is being made. Occasionally,
parallels will be suggested without my making any claim of influence; this is justifiable when particular affinities with the older writer make other areas of influence more likely. At all times, I have striven to gather and evaluate the evidence carefully before making any claims.

If we accept Eliot's observation that "no poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone,"¹ we will immediately recognize the value of the comparative method as a critical tool. It should be easier to define more precisely the development and meaning of Faulkner's work through comparison with the work of a figure who shares many of his concerns and techniques and who, I will attempt to demonstrate in the course of this study, influenced his work considerably; that is to say, in attempting to make clear some of Faulkner's central themes and accomplishments, it will be valuable to examine one of the important forces which has helped to shape the form and content of his art.

If scholars now appreciate the impact of Sherwood Anderson upon American fiction in this century, a number of writers have long recognized his importance as an influential force in American literature. Some are undoubtedly over-exuberant but their remarks strike one as essentially true. Ben Hecht claimed, "Sherwood was our Renaissance, our torch

of letters, our Daniel Boone of Art." Paul Rosenfeld maintained, "Actually, he is no less valuable to our culture than Walt Whitman!" Talking about The Triumph of the Egg, Henry Miller noted, "I was about to give up. That book encouraged me. All Anderson's books did." Feeling closer to Anderson than to Dreiser, James T. Farrell observed, "Sherwood Anderson was one of the most sensitive, significant and influential of American writers in this century." And William Saroyan has written: "He told us many good things. He made it possible for us to sit down and write. He introduced us to our world and to one another." The indebtedness of such figures as Hart Crane, Thomas Wolfe, John Steinbeck and Ernest Hemingway to Anderson should also be recalled. Thus, while Sherwood Anderson's work may constitute, in the final evaluation, but a minor achievement, his place in American literary history seems a major one because of the impact the man and his art have had on other writers. It appears, too, that Anderson understood his role. He was deeply impressed by Rosenfeld's suggestion

2 "Go, Scholar-Gypsy!" Story, XIX (September-October 1941), p. 93.


6 "His Collaborators," Story, XIX, p. 76.
"that after all the only thing the present generation of men in America could expect to do is make with their bodies and spirits a kind of fertilizing element in our soil." It was for another generation to bring the American experience to its full artistic fruition.

Clearly, William Faulkner, who has frequently maintained that Anderson "has never been given his rightful place in American literature," appreciated Anderson's importance:

He was the father of my generation of American writers and the tradition of American writing which our successors will carry on. He has never received his proper evaluation. Dreiser is his older brother and Mark Twain the father of them both.

As we have seen, Faulkner is not alone in his appraisal. More specifically, Faulkner claimed, "I think that he was the father of all of my works, of Hemingway, Fitzgerald, etc., all of them—we were influenced by him. He showed us the way...." It will be, in part, the intent of this study to show in what ways that statement is valid as it applies to Faulkner's works.

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8 Faulkner in the University, eds. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner (Charlottesville, 1959), p. 281.


While a history of the treatment of this topic would of necessity be brief, it will be better to call upon this material as it is relevant to particular issues than to review it at once. It will suffice to say that H. Edward Richardson's observation in 1962 that "the extent of Anderson's influence on Faulkner has never been thoroughly treated" remains an accurate one. However, there have certainly been enough general comments on their relatedness to justify investigating the basis of those claims.

CHAPTER II

THE NEW ORLEANS PERIOD

The early lamentations that Faulkner might have been so much better had he not been isolated from the society of contemporary artists and artistic movements overlook not only Faulkner's early associations in New Orleans but also his avid reading habits. Joseph Blotner's catalogue of Faulkner's library reveals that at the time of his death he had close to twelve hundred volumes. And the catalogue does not indicate the many books Faulkner read in his early years when he did not himself own copies. Certainly, an inquiry into Faulkner's extensive reading is a necessary part of any study of the nature and development of his art.

John Faulkner recalls that his brother spent a good deal of time reading books provided him by Phil Stone and the Oxford Library:

The Stones had a big old Studebaker touring car, a seven-passenger affair. Phil loaded it with books for Bill to read and turned the car over to him. Bill would go out on some country road, a side road where it was quiet, and park the car and spend the day reading.

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2For example, of the eight Anderson books Faulkner reviewed in 1925 only copies of Horses and Men and Winesburg, Ohio were found in his library.

Indeed, Faulkner's forced resignation from his first career as a man of letters at the Post Office of the University of Mississippi was apparently, in part, the result of "his reading a great deal instead of maintaining ardent attendance at the stamp window."4

Faulkner has repeatedly remarked that the writer has three sources: "one is observation; one is experience, which includes reading; the other is imagination... [italics added]."5 In interviews over the years, Faulkner made clear the importance of reading to the apprentice writer. When Lavon Rascoe asked what the best training is for writing, Faulkner replied:

Read, read, read! Read everything—trash, classics, good and bad; see how they do it. When a carpenter learns his trade, he does so by observing. Read! You'll absorb it.6

This was reiterated just before his death: "And if anyone does want to be a writer, he certainly must learn his craft, and the best way to learn it is from the people who can do it well."7 It is clear from his 1925 article on Sherwood

7 Faulkner at West Point, p. 106.
Anderson that Faulkner had read Anderson assiduously. Of Anderson's nine published works to that date only *Mid-American Chants* was not specifically mentioned, although the images of the growing corn Faulkner uses in the review suggest his acquaintance with it. Also, Blotner's catalogue reveals copies of *Dark Laughter*, *Horses and Men*, *Letters of Sherwood Anderson*, *Sherwood Anderson's Memoirs* and *Winesburg, Ohio* and Phil Stone's order for *Tar: A Midwest Childhood*. It seems that Faulkner's advice to aspiring writers grew out of his own practice; having recognized Anderson as the craftsman, he read him eagerly. For Faulkner, reading was no idle matter; it was a vital means of learning one's craft. But Faulkner did more than read Anderson's works; in New Orleans, he met Sherwood Anderson and developed a very valuable friendship with the older artist.

Following the publication of his first book, *The Marble Faun*, in December, 1924, Faulkner and Phil Stone, his lifetime friend and literary promoter, left Oxford for New Orleans to obtain passage to Europe. The examples of Frost,
Pound and Eliot had suggested to Stone that Faulkner might receive recognition via Europe as they had done. However, the European voyage did not come off. Stone returned to Oxford and Faulkner settled in the Vieux Carre, probably attracted by the established Bohemian quarter and the writers associated with The Double Dealer, which had published his poem, "Portrait", in 1922.

It was now that a sojourn in New York in 1921 became important. In New York Faulkner had stayed with Stark Young and had obtained a job through Young at Lord and Taylor's Book Store where Elizabeth Prall was manager. Early in 1921, she had married Sherwood Anderson and in that summer the couple had moved to New Orleans. Through Elizabeth, Faulkner met Sherwood Anderson: "it was just the chance that I had gone to call on Miss Prall that I had known who had been kind to me when I was a clerk in a book store that I came to meet him." Undoubtedly, Faulkner would have met Anderson eventually but their association may not have grown as intimate had Faulkner not already been a friend of Anderson's new wife.

Although Faulkner's early intention was to be a poet, he began almost upon his arrival in New Orleans to publish

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12 Faulkner in the University, p. 230.
prose sketches in the *Times-Picayune* and, soon after, in *The Double Dealer*. As far as we know, the only previous fiction he had published were two pieces, "Landing in Luck" (Nov. 26, 1919) and "The Hill" (March 10, 1922), in the University's newspaper, *The Mississippian*. Since Anderson was away on the lecture circuit in January and February of 1925, hoping "to be able to earn enough to work the rest of the year," the early pieces were not inspired by Anderson's daily presence although many of them have affinities with Anderson's work. This is not surprising since Faulkner's article on Anderson in *The Dallas Morning News*, April 26, 1925, demonstrates an enthusiastic reading of Anderson's published work to that date. While he may have read a good deal of Anderson subsequent to his arrival in New Orleans, it is clear that he was familiar with some of his work earlier. O'Connor reports: "Stone lent him books from his own library—Keats, Swinburne, the new Imagist poets, Conrad Aiken, Sherwood Anderson, the Russian novelists." And there is an often repeated anecdote that Faulkner, on his way to New Orleans, remarked that "I'm a Fool" and Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" were the two finest stories he had ever read (*NOS*, 18).

In the sketches gathered under "New Orleans," which appeared in the January-February issue of *The Double Dealer*,

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13 *Letters*, p. 127.

Faulkner, like Anderson, shows a special interest in, and sympathy with, those characters who are outside the respectable community: the Jew, the gangster and his girl, the Negro longshoreman, the beggar, the artist, and the prostitute. Faulkner's subjects share with Anderson's grotesques vague longings, a sense of loneliness, isolation and frustration.

The cobbler muses:

I was once a part of the world, I was once a part of the rushing river of mankind; but now I am old, I have swirled into a still backwater in a foreign land, and the river has left me behind. (NOS, 42)

The Jew feels "all the pain and passion and sorrows of the human race are in this breast: joys to fire, griefs to burn out the soul" (NOS, 37). The Negro knows: "These cities are not my cities, but this dark is my dark..." (NOS, 44). Even the cop feels something within "reproaching me because the man has been unable to give to the lad that high desire which life has promised him" (NOS, 46). And the beggar who once "believed passionately that life was more than just eating and sleeping" now "must whine and snarl with others whose steeds have failed..." (NOS, 47). However, just as the names of some of the pieces are generic, the characterizations in these early sketches lack specification and dramatization; while Faulkner's figures share the alienation and hunger of Anderson's grotesques, they are, on the whole, almost cliche' studies. But, occasionally, one detects in the better passages echoes of Anderson. For example, when Faulkner has the cobbler refer to his wife, he uses a metaphor that is reminiscent of
a passage in Anderson's "Paper Pills":

This bush of golden roses is my wife. See, how the ancient branches are twisted and gnarled with age, as this hand is twisted and gnarled and old. Yet each year it bears me sweet bloom, though it be as old in years as I. (NOS, 43)

On the trees are only a few gnarled apples that the pickers have rejected. They look like the knuckles of Doctor Reefy's hands. One nibbles at them and they are delicious. Into a little round place at the side of the apple has been gathered all of its sweetness....Only the few know the sweetness of the twisted apples.15

The longer pieces in the Times-Picayune reveal the same concern with a wide variety of social outcasts and show an increasing, though still severely limited, technical ability. The crippled beggar in "The Mirrors of Chartres Street" is handled with compassion. In "Home," Jean Baptiste, in an alien land, thinks: "I want to gain a part of that beauty which shall not pass from the earth, of companionship, of love, perhaps--who knows?" (NOS, 76). He longs to live: "I am not interested in death: it is living I want" (NOS, 77). The tormented old husband in "Jealousy" who finally commits murder remembers "when he had been a boy and life was clear and fine and simple" (NOS, 88). It is now anything but that.

It is interesting that after the publication of "Jealousy" on March 1st and Anderson's return to New Orleans on March 3rd, Faulkner's weekly publication in the Sunday section of the Picayune ceased for a month until the appearance of "Cheest" on April 5th. "Cheest" offers striking similarities with Anderson's "I'm a Fool", which Faulkner was later in the month to call "the best short story in America, to my thinking." His tale, too, is one of "a lad's adolescent pride in his profession (horse racing) and his body, on his belief in a world beautiful and passionate created for the chosen to race horses on, of his youthful pagan desire to preen in his lady's eyes...." The youthful swagger of the unsophisticated, essentially innocent narrator, the double date and the main action of the horse race are common to both stories. The repetitive use of the adolescent "Cheest!" in Faulkner's story and of "Gee Whizi" in Anderson's, the accidental meetings, the descriptives "Cheest, she was peachy looking" (NOS, 95) and "Gee, she was a peach!" and the romantic insistence "They was nice girls, see...." (NOS, 96) and "She wasn't that kind" (HM, p. 20) seem more than accidental. It would seem that Faulkner's admiration of "I'm a Fool" has led him to attempt to emulate his master's

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16 Letters, p. 136.

17Dallas article, p. 91.

work and to produce one of the best of his early sketches. With the exception of the incident in *A Fable*, it will not be until his last work that Faulkner will again explore the horse racing story.

Although the writer in "Out of Nazareth" (April 12, 1925), whom Spratling and the narrator encounter in Jackson Park, is only seventeen years old, he seems to be partially modelled on Anderson:

His voice, his speech was Middle Western: one thought of wheat slumbrous beneath a blue sky and a haze of dust along the land....He was eternal, of the earth itself. (NOS, 103)

And Faulkner associates Anderson with the land: "Men grow from the soil, like corn and trees: I prefer to think of Mr. Anderson as a lusty corn field in his native Ohio." Moreover, the story which he gives them for the dollar stylistically imitates Anderson:

I have eaten at a little restaurant. I have slept well on dried corn stalks between long rows of corn. I need not travel. I have no destination. I am at peace with the world.... (NOS, 106)

... 

