STRANGE TEXTURES OF VISION

A study of the significance of mannered fictional techniques in six selected novels of D. H. Lawrence, William Faulkner, and Patrick White, together with a theoretical introduction on "The Novel of Vision"

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department
of
English

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
October, 1973
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3 November 1973
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation is to present, by theory and example, a critical approach to a certain type of twentieth-century novel, described as "the novel of vision." The approach is intended to enable critical readers to experience the aesthetic impact of such novels most directly, in contrast to the indirect experience produced by those approaches which import concepts or terminology to the text from external sources, such as schools of psychology or theories of genre. The approach follows the basic dogma of New Criticism, in treating each novel as a self-contained work of art requiring close textual scrutiny for its illumination; external glosses are rigorously avoided, and specific stress is placed on strange or distorted elements in the language and structure of each novel, by which the novelist chiefly communicates his particular vision of reality.

The first section of the dissertation consists of a theoretical rationale for the critical approach adopted in analyzing the six novels which are the main subject. By way of defining what is meant by "a novel of vision," brief passages are quoted from such novels, which contain the typical characteristics distinguishing this kind of novel from other kinds. Chief of these
characteristics is a startlingly mannered prose texture. "The novel of vision" having been defined by textural characteristics, it is then argued that such a novel functions as a cultural medium through which the novelist engages in dynamic interaction with his society, offering society his vision which is usually in conflict with conventional values and norms of perception. Next, a definition is given of a useful role for the critic, as an illuminator of the artist's vision, rather than interpreter or judge of it. Finally in this section, typical techniques of "the novel of vision" are discussed, and a few convenient terms for referring to these techniques are suggested.

The main body of the dissertation consists of six analytical chapters in which the present writer plays the role of critic defined earlier, and tries to illuminate the vision of the artist in D. H. Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent* and *The Man Who Died*, William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* and *Absalom, Absalom!*, and Patrick White's *The Aunt's Story* and *The Vivisector*. Each of these chapters begins with a brief contrast being drawn between the present approach and typical approaches of other critics. It is noted how certain critics have brought preconceived concepts and terminology to the texts in order to make sense of them, and it is argued that these approaches tend to avoid the artists'
strange visions in these texts. Each chapter then proceeds at greater length to employ the critical approach here suggested, confronting each text on its own terms.

No attempt is made to relate "the novel of vision" to the history of the novel generally, nor to such trends in literary history as Expressionism, Symbolism or Futurism. Nor, in the analyses of specific novels, are they related to other works by the same author, in order to show the development of techniques of vision in the canon of an author.

There is no implication that the three authors studied are the only or even the best examples of "novelists of vision;" rather, these three writers provide convenient and well-known examples by which to demonstrate the critical approach in three quite different literary contexts. The term "novel of vision" is believed to be original, as is the critical approach to such novels here offered.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Three things made it possible for me to complete this difficult work after many delays: encouragement, discipline and a quiet place. For their considerable help in these regards, I wish to thank respectively, Dr. Lee M. Whitehead, my supervisor; Mr. Sydney Bender, my colleague; and Miss Peg Brennan, my friend.
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation is to present, by theory and example, a critical approach to a certain type of twentieth-century novel which I describe as "the novel of vision." I attempt to show how my approach enables critical readers to experience the aesthetic impact of such novels most directly, in contrast to the indirect experience produced by those approaches which import concepts or terminology to the text from external sources, such as schools of psychology or theories of genre. My approach follows the basic dogma of New Criticism, in treating each novel as a self-contained work of art requiring close textual scrutiny for its illumination. I rigorously avoid external glosses, and I specifically stress the importance of strange or distorted elements in the language and structure of the novel, by which the novelist chiefly communicates his particular vision of reality.