But tonight I desire the society of my own kind, so I stroll through the camp exchanging road gossip, stories, experiences, with motherly fat women washing dishes, wandering workers, business men out for a change, or a group of young men off for somewhere. (NOS, 108-109)

"The Cobbler" is an extension of the earlier sketch of the same name. As in the earlier piece, a contrast is

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19 Dallas article, p. 89.
presented between the old man's grubby concerns of the present—"You wan'getta thees shoe today? Si. Si." (NOS, 131)—and his account of the pastoral, Edenic condition of his youth in Tuscany where "the ancient hills brood bluely above the green and dreaming valleys" (NOS, 131). He is like the yellow rose he has kept to remind him of his one romance:

It was not then as it is now: now it is old and black and twisted, as I am; but then it was green and fresh and young. (NOS, 134)

The same juxtaposition of a sordid, present, urban reality with an agrarian ideal, frequently presented as a vision of the rural setting of one's youth, constitutes, in terms familiar to the reader of Anderson, a challenge to the Edenic myth of America. For example, the following scene from Anderson's *Marching Men* refers to a period in Beaut McGregor's youth and contrasts markedly with the general disorder and despair presented in the novel:

On the first morning, when the boy Beaut sat on the hillside with his father, it was spring and the land was vividly green. Lambs played in the fields; birds sang their mating songs; in the earth and in the water of the flowing river it was a time of new life....He sat upon the log drunk with happiness that the world could be so beautiful.20

The body is later to know "the fullness of the tragic story of his race," of how men, coming out of Europe "have failed in the challenge given them by fate and have produced out of

the stately order of nature only the sordid disorder of man." This theme recurs in Anderson's work; it is, of course, a theme which is encountered in an important body of American literature and which is, by no means, unique to American writing. But it is not unlikely that Anderson's exploration of it was in Faulkner's mind during the period of the generally imitative New Orleans pieces. In any event, if we hear echoes of Anderson's writing in these early sketches, it is not surprising since Faulkner was deeply involved with the man and his work at the time.

As we have said, Faulkner was acquainted not only with Anderson's work but also with the man. In New Orleans in the spring and summer months of 1925, Faulkner and Anderson walked, talked and drank together; they swapped tales and ideas. Their friendship grew so that in later years both men were to reminisce on a number of occasions about their days together in the Vieux Carré. It will be shown that, for Faulkner, this period was a very crucial one in his artistic development. But what drew these two men together? We have already seen that Faulkner, in search of his artistic direction,

21 Marching Men, p. 63.

had been impressed in his reading of Anderson; it is evident, too, that Anderson was very much impressed with Faulkner.

It will be forever to Anderson's credit that he almost instantly recognized Faulkner's talent and generously went out of his way to encourage the young writer. Faulkner has said of Anderson: "he was ready to be generous to anyone, once he was convinced that that one approached his craft with his own humility and respect for it." It would seem that Anderson sensed Faulkner's integrity and devotion to writing early. Roger Sergei recalls that at Ripshin, a few years later, Anderson talked for hours of Faulkner and Hemingway:

The art of these men he respected. They "had not sold out their imaginative life." They had not sold out their dreams.

Whether or not Faulkner's own sense of craft was, in part, modelled on Anderson's, it is clear that he talks about writing in similar terms.

Anderson recalls "there never was any doubt in my mind about Faulkner. From the first he was a real writer. He had the touch."

In 1930, Anderson prophetically wrote:

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"the two most notable young writers who have come on in America since the war, it seems to me, are William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway." 26 "They were both men of ability. I went to bat for that ability." 27 Indeed, Anderson would claim: "Faulkner is a man of great talent who has one fault. He is too talented, too clever." 28 In his 1953 "Appreciation", Faulkner recalls this same criticism:

He told me once: "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." 29

There are other reasons, in addition to Anderson's recognition of Faulkner's talent, which may explain their personal attachment. Neither man considered himself an intellectual or a literary man; they were storytellers, craftsmen, but not thinkers. As Faulkner put it,

Of course, you can be literary without the formal education, but I've got to talk in terms of what I know about Faulkner now, you see, and Sherwood Anderson--that we were not literary men in the sense that Edmund Wilson is a literary man or Malcom Cowley, for instance. 30

27 Memoirs, p. 477.
28 Memoirs, p. 474.
29 Atlantic article, p. 28.
30 Faulkner in the University, p. 23.
Julius W. Friend has also rightly observed that Anderson's approach to the ultimate questions was "not that of the abstract reasoner. Anderson did arrive at conclusions, but his ideas were drawn directly from his feeling for the world of his experience." 31 It is not unlikely that Faulkner and Anderson were drawn together because they felt somewhat apart from the intellectuality of The Double Dealer coterie. They were more involved with plain people than with intellectuals. For example, in a letter composed during a brief holiday from New Orleans, Anderson wrote:

The mountain people are sweet. No books, little false education, real humbleness. It does so beat talking to pretentious half-artists. 32

Faulkner has said:

I don't know any literary people. The people I know are other farmers and horse people and hunters, and we talk about horses and dogs and guns and what to do about this hay crop or this cotton crop, not about literature. 33

Both were townsmen who remained essentially townsmen all their lives. Faulkner was to live, removed from artistic and intellectual circles, in Oxford; Anderson was to retreat from the same circles to Marion, Virginia.


32 Letters, p. 145.

33 Faulkner in the University, p. 65.
It must be noted, too, that Anderson was very much attached to the South. In a letter to Stein, dated early March, 1925, he reported: "I am back at home...back with the niggers, the ships, the old houses, the rich often rank Southern smells I love." As he revealed in an article later, unlike many northerners, he was sympathetic to the position of the Southern white man and interested in the problems of the South: "It is a difficult, delicate job to see the Southern white man's angle and see it whole, but the northern man will have to do it if he wants to draw nearer the south." Faulkner, then, a young man described in the introduction to The Marble Faun as a "Southerner by every instinct," was probably of special interest to Anderson. Indeed, the young Southern poet, David, warmly and sympathetically portrayed in Anderson's "A Meeting South," is quite definitely drawn from William Faulkner. When Faulkner first met Anderson, he was primarily interested in being a poet. David walks and talks with the narrator in the Vieux Carré, as Faulkner did with Anderson. Physically, David resembles Faulkner: he is small and delicate but has a fine capacity for drinking the moon liquor he carries with him.

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34 Letters, p. 135.
the narrator in the story describes David's producing a bottle:

It was so large that I was amazed. How had it happened that the carrying of so large a bottle had not made him look deformed?... "Perhaps, like the kangaroo, his body has developed some kind of a natural pouch for taking care of supplies," I thought. 37

Writing of his first meeting with Faulkner, Anderson recalls: "His 'things' consisted of some six or eight half gallon jars of moon liquor he had brought with him from the country and that were stowed in the pockets of the big coat." 38 David admires Keats and Shelley, romantics whom Faulkner read avidly as a young man. An aviator with the British in the war, David has been wounded in a crash. This reminds one of the often reported, but erroneous, stories of Faulkner's war efforts. David's great grandfather was a fairly wealthy plantation owner but "now his father had but a few hundred acres left." 39 When Faulkner was young, the family's fortunes had very definitely dwindled from the days when Faulkner's great grandfather was a relatively powerful figure in the State. Although not accurate, these details surely resemble enough of Faulkner's biography to preclude any doubt about the character's prototype.


38 Memoirs, p. 473.

There is probably more of interest to the Anderson-Faulkner relationship in the extra-literary matter surrounding the pre-publication of *Soldiers' Pay* than there is in any attempt to determine Andersonian influences in the work itself. It is Faulkner's much repeated, though obviously humorous, claim that the example of Anderson's life as a novelist in New Orleans was the primary reason for his becoming a novelist: "I said to myself, 'If that is what it takes to be a novelist, then that's the life for me.'" But, also, according to Faulkner in an early interview, Anderson himself urged the young writer to attempt a novel: "He suggested to me that I write a novel." In any case, there is absolutely no doubt that Anderson at the height of his fame and securely established with Horace Liveright, generously used his influence to have the unknown, young Faulkner's first novel published. On August 17, 1925, he wrote Phil Stone:

> My dear Phil Stone: I had a letter from Mr. Liveright, who said that two of his readers were enthusiastic about Bill's novel, the third not so enthusiastic. He was to read it himself and decide. I have a hunch he will take it.

> I am very sure, however, that Bill's novel neither wants or needs an introduction by me.

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40 *Atlantic* article, p. 29.

If Mr. Liveright wants me to write a blurb for the outside paper jacket, I'll be glad to do it, as I certainly admire Bill's talent.\textsuperscript{42}

Writing to Horace Liveright on August 28th, Anderson noted:

I am glad you are going to publish Faulkner's novel. I have a hunch this man is a comer. Will tell you a lot about him when I see you in late October or November.\textsuperscript{43}

Faulkner's five accounts of the events which led up to the publication of \textit{Soldiers' Pay} vary and, more interestingly, seem to offer a mixture of fact and legend.\textsuperscript{44} Faulkner's decision to become a novelist because it appeared to be a pleasant life, his claim to have written the book with no thought of having anyone read it, the fortuitous meeting with Mrs. Anderson (in three of the five versions) which led to the swap between the two writers and the casual bargain that Anderson would tell his publisher to take it if he did not have to read it, are suggestive of the tall tale. The most recent version, for example, demonstrates this anecdotal flair:

So I wrote a book and when I started I found that writing was fun, and I hadn't seen Mr. Anderson in some time till I met Mrs. Anderson on the street. She said, We haven't seen you in a long

\textsuperscript{42}Letters, pp. 145-146.

\textsuperscript{43}Letters, p. 146.

time. What's wrong? I said, I'm writing a book, and she said, Do you want Sherwood to look at it? And I said, No'm, it's not finished yet. I hadn't thought of anybody looking at it, it was fun to write the book. And I saw her later and she said, I told Sherwood you were writing a book and he said, Good God! Then he said that he will make a trade with you. If he don't have to read it, he will tell his publisher to take it. I said, Done.45

Faulkner shares with Anderson the love of a good tale and the inclination, to the chagrin of the scholar only, of improving on fact. However, perhaps more credence should be given Faulkner's claim that Anderson did not read his manuscript before recommending it to the publisher since Anderson has said "I never saw anything they [Hemingway and Faulkner] had written until it was published."46

Soldiers' Pay, then, was written in New Orleans in 1925 over a period, according to Faulkner, of about two months.47 It was published in March, 1926, after Faulkner's return from Europe. If, as I shall try to show later, Anderson's most important instruction to Faulkner was to direct him toward an artistic exploration of the resources of his own region, it is a dictum not much heeded in Soldiers' Pay. If the corollary to this is the development of a truly American style, "to give new force to the words of our

45 Faulkner in the University, p. 22.


47 Atlantic article, p. 29.
everyday life," Faulkner shows little indebtedness here to the master of style. The style is frequently swollen and overly romantic:

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.

As O'Connor and others have observed, the novel is imitative of the sophisticated, world weary mood of the fin de siècle era. Faulkner has not forgotten his early acquaintance with Swinburne, Beardsley, et al. While the characters are disillusioned, alienated and lost, they are distinctly not drawn in the Andersonian manner. The characterization is, for the most part, flat; the reality of portrayal achieved in some of the later sketches is not captured.

It is significant that Faulkner is at his best in Soldiers' Pay when he is treating life in the small town. While the novel is set in a mythical Charlestown, Georgia, the description of the town coincides with his later depiction of Jefferson and seems also to be drawn from his own Oxford in Lafayette County. The evocation of place is quite striking:

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48 Sherwood Anderson's Notebook, p. 50.


50 The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner, p. 28.
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 and talked. (SP, 78)

It is in the passages pertaining to the town and the townfolk where Faulkner's novel is most appealing. Again, in the portrayal of the Negro church service, there is a particular power in the fusion of emotion and realistic detail:

The singing drew nearer and nearer; at last, crouching among a clump of trees beside the road, they saw the shabby church with its canting travesty of a spire. Within it was a soft glow of kerosene serving only to make the darkness and the heat thicker, making thicker the imminence of sex after harsh labor along the mooned land.... 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. (SP, 221)

Unfortunately, such passages are few but, as Anderson realized, they did signify the direction which Faulkner's art must take if he were to exploit his talent to the full.
While in the writing of *Soldiers' Pay* Faulkner "found that writing was fun," he had yet to discover that "not only each book had to have a design but the whole output or sum of an artist's work had to have a design." In an article on the Anderson and Faulkner relationship, H. Edward Richardson maintains that "one of the most directly prominent adaptations of Anderson's methods by Faulkner in *Soldiers' Pay* was his use of the girl character who is keenly aware of her sexuality and freedom." In Richardson's comparison of Cecily of *Soldiers' Pay* and Rosalind of "Out of Nowhere Into Nothing" he sees a similarity in the purpose of the character: "in the work of both men she is a brooding thing, a symbol rather than someone to be remembered for herself, a symbol of a newly independent, youthful desire, freshly experienced in the new, unrestrained atmosphere of independence itself." However, this comparison is most unconvincing and seems, finally, misleading. Cecily is the essence of the 'flapper'; she is shallow, bored, caught up in meaningless motion and incapable of any depth in human relationships. She has scarcely any inner life. A kind of boy-woman, she is aware of her sexuality

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51 Faulkner in the University, p. 22.
52 Stein interview, Three Decades, p. 82.
only in a narcissistic way: "she lay...running her fingers lightly over her breasts, across her belly, drawing concentric circles upon her body beneath the covers, wondering how it would feel to have a baby, hating that inevitable time when she'd have to have one..." (SP, 99). Faulkner's presentation, then, is clearly critical. In her flirtations there is very little that could be described as "youthful desire, freshly experienced." On the other hand, Anderson's portrayal of Rosalind is sympathetic. Her awakening is more than simply a sexual one; indeed, she muses:

If the sex impulse within it [her body] had been gratified in what way would my problem be solved? I am lonely now. It is evident that after that had happened I would still be lonely.55

Her awakening is to the wonder, joy and grief of life; she is willing to seek in the real world for the substance of the visions of her imaginative life:

It was in expressing physically her love of the man she would find the white wonder of life, the wonder of which, as a clumsy and crude girl, she had dreamed as she lay on the grass in the orchard. (TE, 254-255)

There appears, then, to be no grounds for claiming any adaptation of Anderson's methods in the portrayal of Cecily Saunders. If anything, the two girls are antithetical types. While Anderson urged Faulkner to undertake a novel, it would

seem that convincing parallels with Anderson's art are lacking in Soldiers' Pay.

Faulkner's second novel, Mosquitoes, drawn from his experiences with Sherwood Anderson in New Orleans, was written at Pascagoula on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in the summer of 1926. According to the note on the last page of the bound typescript, it was finished there on September 1, 1926. This rather interesting, though decidedly unsuccessful novel is especially relevant to this study for a number of reasons.

Of primary interest is the inclusion of a portrayal and critique of Sherwood Anderson in the person of one of the main characters, Dawson Fairchild. The model for the character is unmistakable. He is introduced with a marvelously fitting, comic description: "here was Dawson Fairchild, the novelist, resembling a benevolent walrus too recently out of bed to have made a toilet." He is "a middleaged man, and a successful novelist" (M, 76), "who has come from a provincial midwestern lower middle class family" (M, 200). Mark Frost mentions "the lusty pride of his Ohio valley masculinity" (M, 172). Frost's casual observation, "Just

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56 Collins, NOS, p. 33.
because the *New Republic* gives him hell" (M, 172), is undoubtedly based on the article which referred to Anderson's works as "naive but disquieting bed-time stories." Fairchild's opinions and theories of art are essentially Anderson's and he spins yarns about Al Jackson which Faulkner exchanged with the older writer. The terms in which he describes his liking the heat are typically those of Anderson:

"Like an old racehorse, you know. He's willing enough, you know, but in the cool weather when his muscles are stiff and his bones ache, the young ones all show him up. But about Fourth of July, when the sun gets hot and his muscles loosen up and his old bones don't complain any more, then he's good as any of 'em." (M, 42)

For example, Anderson, in a letter to his brother Karl, writes:

> We are settled in the old quarter of New Orleans, and my oldest boy, Bob, is here. It is hot, but like an old horse I feel better, can go better in the heat.

Fairchild's awe of Education (with a capital 'E'), his bewilderment and his lack of self-assurance are qualities Faulkner was later to attribute to Anderson. Thus, the portrait of Fairchild is frequently drawn very accurately,

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59[Unsigned], "The All-Star Literary Vaudeville," *The New Republic* (June 30, 1926), p. 163. None of the previous articles or reviews were critical; this appeared while Faulkner was writing *Mosquitoes*.

60*Letters*, p. 128.

61*Faulkner in the University*, pp. 229-230.
not coincidently, from facts relating to Anderson's life. Indeed, as Anderson was the person who most interested Faulkner in New Orleans, so Dawson Fairchild is the most prominent and fully developed character in the novel.

Faulkner's attitude toward Dawson Fairchild is ambivalent; he is viewed both with amusement and seriousness. One character, Julius Kauffman, classifies Fairchild as "a bewildered stenographer with a gift for people..." (M, 43). Although, on occasion, the portrait is almost purely satiric, as in the rendering of Fairchild's story about love in the outhouse (M, 191-193), Fairchild's honesty in grappling with the problems of art and life contrasts most favorably with the barren sophistication and cynicism espoused by many of the party. As Kauffman observes of Fairchild,

"His writing seems fumbling, not because life is unclear to him, but because of his innate humorless belief that, though it bewilder him at times, life at bottom is sound and admirable and fine..." (M, 200).

While Fairchild takes a large part in much of the meaningless chatter, he is capable of realizing that such talk is vacuous:

"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 in a certain way....I don't claim that words have life in themselves. But words brought into a happy conjunction produce something that lives...." (M, 173)

Moreover, it is Fairchild who comes to realize and articulate an artistic credo which is essentially Faulkner's. In a
final vision, Fairchild sees what lies at the core of artistic creation:

"It is that Passion Week of the heart, that instant of timeless beatitude which some never know, which some, I suppose, gain at will, which others gain through an outside agency like alcohol, like tonight—that passive state of the heart with which the mind, the brain, has nothing to do at all, in which the hackneyed accidents which make up this world—love and life and death and sex and sorrow—brought together by chance in perfect proportions, take on a kind of splendid and timeless beauty." (M, 280-281)

Unlike the other characters, with the exception of Gordon, Fairchild achieves a kind of fulfillment, "hearing the dark and simple heart of things" (M, 281). It is, in fact, the presence of this double vision in the novel, permitting a balanced view and an ironic complexity, which represents an advance over *Soldiers' Pay* and which will become characteristic of Faulkner's greatest accomplishments. It is, then, greatly to oversimplify to see in *Mosquitoes* only a caricature of Sherwood Anderson.

The further influence of Anderson in *Mosquitoes*, beyond his being the prototype of Dawson Fairchild, is found in the tall tales about the Jackson family which provide some of the most interesting passages in the novel. As Faulkner recalled in 1953, the material was evolved during their walks together and in an exchange of letters:

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62 *The Letters* contains one of Anderson's contributions (pp. 162-164) and notes two Faulkner letters in the Newberry collection which are related to the series. One of the Faulkner letters is reproduced in James B. Meriwether's *The Literary Career of William Faulkner*, figures 27-29.
During those afternoons when we would walk about the old quarter, I listening while he talked to me or to people...he, with a little help from me, invented other fantastic characters like the sleepless man with the horse. One of them was supposed to be a descendant of Andrew Jackson, left in that Louisiana swamp after the Battle of Chalmette, no longer half-horse half-alligator but by now half-man half sheep and presently half-shark, who—its, the whole fable—at last got so unwieldy and (so we thought) so funny, that we decided to get it onto paper by writing letters to one another....

The descendant is, of course, Claude Jackson, who appears in the third of Fairchild's tales. But in 1958, in reply to a student's observation that he didn't remember seeing these stories in any of Faulkner's books, Faulkner stated that they were never printed. As is the nature of things, out of this contradiction has risen not only a scholarly article but also something of a controversy. H. Edward Richardson attempts to explain the irreconcilables but gives short shrift to the "common-sense assumption" that Faulkner simply forgot in this exchange with students that he had used the tall tale in Mosquitoes. Moreover, Richardson ascribes the origin of the Claude Jackson tale to Anderson. And he attaches great importance to the fact that the memory of the actual relationship has overshadowed the fictional use:

63 Atlantic article, p. 28.
64Faulkner in the University, p. 232.
it is conceivable that the nostalgic recollection of Sherwood Anderson, who became for Faulkner a giant of whom few others were even aware, faded the very fabric of artistic fact. The episode suggests the possibility that Faulkner's discrepancy is, in some way, a key to a deeper Anderson influence upon his thought and work than scholars have heretofore been aware of....

In their reply to this article, Walter B. Rideout and James B. Meriwether rightly take Richardson to account for so slighting the commonplace assumption. They point out, too, that the Faulkner letter reproduced in The Literary Career of William Faulkner contains the Claude Jackson story which is related in Mosquitoes. Their conclusion, contrary to Richardson's, is that Faulkner drew from his own contribution to the Jackson story, not Anderson's. However, though much more satisfactory in their approach, Rideout and Meriwether seem overly concerned with defending Faulkner from any claim that he has appropriated some of Anderson's contribution to the legend. But such things do not worry Faulkner:

66 "Faulkner, Anderson and Their Tall Tale," p. 290. This suggestion should not be taken too seriously. It is erroneous to claim that he "became for Faulkner a giant of whom few others were even aware." Firstly, Faulkner's praise of Anderson has always been tempered with criticism; although he referred to him as a giant, he noted, too, that he made "but two or perhaps three gestures commensurate with gianthood" (Atlantic, p. 29). Secondly, as we have already seen, Faulkner was by no means alone in his recognition of Anderson's importance.


68 The Literary Career, fig. 27-29.
I think the writer, as I said before, is completely amoral. He takes whatever he needs, wherever he needs, and he does that openly and honestly....69

Perhaps the following is an example. In Anderson's letter Flu Balsom mentions that "Al brands all his fish by cutting a notch in their tails."70 During Fairchild's second story in Mosquitoes part of the dialogue is:

"Marks his fish, eh?"
"Sure: notches their tails."
"Mr. Fairchild," Mrs. Maurier said.
"But our fish at home have notched tails."
Major Ayers objected.
"Well, they are Jackson fish that have strayed off the range, then." (M, 73)

But there is surely nothing sinister, nothing to be defended, in this borrowing. Anderson had planted an idea which Faulkner used in his novel. Of course, it is quite likely, since they worked up the tales together, that Faulkner forgot exactly which details were his and which were Anderson's. In either case, there does not really seem to be a genuine issue here. The whole problem of who contributed what to the Jackson legend cannot be dealt with until all the letters, if they still exist, are made available. Mr. Richardson, like Tristram Shandy's father, raises exciting, hypothetical possibilities which are left unsolved. Rideout and Meriwether, on the other hand, seem to view the whole question of a

69 Faulkner in the University, p. 20.
70 Letters, p. 163.
borrowing as something in the nature of an expose to be vigorously denied. In any event, what is important is to appreciate the early development of Faulkner as a writer of tall tale humour under the tutelage of Anderson. In the exchange of letters, Faulkner depicts Anderson as very much the teacher and he, the student:

"Either throw it away, and we'll quit, or take it back and do it over." I took the letter. I worked three days over it before I carried it back to him.71

It was to become increasingly clear that Faulkner's real comic talent was found not in the sophisticated verbal repartee which comprises most of the novel but in the depiction of ridiculously exaggerated and incongruous situations characteristic of the humour of the Old Southwest. And it is the humour in Mosquitoes that Faulkner still finds worthwhile in a book which, on the whole, is not an important book to him.72 In Mosquitoes are sown the seeds of a major comic talent which was later to flower especially in The Hamlet. Interestingly, Faulkner first began to explore the folk material relating to the Snopes family just after the writing of Mosquitoes.73 A notice Phil Stone had written for the forthcoming publication of that book substantiates this:

71 Atlantic article, p. 29.
72 Faulkner in the University, p. 257.
73 Faulkner in the University, p. 14 and p. 90.
Since his return from Europe Faulkner has been here at home playing golf and writing two new novels which are already under contract. Both are Southern in setting. One is something of a saga of an extensive family connection of typical "poor white trash" and is said by those who have seen that part of the manuscript completed to be the funniest book anybody ever wrote.74

It is revealing that both the Sartoris and Snopes sagas were begun at the same time; both themes are inherent in the material Faulkner was just beginning to explore as a result of Anderson's guidance. But this matter we will explore later.

In December, 1926, Faulkner and the artist William Spratling saw published their Sherwood Anderson and Other Famous Creoles.75 The sketches were by Spratling and the introduction and subtitles were Faulkner's. This little book of caricatures of the inhabitants of the Vieux Carre' is generally seen by commentators on Anderson and Faulkner as the reason for the break-up of their friendship; it has usually not received any other attention. The foreword is clearly a parody of Anderson's style and a "whimsical interpretation of Sherwood Anderson's attitude to the Vieux Carre."76

75 (New Orleans, 1926).
76 Quoted in Meriwether, The Literary Career of William Faulkner, p. 11. This is from a review in the Times-Picayune (January 2, 1927).
First, let me tell you something about our Quarter, the Vieux Carre. Do you know our quarter, with its narrow streets, its old wrought-iron balconies and its southern European atmosphere? An atmosphere of richness and soft laughter, you know. It has a kind of ease, a kind of awareness of the unimportance of things that outlanders like myself—I am not a native—were taught to believe important. So it is no wonder that as one walks about the quarter one sees artists here and there on the shady side of the street corners, sketching houses and balconies. I have counted as many as forty in a single afternoon, and though I did not know their names nor the value of their paintings, they were my brothers. And in this fellowship where no badges are worn and no sign of greeting is required, I passed them as they bent over their canvasses, and as I walked onward I mused on the richness of our American life that permits forty people to spend day after day painting pictures in a single area comprised in six city blocks.77

It is surely not a "harsh-parody satire."78 Although many claim it cost Faulkner his friendship with Anderson, it is so gentle a parody that this supposition should be questioned. The last lines, while clearly addressed to Anderson, are in no way malicious:

One trouble with us American artists is that we take our art and ourselves too seriously. And perhaps seeing ourselves in the eyes of our fellow artists, will enable those who have strayed to establish anew a sound contact with the fountainhead of our American life.79

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77 Quoted in The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner, p. 22.
79 Quoted in The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner, p. 23.
John McClure's remark in his review that the work contains "not a line drawn in malice" seems most reasonable. Moreover, the evidence suggests that the Faulkner-Anderson relationship was severely strained well before the publication of the parody.

In a letter to Horace Liveright, dated April 19, 1926, almost eight months before the Spratling book, Anderson wrote:

I hope you will have sales enough of this novel to encourage both Faulkner and yourself. I do not like the man personally very much....He was so nasty to me personally that I don't want to write him myself....

James Schevill, discussing Anderson's state of mind in the early spring of 1926, notes:

Another thing that concerned him was the quarrel he had had with William Faulkner, whose first novel, *Soldiers' Pay*, had just appeared. He had been close to Faulkner and the separation pained him.

This would again place the rift months before the caricature. Only Schevill attributes the disruption in the friendship to a cause other than the parody:

While they remained friends, they soon discovered a basic difference of opinion. The roots of this disagreement lay in their respective backgrounds.

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80 McClure, quoted in *The Literary Career*, p. 11.
81 *Letters*, p. 155.
They could not help arguing about the South and particularly about the treatment of the Negro. 83

In October, 1930, Anderson, writing of Faulkner, recalls:

We were discussing the cross between Negroes and whites and Faulkner declared it couldn't work past the first crossing. "The result of such a cross is like a mule. It can't breed its own kind," he said, and when I laughed he grew angry and accused me of being a damn Yank, absolutely ignorant and stupid concerning all Southern things.

It may be that we had both been drinking. We separated, each walking off alone and each turning to swear at the other. 84

That this very silly argument caused the break, however, is quite unlikely. As I have already argued, contrary to Schevill's feeling, Anderson would appear to be fundamentally sympathetic to the Southern point of view.