In the first section of the dissertation, I present an essay--partly documented, partly original argument--in which I construct the theoretical rationale for the critical approach I adopt in analyzing the six novels which are my main subject. By way of defining what I mean by a "novel of vision," I begin by quoting brief passages
from such novels, which contain the typical characteristics and which distinguish this kind of novel from other kinds. Chief of these characteristics is a startlingly mannered prose texture. Having defined "the novel of vision" by textural characteristics, I then describe how it functions as a cultural medium through which the novelist engages in dynamic interaction with his society, offering society his vision which is usually in conflict with conventional values and norms of perception. Although this part of the theory is largely postulative, I do offer some supporting evidence for my construct of a dynamic interaction. Next, I define a useful role for the critic, as an illuminator of the artist's vision, rather than an interpreter or judge of it. Finally in this section, I discuss typical techniques of "the novel of vision" and suggest a few convenient terms for referring to these techniques.

The main body of the dissertation consists of six analytical chapters in which I play the role of critic defined earlier, and try to illuminate the vision of the artist in D. H. Lawrence's The Plumed Serpent and The Man Who Died, William Faulkner's As I Lay Dying and Absalom, Absalom!, and Patrick White's The Aunt's Story and The Vivisector. In each of these chapters, I begin by briefly
contrasting my own approach with typical approaches of other writers. I note how certain critics have brought preconceived concepts and terminology to the texts in order to make sense of them, but I argue that these approaches, despite their values, tend to ignore the artists' strange visions in these texts. I then proceed at greater length to use the critical approach which I am offering, confronting each text on its own terms.

In the analytic portions of my work (and to some extent in the theory) I have tried to keep in the forefront of my mind the actual experience of a novel reader. I have tried not to be intimidated or influenced by the ponderous language and prescriptive attitudes which unfortunately we find in much existing criticism, and which quite remove us from the imaginative worlds of the books under discussion. I have written frankly and informally, as far as I could, so as to try to preserve the live context in which the actual impact of a novel on a reader is the main focus of attention.

I had to deal with a quadruple field of research, comprising the aesthetics of prose fiction generally, and the specific areas of three separate novelists belonging in three separate cultures. To master such
an enormous field would obviously need a lifetime's work, so I have had to be selective both in the scope of my research and in the range of application of my thesis. I do not, for example, attempt to relate "the novel of vision" to the history of the novel generally, nor to such trends in literary history as Expressionism, Symbolism, Futurism etc; nor, in the analyses of specific novels, do I relate them to other works by the same author, in order to show the development of techniques of vision in the canon of an author. These are just two examples; there are many other directions I might have taken but decided to forego in order to achieve a manageable and coherent study. I was strongly tempted to study Blake in the context of the term "vision;" then at one point I thought of researching the background in folklore and mythology of the god Quetzalcoatl, to see what origins I might find for the motifs used in *The Plumed Serpent*; and so on. In determining the boundaries of my work I decided to focus primarily on the texts and criticism of the six novels studied. My research did include a comprehensive survey of the secondary materials relating to those six novels, and any material on the aesthetics of prose fiction which I believed might have a direct bearing on my thesis.
In selecting the three authors to study I do not imply that they are the only or even the most accomplished examples of "novelists of vision;" rather, these three writers provide convenient, well-known examples by which to demonstrate my critical approach in three quite different literary contexts. The term "novel of vision" is original, as, I believe, is the critical approach to such novels here offered. In developing my theory of "the novel of vision," I found some useful and supportive sources, notably Victor Shklovsky's essay "Art as Technique,"¹ some of Lawrence's essays, and some of Faulkner's and White's recorded conversations. I also found some confirmation for my ideas in two private letters of Patrick White addressed to my friend Audrey Thomas, the Vancouver novelist, but I have not received permission to transcribe or quote from these letters at this time.
FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER II

THE NOVEL OF VISION: TEXTURE, DYNAMIC, TECHNIQUES

THE BARRIER OF PROSE: TEXTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NOVEL OF VISION

The problem or area of confusion upon which this dissertation is an attempt to shed light is easy to illustrate:

Then Ellen died, the butterfly of a forgotten summer two years defunctive now—the substanceless shell, the shade impervious to any alteration of dissolution because of its very weightlessness: nobody to be buried: just the shape, the recollection, translated on some peaceful afternoon without bell or catafalque into that cedar grove, to lie in powder—light paradox beneath the thousand pounds of marble monument which . . .