Although their relationship had seriously deteriorated earlier, it may well be, as Faulkner suggests, that, while the intentions were good-humoured, Anderson was hurt by his burlesque of the primer-like style:

But we had made his style look ridiculous; and by that time, after Dark Laughter, when he had reached the point where he should have stopped writing, he had to defend that style at all costs because he too must have known by then in his heart that there was nothing else left. 85

We know, too, that Anderson tended to despair about his talent and his accomplishments at this period. He could find hurt

83 Schevill, p. 195.

84 American Mercury XXI (October 1930), p. 129.

85 Atlantic Article, p. 28.
where none was intended. Of course, it is also possible that this parody, however gentle, was a necessary step for the young Faulkner to take in establishing his independence from his chosen master; at some point, the son must always assert himself before his father. But in his mature years it was something Faulkner looked back upon as "the unhappy caricature affair." Certainly, after this time, Faulkner and Anderson scarcely ever saw one another; the personal relationship had cooled for good.

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86 *Letters*, p. 160.
87 *Atlantic* article, p. 29.
CHAPTER III
THE GROTESQUE

Faulkner has always held Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio in high regard and in an examination of larger areas of Anderson's possible influence it seems convenient to use the comments in his Dallas review of Winesburg as a starting point. In the article Faulkner is particularly interested in Anderson's characterizations and the background against which they play out their lives. Having mentioned Wash Williams earlier in the article, Faulkner continues:

These people live and breathe; they are beautiful. There is the man who organized a baseball club, the man with the "speaking" hands, Elizabeth Willard, middle-aged and the oldish doctor....And behind all of them a ground of fecund earth and corn in the green spring and the slow, full hot summer and the rigorous masculine winter that hurts it not, but makes it stronger.1

Since both of these subjects appear to suggest possibilities of indebtedness, it seems wise to consider them separately. Because Faulkner's appreciation of Anderson's sense of the land, of place, and its concomitant a sense of community, involves extensive issues, it is best to consider it later.

Faulkner's continued praise of Winesburg and his concentration on Anderson's creations of the grotesque, as shown above, seem evidence enough to justify a comparison of some

1 Dallas article, p. 90.
of his own creations with Anderson's to determine the possibility of influence. However, before any meaningful comparison can be made, it appears necessary first to examine Anderson's use of the word "grotesque" and its place in his fiction prior to considering how Faulkner might have been influenced by this concept.

"The Book of the Grotesque," the first of the stories to be written and, originally, Anderson's title for the total collection, is central to the meaning and structure of the book:

That in the beginning when the world was young there were a great many thoughts but no such thing as a truth....

And then the people came along. Each as he appeared snatched up one of the truths and some who were quite strong snatched up a dozen of them.

It was the truths that made the people grotesques. The old man had quite an elaborate theory concerning the matter. It was his notion that the moment one of the people took one of the truths to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live his life by it, he became a grotesque and the truths he embraced became a falsehood. (WO, 24-25)

Significantly, this theory has been echoed by William Faulkner:

I think that no one individual can look at truth. It blinds you. You look at it and you see one phase of it. Someone else looks at it and sees a slightly awry phase of it.3

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3 Faulkner in the University, p. 273.
Let us see, firstly, how the theory applies to the characterizations of the two authors.

The old man's theory points to the distortion that characterizes the grotesques of Winesburg; they are incapable of any range of human experiences and their behaviour is consequently obsessive. The theory is only possibly misleading in suggesting, as Howe points out, that the grotesques have willfully chosen their predicament whereas, in fact, they are victims, generally, of a larger, cultural failure signified by the loss of any meaningful community. The inability to communicate with others and the failure to find any form of fulfillment of their impulses to love and to express their inner lives have created the grotesques. As Ihab Hassan puts it:

At the bottom, as we come to realize, the grotesque is a form of the Self, that persistent and curious inwardness of man which will reveal itself, and reveal itself malformed rather than not at all.5

Anderson's grotesques are treated with great sympathy, which Faulkner has commented upon,6 and, despite their obsessive and distorted behaviour, the grotesques are by no means satirized or burlesqued. What Faulkner characters, then, show

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6 Dallas article, p. 90.
an affinity with the *Winesburg* grotesques?

*Light in August* seems to offer some possible figures for comparison. Reverend Gail Hightower in his hysterical preaching recalls the Reverend Curtis Hartman of *Winesburg*. He is "wild too in the pulpit, using religion as though it were a dream. Not a nightmare, but something which went faster than the words in the Book; a sort of cyclone that did not even need to touch the actual earth." The description of one of Hartman's sermons is similar: "With his brain in a whirl he went down into the pulpit and preached a long sermon without once thinking of his gestures or his voice" (WO, 149). However, in his isolation and bachelor-like existence, Hightower is even more reminiscent of Wing Biddlebaum. Both have attempted to convey their dreams to their fellows and both have failed utterly. Both have suffered physical beatings at the hands of their townspeople and been driven into isolation. Biddlebaum only has contact with one other individual, George Willard, while Hightower's only visitor is Byron Bunch. The important distinction to be made in these two studies of outcasts is that, while Biddlebaum is blameless, Hightower is responsible for his predicament. Also, Biddlebaum longs for human contact while Hightower has sought immunity. But even Hightower can realize

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"all that any man can hope for is to be permitted to live quietly among his fellows" (LA, 64). Moreover, Hightower recalls the theory of the grotesque in that he lives under the obsession of one idea, his grandfather's heroism, giving the impression "of being born about thirty years after the only day he seemed to have ever lived in—that day when his grandfather was shot from the galloping horse..." (LA, 53).

Alice Hindman of Winesburg and Joe Christmas, the central figure in Light in August, are two other studies of isolation whose presentations bear some comparison. In states of great emotional stress, both attempt similar acts which indicate a striving for release. Alice, having undressed,

ran downstairs through the dark house and out into the rain. As she stood on the little grass plot before the house and felt the cold rain on her body a mad desire to run naked through the streets took possession of her. (WO, 119)

Joe Christmas stands outside his shack:

The dark air breathed upon him, breathed smoothly as the garment slipped down his legs, the cool mouth of darkness, the soft cool tongue. Moving again, he could feel the dark air like water; he could feel the dew under his feet as he had never felt dew before. (LA, 93)

In their isolation both have portents of some dire event. Alice, after her abortive adventure, weeps brokenheartedly:

"'What is the matter with me? I will do something dreadful if I am not careful...'" (WO, 120). Christmas, puzzled and driven, wonders: "'What in hell is the matter with me?"
And he thinks, "Something is going to happen to me. I am going to do something... (LA, 91).

In Joe's lover, Joanna Burden, Faulkner has created another Andersonian grotesque. Isolated, living just outside Jefferson, "a stranger, a foreigner" (LA, 40), she has become obsessed by her father's idea that the Negro is "[a] race doomed and cursed to be forever and ever a part of the white race's doom and curse for its sins" (LA, 221). As a result, Joanna becomes a martyr, incapable of recognizing the negroes' humanity, seeing them "not as people, but as a thing, a shadow in which [she] lived..." (LA, 221). The truth of the negro's just cause has become, in Joanna's grasp, a falsehood.

Addie Bundren, who dominates the action of As I Lay Dying, is another lonely figure whose intense inner life finds only a grotesque expression. As a teacher, she longed to break down the barrier between her students and herself:

When the switch fell I could feel it upon my flesh, when it welted and ridged it was my blood that ran, and I would think with each blow of the switch: Now you are aware of me! Now I am something in your secret and selfish life, who has marked your blood with my own for ever and ever.  

For Addie, language provides no real means for communication; this isolates her completely from Anse who is all meaningless

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words. The distance between husband and wife is reminiscent of that between Elizabeth Willard and Tom in *Winesburg*. There is no possibility of the passionate internal lives of these women finding expression within their marriages; both must seek elsewhere for communion and understanding.

Anderson's Jesse Bentley is a portrayal of a fanatic: "He was a man born out of his time and place and for this he suffered and made others suffer" (*WO*, 67). In this sense, he rather suggests Faulkner's Percy Grimm who "was suffering the terrible tragedy of having been born not alone too late but not late enough to have escaped first hand knowledge of the lost time when he should have been a man instead of a child" (*LA*, 394). In his religious fanaticism, Jesse might be compared with Doc Hines; both see the hand of God in their experiences. Most of all, Jesse Bentley deserves comparison with Faulkner's Thomas Sutpen of *Absalom, Absalom*.

Jesse, "owner and overlord" of the Bentley farm, "wanted terribly to make his life a thing of great importance" (*WO*, 69). He longs, like the Jesse of Old Testament days, "to rule over men and to be the father of sons who shall be rulers!" (*WO*, 70). He takes his grandsom David to be the instrument by which he will extend his dynasty and have God's presence known to him: "'Send me a son to be called David who shall help me to pluck at last all of these lands out of the hands of the Philistines...'") (*WO*, 73). Driven
by "the indefinable hunger within" (WO, 68), Jesse, "in his absorption in himself and in his own destiny" (WO, 69), neglects his wife and turns his daughter, Louise, into a bitter recluse. Finally, in his obsession, he so terrifies David that the boy turns upon him and flees forever, thinking he has killed the man. Jesse's dream is crushed; in sacrificing his kin to his dream for power and glory, he sets in motion the very forces that will ensure his failure.

Faulkner portrays Sutpen in some very similar terms; the canvas, of course, is much larger and richer. Sutpen, soon after being sent as a child to the back door by the plantation owner's negro butler, and, for the first time, seeing his family "as cattle, creatures heavy and without grace," sets out upon a design to establish a dynasty. Having experienced the traumatic rejection by the butler, Sutpen strives obsessively to assert himself: "'to make that scratch, that undying mark on the blank face of the oblivion to which we are all doomed...'" (AA, 129). Completely absorbed in his dream, Sutpen fails to appreciate the humanity of others, as when he sets aside his wife, Eulalia, and son, Charles Bon: "'I merely explained how this new fact rendered it impossible that this woman and child be incorporated in my design...'"(AA, 264). When Bon arrives at Sutpen's Hundred, seeking his father's recognition, the end of Sutpen's

dream approaches. Finally, Henry, Sutpen's son by Ellen Coldfield, kills Bon and flees. Sutpen is left, like Jesse, a pitiable old man, desperately in search of a son. His shocking offer to marry Rosa Coldfield only if she proves capable of bearing a male heir turns her into a recluse. Both Sutpen and Bentley are so obsessed by their designs that in their rigidity they deny life. Finally, the novel's title is taken from II Samuel and the book recalls the Biblical story of King David. This story, as we have seen, plays an important part in Anderson's depiction of Jesse.

These comparisons show that a number of Faulkner's characters are depicted in ways not dissimilar from some of Anderson's grotesques. Now, it should be made clear that no attempt is being made to claim that Faulkner simply adopted certain characters and situations from Anderson's work. But his especial familiarity with Winesburg and his repeated claim that the writer borrows freely may allow us to conclude that Anderson's grotesques played a part, and sometimes an important part, in Faulkner's characterizations.

There is, however, another important way in which Anderson's theory of the grotesque seems to bear an interesting relation to the large structure of three of Faulkner's most important novels: The Sound and the Fury.

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10 Faulkner in the University, p. 20.
As I Lay Dying and Absalom, Absalom!. In all three novels there are multiple points of view, each of which offers a private, fragmentary version of the total picture. In varying degrees, there is a distortion occasioned by the individual's distinctive way of viewing experience. The individual tends to see his fragment of the truth as the truth. This recalls the old man's theory in Winesburg:

It was his notion that the moment one of the people took one of the truths to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live his life by it, he became a grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood. (WO, 25)

That Faulkner himself shares such a theory is revealed not only in these three novels but also, as noted earlier, in his public remarks. Talking about the possibility of anyone's having the right view in Absalom, Absalom!, Faulkner observes:

I think that no one individual can look at truth. It blinds you. You look at it and you see one phase of it. Someone else looks at it and sees a slightly awry phase of it. But taken all together, the truth is in what they saw though nobody saw the truth intact. So these are true as far as Miss Rosa and as Quentin saw it. Quentin's father saw what he believed was truth, that was all he saw. But the old man was himself a little too big for people no greater in stature than Quentin and Miss Rosa and Mr. Compson to see all at once.12

A closer look at the three novels should more clearly reveal how Faulkner has used and developed this theory which we first


12 Faulkner in the University, pp. 273-274.
encountered in Winesburg.

In The Sound and the Fury, the idiot, Benjy, orders the world largely around a fixed image of Caddy. Incapable of recognizing time, he will allow no change in the sister he loves. When she no longer smells like trees he bellows: "and I couldn't smell trees anymore and I began to cry." For Benjy, Caddy must always remain the child who gave him her innocent love. Quentin's vision is no less inflexible, no less removed from reality than Benjy's. Again, Caddy is central. Quentin, obsessed with Caddy's virginity, cannot countenance her growing up: "Who loved not his sister's body but some concept of Compson honor precariously and (he knew well) only temporarily supported by the minute fragile membrane of her maidenhead..." (SF, 9). He equates Caddy's sexual freedom with the decline of the Compsons and the South. To Quentin, Caddy is an ideal; he cannot accept her as she is. Jason, too, is obsessed by Caddy and, especially, by her daughter. He sees both in completely materialistic terms. To Jason, Caddy is money in the bank. Caddy, then, the center of the book, is seen by the brothers according to their own obsessions. None of them will let her live her life; none can recognize that she is a real, vital human being.

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In *As I Lay Dying*, the number of perspectives is increased and the authorial view excluded. Here, too, the characters' thoughts, generally focussed on Addie, are shown to vary markedly and to be greatly influenced by the character of the observer. Cora Tull, with her cheap religiosity and her humdrum problems, is completely unaware of experience; she is often very mistaken in her assessment: "I saw that with Jewel she had just been pretending, but that it was between her and Darl that the understanding and the true love was" (*AILD*, 354). Anse, as Addie knew, is incapable of going beyond the platitudes and self-pity that characterize him. He is incapable of real feelings and of understanding the feelings of others. Darl feels the most and sees the most profoundly. He has seen into the secrets of Addie and Dewey Dell and he knows the heart of Jewel's frustration. As Vernon Tull realizes: "It's like he had got into the inside of you, someway" (*AILD*, 426). But Darl's capacity to know and to feel ultimately drive him mad. He loses all connection with reality, coming even to talk of himself as another person: "Darl is our brother, our brother Darl" (*AILD*, 527). Cash, who offers a kind of sanity and health, nevertheless sees the world rather too simply in the terms of the craftsman. An examination of all of the narrators in the novel reveals that, while some are closer to the truth than others, none offers more than an aspect of it.
Absalom, Absalom! further explores the theme of how distortion and falsehood arise from the individual's insistence that his perspective is the entire truth. This is especially true of the presentation of Miss Rosa Coldfield. A recluse for forty-three years, Rosa offers the most distorted and hysterical account of Sutpen; she has become as rigid as her view of him: "sitting so bolt upright in the straight hard chair that was so tall for her that her legs hung straight and rigid as if she had iron shinbones and ankles..." (AA, 7). Rosa's hatred of Sutpen occasions her seeing him as some Satanic being, the instrument of the "fatality and curse on the South and on our family..." (AA, 21). Obsessed by her abhorrence of Sutpen, she is made a grotesque who, though closest to the man, is the least capable of depicting him. Mr. Compson, on the other hand, casts an ironic eye upon the Sutpen legend, providing us with a ready criticism of and balance to Rosa's account. However, he is too removed, too apt to see the Sutpen story in merely theatrical or classical terms. Quentin, too obsessed with his own incestuous wishes and sharing Rosa's fascination and frenzy, comes to be especially aroused by the Bon-Henry-Judith triangle and to identify with Henry:

So that now it was not two but four of them riding the two horses through the dark over the frozen December ruts of that Christmas Eve: four of them and then just two--Charles--Shreve and Quentin-Henry.... (AA, 334)

Comparing the Quentin of Absalom to that of The Sound and the Fury, Faulkner has said,
To me he's consistent. That he approached the Sutpen family with the same ophthalmia that he approached his own troubles, that he probably never saw anything very clearly, that his was just one of the thirteen ways to look at Sutpen, and his may have been the—one of the most erroneous.

Despite Shreve McCannon's being a Canadian, Faulkner sees him as tempering Quentin's distorted vision: "Shreve was the commentator that held the thing to something of reality. If Quentin had been let alone to tell it, it would have become completely unreal."

Faulkner and Anderson are deeply involved in the problems of the isolation of individuals, both in their relations with others and in their visions of reality. Man's insistent concern with any particular idea or problem removes him even further from his fellows and from the whole truth. While Anderson explores this primarily in *Winesburg*, Faulkner gives it more frequent treatment. It would seem a large enough theme in Faulkner's work to suggest that he must have been very interested in Anderson's exploration of the theory of the grotesque in *Winesburg*. The parallels that have been discussed suggest the likelihood of Anderson's influencing Faulkner's handling of this very important modern theme.

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14 Faulkner in the University, p. 274.
15 Faulkner in the University, p. 75.
CHAPTER IV

THE REGIONAL MATERIAL

There seems no reason, as I shall attempt to demonstrate, to deny that it was Anderson who led Faulkner to explore his native resources. John M. Bradbury, however, charges "the attribution to him [Anderson] of major influence in turning Faulkner's interests and talents to his native material appears patently improbable." The reasons Mr. Bradbury evinces are weak. He over-emphasizes the parody-satire and assumes the break in the relationship ended Anderson's influence. Also, he suggests in giving the date, 1929, with the title of *Sartoris* that the late date precludes Anderson's influence. But, although *Sartoris* was not published until 1929, it was begun before the publication of *Mosquitoes* in April, 1927, and the completed typescript is dated September 29, 1927. This brings it well within the range of what Bradbury would grant as Anderson's influential period. Moreover, there is a quantity of evidence to show Anderson's role in sending Faulkner back to his native soil.

From the very beginning Faulkner associated Anderson with a sense of place: "Men grow from the soil, like corn

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and trees: I prefer to think of Mr. Anderson as a lusty corn field in his native Ohio."\(^4\) And he adds: "He is American, and more than that, a middle westerner, of the soil: he is as typical of Ohio in his way as Harding was in his."\(^5\) Later, in 1953, Faulkner attributed his own awareness of the importance of a sense of place to Anderson: "I learned that, to be a writer, one has first got to be what he is, what he was born."\(^6\) He recalls that Anderson told him: "'You're a country boy; all you know is that little patch up there in Mississippi where you started from.'"\(^7\) In \textit{Winesburg, Ohio}, Anderson had provided Faulkner with a most cogent demonstration of his credo.

In \textit{A Story Teller's Story}, published only a few months before Anderson met Faulkner,\(^8\) the recognition that the writer's imagination must be fired by a love of his native soil is echoed in the remembered advice of Judge Turner: "one had in the end to accept his own time, place and people, whatever they might be, and...one gained nothing by wandering about the earth among strangers."\(^9\) Anderson

\(^4\)\textit{Dallas article}, p. 89.  
\(^5\)\textit{Dallas article}, p. 94.  
\(^6\)\textit{Atlantic article}, p. 29.  
\(^7\)\textit{Atlantic article}, p. 29.  
\(^8\)Schevill gives October, 1924, as its publication date, p. 199.  
\(^9\)(\textit{New York, 1924}), p. 178.
recalls his increasing awareness of the artistic necessity of this dictum:

One had first of all to face one's materials, accept fully the life about, quit running off in fancy to India, to England, to the South Seas. We Americans had to begin to stay, in spirit at least, at home. We had to accept our materials, face our materials.10

This is what he tried to teach Faulkner.

It is clear that the problem of achieving universality through regionalism had early occupied Faulkner. In 1922, he attributed to a Frenchman the statement "that art is pre-eminentely provincial: i.e., it comes directly from a certain age and a certain locality." 11 But the young Faulkner intimated that great art in the present is almost impossible in America "because of the fact that America has no drama or literature worth the name, and hence no tradition." 12

Faulkner's interests, before his association with Anderson, were in English and French literature of the late nineteenth century; significantly, after his meeting with Anderson, Faulkner's reading included more contemporary and American literature. Indeed, in later years he was to claim a strong attachment only with those writers whom he felt were really American. In replying to a suggestion that he had some affinity with Poe, Faulkner said:

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10 *A Story Teller's Story*, p. 385.
12 *Early Prose and Poetry*, p. 87.
I don't believe so, for this reason—Poe was one of the group of American writers who were primarily European, not American. These others—Anderson and Dreiser—they were American, so the inheritance was more direct than with Poe, because to me, Poe, Hawthorne, Longfellow—they were easterners, they were actually Europeans.  

Faulkner explores the problem of achieving universality in art further in *Mosquitoes* where Dawson Fairchild's regionalism is subjected to a variety of criticisms. One does not wish to remain a mere local colorist. Mrs. Wiseman observes: "And there's the seat of your bewilderment, Dawson—your belief that the function of creating art depends on geography" (M, 151). Her brother remarks, "Clinging spiritually to one little spot on the earth's surface, so much of his labor is performed for him" (M, 151). Fairchild lacks, he claims, "a standard of literature that is international...a belief, a conviction that his talent need not be restricted to delineating things which his conscious mind assures him are American reactions" (M, 200). Julius Kauffman prescribes how Fairchild can attain universality:  

"For by getting himself and his own bewilderment and inhibitions out of the way by describing, in a manner that even translation cannot injure (as Balzac did) American life as American life is, it will become eternal and timeless despite him.  

Life everywhere is the same, you know. Manners of living it may be different...but a man's old compulsions, duty and inclination: the axis and the circumference of his squirrel cage, they do not change." (M, 201)

\[13\text{Faulkner at Nagano, p. 15.}\]
And this realization was precisely what Faulkner put into effect in his very next novel and in his subsequent major fiction. Despite the criticism levelled at Fairchild above, it was really what Anderson had attempted in *Winesburg*. As William L. Phillips has observed, "the method of Faulkner's *Yoknapatawpha* novels is an elaboration of the *Winesburg* method....Extend Anderson's *Winesburg* almost infinitely in time, space, and depth and one has the massive body of Faulkner's novels."

*Sartoris* is, then, in an important sense, the real beginning of Faulkner's career. As he related in the *Paris Review* interview,

> With *Soldiers' Pay* and *Mosquitoes* I wrote for the sake of 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.  

Faulkner's dedication of *Sartoris*, "To Sherwood Anderson / through whose kindness I was first published, with the belief that this book will give him no reason to regret that fact," may suggest not only gratitude for the older writer's aid with Liveright but also indebtedness for his having led the younger man to his real subject.

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15 Stein interview, *Three Decades of Criticism*, p. 82.
Although Faulkner seems to have drawn upon Oxford and Lafayette County for the setting of his Georgia town in *Soldiers' Pay* and for the folk background of his early sketch, "The Liar," he did not explore his heritage in any depth until the writing of *Sartoris*. In this third novel Faulkner found that to face his materials meant to discover the inexhaustible world of Yoknapatawpha County. The history and legend of his area are assimilated and transformed in the Yoknapatawpha saga. The whole social spectrum from the aristocracy to the poor whites and Negroes is included. The history of the Sartoris clan is largely based on the history of the Faulkner family. As Faulkner has said of *Sartoris*: "It opened up a gold mine of other people, so I created a cosmos of my own." Sartoris very definitely gives the impression of a novel of beginnings; it occasionally tends to be somewhat disconnected. As Irving Howe has put it: "*Sartoris* reads like a notebook packed with bits and pieces of novels still to be written." Lawrance Thompson calls it "the matrix narrative for the chronicles of Yoknapatawpha...." And, when asked if there were a particular sequence in which his works should be read, Faulkner replied it would be best to begin with *Sartoris* because "that has the germ of my apocrypha in it. A lot of

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16Stein, *Three Decades*, p. 82.
the characters are postulated in that book." The Sartorises are to be fully treated again in *The Unvanquished*. Flem Snopes, who has become vice-president of the Sartoris bank, and the Snopes clan; which is gradually encroaching upon Jefferson, are later to be portrayed at length in the trilogy. V.K. Suratt, the sewing machine salesman, who has only a minor part in this novel, will play a major role as V.K. Ratliff in *The Hamlet*. Horace Benbow, Narcissa and Belle Mitchell appear again in *Sanctuary*. The amusing story of Banker Sartoris and his opposition to the automobile is re-treated in *The Reivers* where old Bayard is now Grandfather Priest. The advent of the machine is a recurring theme and symbol in subsequent work. This is a very sketchy survey of the material that is to be re-explored but it is sufficient to reveal that the fictional world created in *Sartoris* is a germinal one.

Whether Faulkner would have eventually immersed himself as deeply in the life of his own region and have utilized its resources so extensively in his fiction had he not read and known Anderson is impossible to say. What is clear is that Anderson played an important part in directing Faulkner, both by example and by his urging, to the materials of his own region. This is surely one of Anderson's most important influences on Faulkner and the dedication of the first *Yoknapatawpha* novel to Anderson seems to constitute Faulkner's

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19 *Faulkner in the University*, p. 285.
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19 *Faulkner in the University*, p. 285.
recognition of that fact.

It can also be shown that Anderson as well provided Faulkner with a developed sense of community. An important aspect of a sense of place is a sense of community. There is a feeling of continuity and involvement not only with the land but also with the people. Anderson has articulated his desire to show the relationship of the individual to society in a note which he wrote for the *Oxford Anthology of American Literature*: "there is always the desire to get your story imbedded in the whole life of a community.... The story has its particular form, attempts at flashes out of a community life...." Of course, this is essentially the concept which underlies *Winesburg, Ohio*. Of *Poor White* Anderson has written: "the town was really the hero of the book....What happened to the town was, I thought, more important than what happened to the people of the town." And in *Nearer the Grass Roots* he claims to have gone into retirement to be "in close and constant touch with every phase of life in an American community every day of the year." For Anderson,

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the true artist could never become an escapist: "To draw ourselves apart, to live in little groups and console ourselves with the thought that we are achieving intellectuality is to get nowhere." Anderson, then, possesses a sense of community which, moreover, plays an important part in his fiction. Let us see how the concept of community functions in the work of Anderson and Faulkner.

The often remarked upon sense of "lostness" in Anderson's works derives largely from the portrayal of the isolated individual's search for community. The individual needs, in some way, to share his interests with others; there must be some community of values. It represents man's universal need for order, commitment and fellowship. The quest was Anderson's as well: "I wander constantly from place to place striving to put down roots into the American soil and not quite doing it." Hugh McVey in Poor White has the "boyhood dream of finding a place and a people among whom he could, by sitting still and inhaling the air breathed by others, come into a warm closeness with life...." But, until he becomes famous with his inventions, "the citizens of Bidwell would not take him into their town life but left him standing to one side...." Anderson, as Winesburg amply

23 Notebook, p. 198.
26 Poor White, p. 178.
testifies, is at his very best when exploring the tension between the sensitive, lonely individual and the society from which he feels excluded.

In Winesburg, the sensitive soul finds himself in a wasteland; a once vigorous community, Winesburg is in decay; the viable agrarian tradition of the Old Mid-West has crumbled before modern industrialism. There is no tradition or code of manners which would allow an effective medium for real communication. There is only banality:

He regretted that he also could not laugh boisterously, shout meaningless jokes and make of himself a figure in the endless stream of moving, giggling activity that went up and down the road. (WO, 128)

Yet, the compassionate point of view is such that, unlike in Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*, the town is not simply an object of attack. And, more importantly, with George Willard's maturing point of view comes a new feeling toward the townsfolk:

One shudders at the thought of the meaninglessness of life while at the same instant, and if the people of the town are his people, one loves life so intensely that tears come into the eyes.

... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ...

He began to think of the people in the town where he had always lived with something like reverence. (WO, 210-211)

The prospective artist is beginning to feel some identification with his people. Later, we shall see Faulkner give full treatment to this theme in *Intruder in the Dust*. 
Anderson's grotesques are isolated, in some way, from the community. Wing Biddlebaum "did not think of himself as in any way a part of the life of the town where he had lived for twenty years" (WO, 27). He is "the town mystery" (WO, 28). Doctor Reefy is alone for "Winesburg had forgotten the old man..." (WO, 35). Seth Richmond is described as being "depressed by the thought that he was not a part of the life in his own town" (WO, 136). Elmer Cowley, who is obsessed with showing Winesburg that not all Cowleys are queer, turns on George Willard whom he thinks is his antithesis: "George Willard, he felt, belonged to the town, typified the town, represented in his person the spirit of the town" (WO, 194).

The community is an active presence: "Winesburg was proud of the hands of Wing Biddlebaum in the same spirit in which it was proud of Banker White's new stone house..." (WO, 29). The Pennsylvania town from which Biddlebaum was driven is shown as both vengeful and compassionate: "They had intended to hang the schoolmaster, but something in his figure, so small, white, and pitiful, touched their hearts and they let him escape" (WO, 32-33). The town is occasionally a worried onlooker as when the Standard Oil agent falls in love with Sarah King:

Joe Welling's love affair set the town of Winesburg on edge. When it began everyone whispered and shook his head. When people tried to laugh, the laughter was forced and unnatural. (WO, 107-108)
Frequently, the townspeople fail to perceive the individual's real nature as in the case of Kate Smith: "The people of the town thought of her as a confirmed old maid and because she spoke sharply and went her own way thought her lacking in all the human feeling that did so much to make and mar their own lives" (WO, 162). This is sufficient to show that the community is a pervasive presence in Winesburg, Ohio and, as we shall see, it plays an equally important role in much of Faulkner's work.

In The Town, Charles Mallison sees himself as spokesman: "So when I say 'we' and 'we thought' what I mean is Jefferson and what Jefferson thought." The narrator in "A Rose for Emily" is appropriately anonymous as he is the town's voice. For example,

We did not say she was crazy then. We believed she had to do that. We remembered all the young men her father had driven away, and we knew that with nothing left, she would have to cling to that which had robbed her, as people will.

Although the community has no particular spokesman in Light in August as it does in "A Rose for Emily" or The Town, the community, as Cleanth Brooks has observed, "is everywhere in


The Armstids are the first of a number of plain folk who are representative of the community; it is embodied in the "they" who relate Hightower's past in Jefferson to Byron Bunch; its earthy wisdom is suggested in the furniture dealer's narration which concludes the novel.

Moreover, in *Light in August* the community is an especially integral part of the novel's structure and meaning. The situations of all the major characters are significantly defined by their relation to the community. The central character, Joe Christmas, is the most alienated figure: "There was something definitely rootless about him, as though no town nor city was his, no street, no walls, no square of earth his home" (*LA*, 27). An outsider, incapable of establishing any attachment with the community, Christmas is violently lost. Reverend Gail Hightower, obsessed with the phantoms of his past, "did not care about the people, the living people, about whether they wanted him here or not" (*LA*, 52). No longer in life, Hightower seeks not community but immunity: "'I have bought immunity. I have paid. I have paid!'" (*LA*, 270). In a whole chapter the history of Hightower's relation with Jefferson is traced as the town related it to Byron Bunch:

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And they told Byron how the young minister was still excited even after six months, still talking about the Civil War and his grandfather, a cavalry man, who was killed, and about General Grant's stores burning in Jefferson until it did not make sense at all. (LA, 52-53)

Even Byron is something of an outsider, "a man of mystery among his fellow workers" (LA, 42), who has lived in Jefferson only seven years. Joanna Burden's isolation is suggested graphically by her living outside of town: "she is still a stranger, a foreigner whose people moved in from the North during Reconstruction" (LA, 40). And Percy Grimm, who sees himself as the town's defender, is, in fact, alienated from the community: "He had no one...to open his heart to" (LA, 394). He is so terribly desperate to play the role of the community's protector simply because he is so pathetically remote from the realities of his time. It is manifestly clear that the price of isolation from the community is high; the isolated individual, it appears, runs the risk of severe distortion. Of the main characters only Lena Grove maintains an easy and complete involvement with the community. Although she has just arrived in town in search of Lucas Burch, Lena is soon an object of the town's compassionate concern. The pregnant girl is assimilated into the community with no struggle whatsoever. She attains what the alienated figures need desperately to achieve.

Since *Light in August* posits that the individual ultimately cannot exist alone, the outsider's attempt to re-enter the community is a necessary concomitant to his
redemption. Hightower achieves a measure of this when, in a final vision, he comes to see his involvement with and responsibility to others and to realize that he, as much as Percy Grimm, was responsible for the murder of Christmas. Now, while the community is "the arena in which moral battles are to be fought," it must also be made clear that the community itself by no means escapes criticism in the novel. For example, in its prejudices, especially toward the Negro, it is certainly found wanting as it is in its related demand that individuals allow themselves to be simply categorized and labelled:

He never acted like either a nigger or a white man. That was it. That was what made the folks so mad. (LA, 306)

The community, then, is an admixture of good and evil but, when the long view is taken, only within it is the full realization of human life possible.

That Faulkner's characters are very much a part of a community and that they are importantly defined by their relationship with the community is also apparent from an examination of Quentin Compson's situation in _The Sound and The Fury_. Estrangement from Yoknapatawpha County, both geographically and temporally, is the essence of Quentin's tragedy. The Compson's role of leadership in the community has been lost. Since Quentin has been formed by his heritage,

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when his historical role has been lost, he is lost. As Louis D. Rubin, Jr., has put it: "Quentin as a character could properly exist only in Yoknapatawpha County." But in a world "populated mainly by the descendants not of Compsons but of Snopeses" (SF, 7) and governed by their values there is no place for Quentin. Moreover, the tradition of leadership has become so diluted that Quentin is too weak and too much in retreat from the loud world to attempt to oppose it.

The problem of community is most explicitly dramatized in what has been called "Faulkner's most provincial novel," Intruder in the Dust. The story involves the initiation of young Chick Mallison into the evil of the social code, the attempt to escape the realization, his feeling of revulsion for his community and his heritage and, finally, his reconciliation with the community. Initially, Chick accepts the Southern dogma about the Negro in which he is not to be viewed as fully human. The static society expects him to live in accord with its arbitrary labels:

We got to make him be a nigger first. He's got to admit he's a nigger. Then maybe we will accept him as he seems to intend to be accepted.33

However, Lucas Beauchamp has shown Chick that the Negro is capable of great dignity and humanity; furthermore, the mores of Jefferson, Chick discovers to his horror, can lead to the blind murder of a man for the sole reason of keeping the negro in his place: "the death by shameful violence of a man who would die not because he was a murderer but because his skin was black" (ID, 72). Mallison's situation is that "he was responsible for having brought into the light and glare of day something shocking and shameful out of the whole white foundation of the country which he himself must partake of too since he too was bred of it..." (ID, 138). Mallison's horror at this revelation and his consequent virulent condemnation of the community are indices of his very real attachment to it. This is repeatedly emphasized:

he seemed to see his whole native land, his home—the dirt, the earth which had bred his bones and those of his fathers for six generations and was still shaping him into not just a man but a specific man.... (ID, 151)

The Face which in his vision replaces the faces of the mob revolts him but, significantly, it is also "the composite Face of his native kind his native land, his people his blood his own with whom it had been his joy and pride and hope to be found worthy to present one united unbearable front to the dark abyss the night..." (ID, 194).

It is Chick's uncle, Gavin Stevens, who leads him, not so much out of his disillusionment, as beyond it. Chick comes to realize his bitter disenchantment arises from "that fierce
desire that they should be perfect because they were his and he was theirs..." (ID, 209). Feeling very much a part of an organic community (it is no mere aggregation), he is all the more anguished by its betrayal. But he understands that the South has been shaped by the past; that it has made possible both the lynch mob and himself, Stevens and Miss Habersham. Moreover, he realizes that his own present actions within a social context will also determine what the South of tomorrow will be like; his framework, like Faulkner's, is importantly communal.  

Although it is impossible to determine the extent of the influence of Anderson's feeling for and conception of a community upon Faulkner, it is clear that the same importance is attributed to a sense of community in Faulkner's works. In fact, it would indeed be overzealous to see Anderson as the primary source of Faulkner's feeling of the importance of a sense of community. As John Longley observes:

The source of his major tradition and theme did not have to be found in books. It was as much a part of his early life as the air he breathed; it came directly and orally from his own family, the town and the region where he grew up.  

But Sherwood Anderson did direct Faulkner back to his region and its problems. It is likely that Anderson's work suggested

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to Faulkner how he might use his own feeling for an organic community in his fiction.
CHAPTER V

RESPONSE TO THE MODERN WORLD

The breaking up, under the pressures of industrialization and commerce, of the traditional concept of a community within the fixed patterns of which the individual defined himself is a central theme in the work of both Faulkner and Anderson. The South in which Faulkner grew up in the 1900's and 1910's was, as Louis D. Rubin writes, "breaking away from the old concept of community, the old fixed patterns of life in a society in which inherited beliefs and accustomed role played a central part in the conduct of life, in which the individual's identity was supposedly still defined within the community."¹ We have seen that Faulkner's vision is a communal or dynastic one; unlike the Southern writer who grew up in the 1920's or 1930's when the disruption of an organic Southern community was far more advanced, Faulkner was still capable of viewing the world within an historical and communal framework. But, in his essay, "Mississippi", he recalls "little towns which had been hamlets without change or alteration for fifty years booming and soaring into cities overnight."² As a result, the attack of modern commerce and mechanization upon the traditional

¹The Faraway Country, pp. 207-208.
values of the Southern community forms a theme in Faulkner's fiction.

In Sherwood Anderson's writing Faulkner obviously could see the response in fiction to essentially the same situation. Anderson grew up in the Ohio of the late nineteenth century which "stood midway on the scale of social organization between the commercial East and the agrarian West, subject to the blunt pressures and tacit influences of both."³ He was, then, to see the gradual replacement of rural values with urban ones and his fiction mourns the passing of an agrarian, humanistic community before the disorder and materialism of industrialism. Indeed, Anderson was very much concerned with this theme when he and Faulkner were closest. In The Modern Writer, published late in 1925 but based on lectures given in January and February of that year, Anderson observes:

> There came a revolution more widespread and deep in its meaning than any other revolution that has ever happened in the western world. Starting out as we did as an agricultural people we Americans found ourselves suddenly landed in the very midst of the industrial age.⁴

More importantly, this theme is a substantial one in his fiction from the beginning.

In Windy McPherson's Son the rise of Sam from the son of a village housepainter to become a captain of industry

³Irving Howe, Sherwood Anderson, p. 3.
parallels the movement of American culture. Beaup McGregor in *Marching Men* learns how Americans, motivated by the forces of materialism, "have produced out of the stately order of nature only the sordid disorder of man." In *Poor White*, before the onslaught of industrialism, life is pictured as idyllic:

In all the great Mississippi Valley each town came to have a character of its own, and the people who lived in the towns were to each other like members of a great family.... Strangers did not come and go swiftly and mysteriously and there was no constant and confusing roar of machinery and of new projects afoot. For the moment mankind seemed about to take time to try to understand itself.6

However, the changes old Judge Hanby has seen in the eastern towns come to Bidwell:

Thought and poetry died or passed as a heritage to feeble fawning men who also became servants of the new order. Serious young men in Bidwell and in other American towns, whose fathers had walked together on moonlight nights along Turner's Pike to talk of God, went away to technical schools.7

In *Winesburg, Ohio*, the narrator realizes that modern men and women are very different from those of the past:

In the last fifty years a vast change has taken place in the lives of our people. A revolution has in fact taken place. The coming of industrialism...has worked a tremendous change in the lives and in the habits of thought of our people of Mid-America. (WO, 70-71)

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6 *Poor White*, pp. 46-47.
7 *Poor White*, pp. 63-64.
While it would certainly be unwise to attempt to read Faulkner's *The Sound and The Fury* as solely an allegory of the decline of the Old South, the dissolution of the Compson family can, in some ways, be seen to fit into such a schematization. This is not to say that it is the only reading, or the most embracing, but that it is part of the book's structure and meaning. Indeed, this theme of decline may be extended so that the sense of loss which pervades the novel is seen to constitute, as Irving Howe has written, "a lament for the passing of a world, not merely the world of Yoknapatawpha and not merely the South." It depicts a world in which the values of commerce have replaced humanistic ones; "that long line of men who had had something in them of decency and pride" ([SF, 13](#)) has ended in Jason, who is bereft of all human decency and strives only for that great American Dream, a stock market coup. The Old Compson place has given way to "row after row of small crowded jerrybuilt individually owned demiurban bungalows" ([SF, 9](#)). The demise of the aristocracy is, of course, plainly rendered in the ineffectuality of Quentin and in the dipsomania of his father;

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8 In *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country*, even Cleanth Brooks, who wishes to caution against placing too much emphasis upon such a reading and who sees the breakup of the Compson family as a rather special case, qualifies his challenge significantly. He allows that the book may deal with the fall of the Old South and he speaks of "more general cultural causes," p. 334.

the corruption of traditional society is also embodied in the Blands whose inane pretenses at nobility are severely satirized in the novel. We have already seen how Quentin's situation has, in part, been the result of the loss of his communal role and of the replacement of Compson values by those of Snopeses.

Now, it must be made clear that we are not to conclude from this that Faulkner is a traditionalist who is intent upon contrasting a sterile present with a glorious past, for what few references there are to a tradition of plantation nobility are shown to be the product of Quentin's adolescent romanticizing and idealizing. In other places Faulkner has subjected the legend of the Old South to close scrutiny and found it severely wanting; he is certainly not to be identified with Quentin's thinking. However, Faulkner does seem in The Sound and The Fury to regret the loss in the modern world of whatever there once was of "decency and pride"; to this extent the novel proclaims the values of an aristocratic society. If humanity was difficult to achieve in the past, it is even more difficult now in the dehumanizing wasteland of commerce and mass man.

Disturbed by the invasion of new values and the destruction of the old order, both Anderson and Faulkner discuss the effect of commerce and mechanization upon men in similar terms. Whether or not Faulkner was influenced by Anderson's treatment of the problem is difficult to say but
a comparison suggests that possibility. While his earlier fiction already suggests the idea, Anderson has developed explicitly in *Perhaps Women* a theory about industrialism to explain its vitiating effect on the psyche of American men. The mechanization of modern life has gradually removed man from the source of things; the machine has removed the artisan from his tools and materials; man no longer feels the creator of his own acts or of his own world. Finally, with the loss of his creative outlets man comes inevitably to feel his impotency. It is Anderson's "growing conviction that modern man is losing his ability to retain his manhood in the face of the modern way of utilizing the machine and that what hope there is for him lies in women." Since woman's creativity is secure in her biological role as bearer of life, she is less threatened by the machine. This is, of course, more than an abstract theory and the value of these ideas lies in the manner in which Anderson incorporates and dramatizes them in his fiction.

In *Dark Laughter*, Tom Wills observes that the tone of American life is one of a universal impotence: "There's a note I'd like to strike. It's about impotence. Have you noticed, going along the streets, that all the people you see

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10 (New York, 1931).

11 *Perhaps Women*, p. 7.

12 *Perhaps Women*, p. 48.
are tired out, impotent?" The major contrast in the novel lies between the 'primitives', the Martins and the negroes, and the sophisticated people, Bruce Dudley, Fred and Aline Grey. The artistic fulfillment Sponge Martin finds in his trade and his uncomplicated, healthy response to sex are set against the uneasiness, the insecurity of the businessman Fred Grey who, significantly, is sexually impotent. The social illness is clear: "There was a disease of life due to men getting away from their own hands, their own bodies too."

Although Faulkner has articulated no explicit theory, as did Anderson, about the relation of mechanization and man's potency, his fiction makes clear that the values of the acquisitive, materialistic world of commerce violate the nature of man; moreover, this violation has been expressed in terms similar to Anderson's. For example, in his portrayal of Flem Snopes in The Hamlet Faulkner appears to share the notion that mechanization and commerce are ultimately related to the loss of man's potency. Flem is characterized by "a tiny machine-made black bow tie"; (H, 58) scarcely human, this backwoods usurer, who becomes President of Bayard Sartoris' bank, is given totally to the values of commerce; he is one "who never made mistakes in any matter pertaining

13 (New York, 1925), p. 42.
14 Dark Laughter, p. 98.
to money" (H, 57). He is, as Warren Beck puts it, "the modern automaton bred by materialism out of original crudeness." And, like Anderson's businessman, Flem is impotent. Flem is completely separated from the passionate, instinctual life of man. He is the husband for Eula that Labove predicted, "a dwarf, a gnome, without glands or desire" (H, 119). The marriage of Flem and Eula is a central part of the novel's meaning. Eula, the archetypal woman and embodiment of fertility, who is the community's hope and symbol of continuity and renewal, is allowed to be wedded to the impotent male. The marriage of the earth goddess, nature's blessing upon the community, is here a barren act. Passion is wedded to sterility; the natural is sacrificed to the unnatural. Surely, the marriage of Eula and Flem points up one of the central themes in The Hamlet: love and humanity have been usurped by greed and the ethics of the trade. It represents clearly the triumph of "the dead power of money" (H, 119). The description of the town after Eula's wedding is, therefore, very appropriate: "a little lost village, nameless, without grace, forsaken..." (H, 149). Frenchman's Bend is, thus, a kind of rustic wasteland of dehumanizing, sterile values.

Another Faulkner villain who suffers from impotency is Popeye in Sanctuary. He, too, is described in mechanistic

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"he had that vicious depthless quality of stamped tin." O'Donnell's view of Popeye as symbolizing 'modernism' is probably valid. At the very beginning of the book the contrast between the beauty of the spring and the figure with the face of a "bloodless color" (3, 5) and "his tight suit and stiff hat all angles, like a modernistic lamp-stand" (3, 7) suggests Popeye's inhumanity and essential alienation from nature. His terror over the sudden appearance of an owl further emphasizes his opposition to nature. That Popeye is entirely impotent makes final his unnaturalness.

In contrast to the emasculating and dehumanizing world so frequently encountered in their fiction, both Anderson and Faulkner have created the world of horses and men. The parallels which can be drawn from a comparative study of their creations suggest more than a fortuitous relation. This is not surprising for, while Faulkner's enthusiasm for the body of Anderson's work rather waned, his admiration of Horses and Men and Triumph of the Egg, which contains "I Want to Know Why", never abated. And Faulkner's lavish praise of "I'm a Fool" should also be remembered.

Faulkner's early and very enthusiastic review of Anderson's Horses and Men reveals that his appreciation of

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18 Atlantic article, p. 29.
this world is similar to Anderson's:

Horses! What an evocative word in the history of man....No other living thing holds the same place in the life of man as he does....

He goes on to offer his own panegyric on the horse and to single out "I'm a Fool" for especial praise. Finally, he recalls an Anderson tale about a man and a horse to uniquely characterize Anderson and the American quality in his writing:

"I had a funny dream last night. Let me tell you about it," was his opening remark--not even a good morning.

"I dreamed that I couldn't sleep, that I was riding around the country on a horse--had ridden for days. At last I met a man, and I swapped him the horse for a night's sleep. This was in the morning and he told me where to bring the horse, and so when dark came I was right on time, standing in front of his house, holding the horse ready to rush off to bed. But the fellow never showed up--left me standing there all night, holding the horse."

To blame this man on the Russians! Or anybody else....I can not understand our passion in America for giving our own productions some remote geographical significance....Certainly no Russian could ever have dreamed about that horse.

Interestingly, both men have referred to each other in a kind of racetrack banter. Shortly after Anderson's death a Faulkner comment was recalled:

"Anderson is like the family coach horse," Novelist William Faulkner once said: "He's dependable, you can trust him to take the children to Sunday School safely. But he's

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19 Dallas article, pp. 91-92.
20 Dallas article, pp. 93-94.
got a glossy coat and a little sporting blood."  

Anderson has observed of Faulkner: "He may be a little bit like a thoroughbred colt who needs a race or two before he can do his best." Later, in commenting in a letter to Maxwell Perkins on a book by Evan Shipman which has to do with the subject of racetracks, Anderson associates Faulkner with those initiates who appreciate and have attempted to recover the lost world of horses and men:

I wanted to write a note to tell you that yesterday you gave me a grand thrill, the same sort I got when I first read a Hemingway, a Ring Lardner, a Bill Faulkner story. This Evan Shipman, he's got it.

Lordy, Perkins, it's fine stuff. He sure knows his little old race tracks and all that ever went with them.

It will become apparent that the worlds created by Faulkner and Anderson have affinities which they do not share with those of Lardner or Hemingway. Lardner does not explore the world of horses and men, although he certainly creates a male world in his stories. While Hemingway in "My Old Man" has written a story about the racetracks which can be seen to owe something to Anderson's example, he does not use the horse as primarily a male force and he does not effect the

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21[Unsigned], "Dark and Lonely," *Time* (April 7, 1941), p. 98.
22*Letters*, p. 155.
boy's initiation in the sexual terms which Anderson and Faulkner employ.

It becomes clear, first of all, that in the vision of both writers the world of horses embodies essentially the male principle. Anderson hopes, for example, that Shipman "might bring some people back to real horses and to a pretty damn sweet male world." That the world of horses is totally a male world is revealed in "The Man Who Became A Woman" where

a stallion looks out at the door of one of the stalls and sees a sweet-eyed mare looking at him and sends up his trumpet-call, and a man's voice laughs, and there are no women anywhere in sight or no sign of one anywhere, and everyone feels like laughing and usually does. (HM, 83)

The narrator observes that Tom Means realized the almost mystical relation between horse and men: "What Tom said was that any man had something in him that understands about a thing like that, but that no woman ever did except up in her brain". (HM, 86). In Anderson's impressionistic essay The American County Fair, he makes explicit the opposition of horse and woman:

Something like love between the man and the horse. You feel it when you go to the stables...A wife is a wife but a horse is a horse.26


The contrast here is certainly partly whimsical but it receives more serious treatment elsewhere in the Anderson canon. The opposition is suggested in "The Untold Lie" where Ray Pearson, feeling miserably trapped by the woman he has married, thinks of how he longed to "get a job on a ranch and ride a horse into western towns..." (WO, 207). As is the situation for the boy in "I'm A Fool," who has left home against the protestations of his mother and sister, the world of horses is one where man is able to express his individuality.

Faulkner uses the same idea that the world of horses is exclusively a male world in *Light in August*. Joe Christmas, who cannot accept love or the facts of a woman's sexual life, discovers, when his rejection of women is so complete as to include the removal of buttons they had sewn on his garments, that he is drawn towards an old stable:

He was thinking now, aloud now, 'Why in hell do I want to smell horses?' Then he said, fumbling: "It's because they are not women. Even a mare horse is a kind of man." (LA, 95)

Christmas feels at peace in this world for he is relatively secure in the male world: "Perhaps he was thinking then how he and the man could always count upon one another, depend upon one another; that it was the woman alone who was unpredictable" (LA, 139).

In *The Hamlet* it is recalled how the stallion which subsequently killed Jack Houston's wife had been bought at the time of his marriage and how it seemed that its "blood
and bone and muscles represented that polygamous and bitless masculinity which he had relinquished" (H, 218). And, of course, the comic, horse bartering episodes in the novel are entirely masculine affairs.

In *As I Lay Dying*, the spotted horse Jewel Bundren has bought from Lon Quick may be taken to represent his individuality and alienation from the family. Like his predecessors in Yoknapatawpha County, Jewel uses the Snopes horse he comes to own to express his independence and masculinity. The horse has been obtained by his own secret labour at night on Quick's forty acres of new ground. Accomplished without the family's awareness, it is the fifteen year old boy's first independent act; as Cash, the eldest son, puts it:

"He did it single-handed, working at night by lantern. I saw him. So I don't reckon that horse cost anybody anything except Jewel. I don't reckon we need worry." ([AILD, 433-434])

Significantly, the adolescent's nightly disappearances are made not for a woman, as his brothers long suspect, but for a horse.

The horse story, originally separately published as *Notes on a Horsethief*, which forms a lengthy subplot (pp. 140-207) to *A Fable*, offers still another depiction of the exclusive world of horses and men. An addition to the

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legendary tales of immortal love, the love story is not one of "the doomed glorious frenzy" (F, 154) of man and woman but of man and horse: "the world's oldest and most shining tale limning in his brief turn the warp-legged foul-mouthed English horse-groom as ever Paris or Lochinvar..." (F, 153).

The world of horses and men frequently embraces a vision of purity and blessedness that serves as an idealistic alternative to the corruption, disorder and despair of modern life. In Anderson's racetrack stories the narrators associate the world of horses with a simplicity and purity that the outside world can never emulate. In "The Man Who Became A Woman" Herman Dudley, "sick at the thought of human beings" (HM, 105), unconsciously seeks out Pick-it-boy's stall:

That was one of the best and sweetest feelings I've ever had in my whole life, being in that warm stall alone with that horse that night.... I went and stood with my back against the side of the stall, thinking how mean and low and all balled-up and twisted up human beings can become, and how the best of them are likely to get that way any time, just because they are human beings and not simple and clear in their minds, and inside themselves, as animals are, maybe. (HM, 105-6)

There is a rapport between the boy and the horse, a sense of communion: "I got again the queer feeling I'd had about him once or twice before, I mean the feeling about our understanding each other in some way I can't explain" (HM, 108).

This same simplicity and unity is recalled in "An Ohio Pagan":

That was a life! Round and round the track they went, young colthood and young manhood together, not thinking, but carrying life very keenly within themselves and feeling tremendously. (HM, 198)
The narrator in "I Want To Know Why" praises the purity of racehorses. Unlike the women he sees through the brothel window, horses are beautiful: "There isn't anything so lovely and clean and full of spunk and honest and everything as some race horses" (*TE*, 10). There is, also, the sense of rapport:

"I was standing looking at that horse and aching. In some way, I can't tell how, I knew just how Sunstreak felt inside." (*TE*, 15)

In *A Fable*, completed in November, 1953, shortly after the publication of the appreciation of Anderson, Faulkner develops even further this sense of man's spiritual and emotional oneness with the racehorse:

"It was because there had developed apparently on sight between the man and the animal, something which was no mere rapport but an affinity, not from understanding to understanding but from heart to heart and glands to glands...." (*F*, 152)

The groom is dedicated to keeping the thoroughbred free to run, to fulfill "its dedicated and consecrated end and purpose" (*F*, 152). As Sutterfield tells the Runner: "We had to save it until it could die still not knowing nothing and not wanting nothing but just to run out in front of everything else" (*F*, 198). But freedom and fulfillment, purity and simplicity, are not easily maintained. In *A Fable*, the men and the horses are constantly being pursued; their freedom is most precarious.

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*The Literary Career*, p. 38.
In Anderson's stories, with the adolescent's growing awareness of the female sex and evil, the passing of the idyllic male setting is mourned. In "The Man Who Became A Woman," the youth's stumbling over the skeleton of the horse suggests the end of this idealized world for him. He emerges from the experience "a man and my own self" (HM, 116) and passes beyond "the racehorse and the tramp life for the rest of my days" (HM, 118). "I Want To Know Why" is another initiation story in which the boy's sense of the purity of the world of the horses and racetracks is lost when he becomes aware that a man who could feel the same way as he does about a horse could have a similar look in his eyes for a prostitute: "But things are different. At the tracks the air don't taste as good or smell as good" (TE, 19). The boy's appeal at the end to know why is plainly the cry of lost innocence.

While there are some important differences in the treatment of this theme in Faulkner's *The Reivers*,29 there are more important similarities which suggest that, in a sense, Faulkner has come full circle. If, as it seems, Anderson inspired the writing of Faulkner's first novel, then, it is fitting that Faulkner's last novel should be reminiscent of some of Anderson's best work. The novel is largely a

story of horses and men. It simulates the tradition of oral
narrative as do the stories by Anderson. Although it is as
a grandfather that Lucius Priest tells the story, the point
of view is essentially that of an adolescent. The novel
deals with the initiation of Lucius into adulthood in terms
not unfamiliar to the reader of Anderson. The horse race and
the machinations of plot leading to it provide Lucius with
his initiation. He becomes fully aware of the existence of
sex and evil and his reaction to this knowledge is initially
violent. Staying in a brothel, he learns from Otis, an
adolescent Popeye, not only what constitutes pugnuckling but
also how Otis has managed to get some of the action. The
adventures of Lucius in Memphis and Parsham result, then, in
his loss of innocence:

I knew too much, had seen too much. I was
a child no longer now; innocence and child-
hood were forever lost, forever gone from
me. (R, 175)

However, the fall from innocence, which the narrator is never
fully able to accommodate in Anderson's stories, is understood
and assimilated by the youngster with the guidance, especially,
of his grandfather who counsels: "Nothing is ever forgotten.
Nothing is ever lost. It's too valuable" (R, 302). That
Lucius became the wise grandfather who told the story to
Lucius Priest III is evidence that experience was not lost
upon him. While the situations in the novel border on the
sentimental, as, for example, in Everbe's becoming a mother,
Faulkner exploits the comedy of the situation. The humour
allows him always to avoid the sentimentality into which Anderson sometimes falls.

The world of *The Reivers* is a world looked back upon from the distance of a lifetime's experience. It is the loving reminiscence, as the subtitle suggests, of a world that has passed forever; the advent of the machine, here comically embodied in the motorcar, has seen to that. What Anderson wrote of Shipman is again relevant here:

> It makes you realize again, as sharp as a good biting wind, what went out of our little old American world with the grand old, once almost universal, horse feeling. I wonder if they'll be saying this guy has too much nostalgia for the past. I'll bet they do.30

As we have seen, both Anderson and Faulkner recreate this world in their fiction; because of the similarities in their treatment of it, it seems likely that Faulkner did not forget Anderson's example.

The fictional worlds that have just been discussed are all populated with some negro characters. There is a basis for comparing the roles of the negro characters in Anderson's and Faulkner's work. In Anderson's "I'm A Fool", "The Man Who Became a Woman" and "I Want to Know Why", the young boys admire their negro friends: "You can trust them. They are squarer with kids. I don't know why" (TF, 8). Ned McCaslin and Uncle Parsham Hood in *The Reivers* exemplify qualities of

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integrity and kindness and a purity of heart which young Lucius Priest admires. But it is primarily in Faulkner's early works that we see a use of negro characters similar to Anderson's.

Anderson, as was mentioned earlier, had frequently expressed interest in the American negro: "There is something big there that hasn't been touched, perhaps hasn't been seen much."[^31] It is in *Dark Laughter*, begun in the Fall of 1924 and re-written in the Spring of 1925 while he was a daily companion of William Faulkner,[^32] that Anderson gave creative expression to his feelings for the negro. Anderson sees the negro, because of his isolation from the dehumanizing modern world the white man has created for himself, as being able to respond naturally, to follow the dictates of his heart. Explaining the orchestration of the novel, Anderson writes: "The neuroticism, the hurry and self-consciousness of modern life, and back of it the easy, strange laughter of the blacks."[^33] The white man has lost his contact with things outside of himself; he is out of touch with essentials. The negroes, on the other hand, are unaffected by this malaise:

Unconscious love of inanimate things lost to the whites—skies, the river, a moving boat—

[^31]: *Letters*, p. 68.
[^33]: *Letters*, p. 142.
black mysticism—never expressed except in song or in the movements of bodies.

The frustration, disorder and uncertainty of the lives of the white characters are contrasted with the easy, healthy, elemental life of the negroes:

About the negro women it did not matter. They would think as their natures led them to think, feel as their natures led them to feel. (DL, 266)

The negroes' easy-going attitude towards sex is set against the self-consciousness of the whites. Throughout the novel, the actions of the whites are mocked by the "dark laughter" of the negroes. The negroes, then, represent a sanity and health, a closeness to nature which the white man has lost.

Now, this very same kind of orchestration is present in Faulkner's earlier novels where the negro characters perform a kind of choric function. In Soldiers' Pay, the world of the white characters is a world without significance or renewal, "a world that had forgotten Spring" (SP, 27). Donald Mahon is dying; Margaret Powers, who marries him, is emotionally dead. Emmy's life is a deadening routine. The lives of Januarius Jones and Cecily Saunders are entirely aimless and trivial. Joe Gilligan finds no fulfillment and Rector Mahon, tired and defeated, has only his garden retreat and Circumstance for God. In the ending of Soldiers' Pay, the simple, negro church service is in marked contrast to

\[3^{1}\] Dark Laughter, p. 106.
the desolation and despair that permeates the white world:

The singing drew nearer and nearer; at last crouching among a clump of trees beside the road, they saw the shabby church with its canting travesty of a spire... and from it welled the crooning submerged passion of the dark race. It was nothing, it was everything; then it swelled to an ecstasy, taking the white man's words as readily as it took his remote God and made a personal Father of Him.

Feed Thy Sheep, O Jesus. All the longing of mankind for a Oneness with Something, somewhere. (SP, 221)

That this technique of juxtaposing the healthy primitive negroes with the deracinated whites appears in a novel written when Anderson was finishing Dark Laughter and when the two men were closest suggests it may very well derive from Anderson's example.

This same technique also appears, in a minor way, in Sartoris where young Bayard Sartoris, in despair and on his way to suicide, stays with the negro family as they humbly celebrate Christmas. Their simple warmth and cheer Bayard can never attain. Bayard, guilt-ridden about the deaths of both his brother John and his grandfather, is estranged from family and heritage. Earlier in the novel, Faulkner portrays a scene involving negroes which strongly echoes a similar scene from Anderson's "A Meeting South," in which the main character, David, is modelled on William Faulkner. David, like Bayard, has suffered from the war and, when his insomnia troubles him, he often finds peace in listening to the negroes as they sing and work in the night. A comparison of the
passages is most interesting:

"In the fall, at night, the niggers are pressing the cane. Our niggers live pretty much on 'lasses and grits.

"They like working at night and I'm glad they do. There is an old mule going round and round in a circle and beside the press a pile of the dry cane. Niggers come, men and women, old and young. They build a fire outside the shed. The old mule goes round and round.

"The niggers sing. They laugh and shout. Sometimes the young niggers with their gals make love on the dry cane pile. I can hear it rattle."36

The passage from Sartoris is remarkably similar:

...the Negroes brought their cane and made their communal winter sorghum molasses....The mule would be plodding in its monotonous and patient circle, its feet rustling in the dried cane-pitch, while one of the patriarch's grandsons fed the cane into the crusher.

Round and round the mule went....

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The negroes had gathered now: old men and women sitting on crackling cushions of cane about the blaze...and young men and girls, and children squatting and still as animals, staring into the fire. Sometimes they sang....in shadowy beds among the dry whispering cane-stalks youths and girls murmured and giggled.37

35 Richardson, in "Anderson and Faulkner", also brings these passages together. However, Mr. C.F. Forbes, U.B.C. Librarian, brought this to my attention before the article was published.

36 Sherwood Anderson's Notebook, pp. 118-119.

Although Faulkner has enriched the material considerably, the similarities seem not attributable to mere coincidence. And in both the story and the novel the pastoral negro scene is juxtaposed against the white man and his anguish.

In *The Sound and The Fury*, which Anderson described as "a beautiful and sympathetic piece of work", Faulkner concludes the novel with a section devoted largely to Dilsey, the Compson's negro servant. Against the obsession and self-centredness of the three Compson brothers, her kindness and concern for the family represent a humanity that the Compsons have lost. In the modern world the Compsons have no belief and no role; Dilsey retains her simple faith. Significantly, she can say of the Compsons, "I seed de beginnin, en now I sees de endin'" (SF, 313), while she attends the celebration of the Resurrection on Easter Sunday. As Faulkner says of Dilsey and her race: "They endured" (SF, 22). Primitive though Dilsey be, surely Faulkner intends us to admire her, as he does, as "a good human being" and a healthy alternative to the Compsons. Unlike the Compsons, she is capable of bearing the burden of her humanity.

This is not to say that Faulkner always uses the negroes in this way nor that he only sees them as primitives, as Anderson does. Faulkner's view developed beyond this

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38 *Memoirs*, p. 474.

39 *Faulkner in the University*, p. 85.
simplistic one of the negro as healthy primitive. Indeed, he presents a variety of negro characters in his fiction, including the totally human Lucas Beauchamp of Go Down, Moses and Intruder in the Dust and the very complex Joe Christmas of Light in August. However, his early fictional treatment of the negro is very similar to Anderson's and would seem to owe something to the older writer's technique. Both writers contrasted the negro's simple, healthy existence with the desolation of the white man's modern world.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The establishment of a literary relationship between Sherwood Anderson and William Faulkner may be seen as a contribution, however small, to the writing of literary history. Surely, the relation of writer to writer is basic to an appreciation of the literary tradition. An Attempt has also been made to "enrich the critical image" of Faulkner. Hopefully, this kind of comparative study contributes to a critical understanding of Faulkner's work. Certainly, had an appreciation of Faulkner's similarities with so established a writer as Anderson been attempted early in his career, it would have made his critical reception far less hostile and an appreciative understanding of his work far readier. By making a comparison with Anderson, one can attempt a further definition of Faulkner's particular gift. Clearly, as has been evidenced in this study, the problems of literary influence require critical analysis for their ultimate solution.

The fact of Sherwood Anderson's influence, often claimed by Faulkner, is entirely valid. It has been the object of this study not only to establish that fact but

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1 Emily Kuempel Brady, "The Literary Faulkner: His Indebtedness to Conrad, Lawrence, Hemingway and other Modern Novelists" (Diss., Brown University, 1962), p. 2.
also to examine the character of the influence. Faulkner's debt to Anderson is considerable. Anderson's influence appears a major and continuous one. A brief review of the reasons for arriving at this conclusion is in order.

It seems Faulkner's enthusiasm for Anderson's work and for the man himself led the young poet to begin seriously writing prose fiction. Although Faulkner wrote some poetry after the New Orleans period, it is obvious his talents had been re-channelled as a result of his encounter with Anderson. The early stories strongly echo and, at times, imitate Anderson's work, although they are, by no means, as good. Soon after, Anderson not only suggested Faulkner's writing a novel, he also fought to have it published. Faulkner's involvement with Anderson led to his modelling the main character of his second novel, *Mosquitoes*, after him. In that same novel Anderson's part in early providing tutelage for Faulkner as a teller of tall tales is recognized. That Faulkner could still see the limitations of Anderson's style, despite his admiration for the older writer, is revealed by his parody in the foreword to *Sherwood Anderson and Other Famous Creoles*.

It seems very likely that Faulkner assimilated Anderson's concept of the grotesque. The treatment of man's isolation and Faulkner's characterization of those lost individuals owe much to Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*. Faulkner seems, also, to share Anderson's understanding of the problem
of apprehending truth. As a result, Anderson's "theory of the grotesque" provides a rationale for the larger structure of some of Faulkner's most important work.

Anderson played an important role in the development of Faulkner's talent by directing Faulkner to explore his native material. Faulkner's dedication to Anderson of Sartoris, his first Yoknapatawpha novel, seems to recognize that fact. Anderson led Faulkner to realize that universality in art could grow out of regional material and, consequently, to appreciate the possibility of an American tradition. Faulkner's sense of community and his exploration of the individual's search for community so closely resemble Anderson's as to suggest some indebtedness. Faulkner's dramatization of the effects of the destruction of that community by the forces of modern commerce and industry is rendered in terms also similar to Anderson's. Faulkner feels that mechanization and commerce ultimately produce the loss of man's potency; this is a very central notion in Anderson's thinking. Furthermore, Faulkner's creation of an idyllic, rural world in contrast to the mechanistic, urban world seems very much to resemble that in Anderson's stories of horses and men. And Faulkner uses Anderson's idea that the world of horses is a totally male world elsewhere in his fiction. Finally, Faulkner's use of negro characters to embody a kind of sane, healthy alternative to the world of the whites may well have been encouraged by Anderson's example.
For these reasons, then, it must be concluded that Anderson was an important force in shaping the form and content of Faulkner's art. This was a fact Faulkner never forgot and it is one we are only beginning to appreciate.
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