"Faulkner's prose," many a reviewer and critic might have written, "is very poetic." Despite the vagueness of such a catchall term as "poetic" we understand to a degree what is meant: The prose is not simple; it calls attention to itself by its opacity, its difficulty; it requires careful perusal and its compressed meanings are open to various interpretations. And so, because the prose of Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! or of Lawrence's The Plumed Serpent or of White's The Aunt's Story is "poetic" prose, we read it (assuming we're still interested and haven't turned away
to read Hemingway or Waugh or Graham Greene or Robertson Davies) with a certain extra effort, more perhaps than most novelists demand of us, in order to find out what it is the man is saying, to see just why the prose is so unprosaic, so assertive of itself in its strange new guise of language.

Given that the reader makes a certain amount of effort, it might seem perhaps that the problem disappears. After all, the passage quoted above from Absalom, Absalom! is reasonably intelligible: we understand that Ellen is presented in the metaphor of a butterfly, just as, say, Ezra Pound's lady in Kensington Gardens has her weightlessness evoked in the image of a skein of loose silk blowing against the iron railings. Ellen's weightlessness is brought out by the contrasting thousand pounds of the marble monument. But then why is the shade static and "im pervious" because of its weightlessness? Why does the body cease to exist and actually not require burial, yet remain a recollected shape? And why the catafalque, the cedar grove and the powder?

To answer this second set of questions, we may wish to be given the total context (the book as a whole) in which the passage occurs. And indeed the context helps further our understanding. For instance, we find, on fuller
reading, that throughout the novel Ellen is often presented as a butterfly:

Ellen was dead two years now—the butterfly, the moth caught in a gale and blown against a wall and clinging there beating feebly. (p.85)

... Ellen preened and fluttered out her unwitting butterfly's Indian summer. (p.97)

Sometimes the butterfly references are very oblique, as when weightlessness and short life are alluded to:

Ellen at the absolute flood's peak of her unreal and weightless life which with the next dawn was to break beneath her ... (p.106)

With further reading, we find that the reason she is weightless is that in some way the walls of the house have absorbed her substance; in her sister's view, she has "vanished into the stronghold of an ogre or a djinn," in which place, with its "insurmountable resistance to occupancy save when sanctioned or protected by the ruthless and the strong," she lived for a time with Sutpen, but when he went away to war she began to disintegrate physically: "it was as the butterfly itself enters dissolution by actually dissolving" (p.85).

Continuing our careful reading, we pick out of the text the thread of the house, and find that it lifts away in a whole strand of meanings and associations of its own, established in dozens of occurrences in the text, and
interacting with other strands of meaning. So that while one part of our mind, as we are actually reading the novel, is accepting the image of the butterfly as a marvelously evocative image or impression of decadent Southern womanhood, of the puritan Coldfield pride incarnate in a showy, substanceless human being, another part of our mind is trying to relate the image of the butterfly to the image of the house, also a "substanceless shell;" and yet other parts of our mind are drawing relationships between the totemic identifications of Ellen/butterfly, Sutpen/stallion, Bon/cat, and so on, and the anatomical counterpointed descriptions of Coldfield flesh—so rank and embattled in Rosa, so sapped and dehydrated in Ellen—and Sutpen skull (linking Thomas and Henry and Bon in repeated identifications) and teeth (hidden behind the beard in an ambivalent smile). And as readers we become more and more aware, admiringly, frustratedly, in puzzlement or perhaps even anger, that Faulkner is writing something for which our usual capacities as novel readers, and for which the usual critical terms which have helped our understanding in the past, are no longer adequate. It is not just a matter of finding "poetic" passages here and there in the text, where isolated heightening of effect or compression of meaning detain our intellect for a moment before we pass
on in the narrative pursuit; rather, the entire texture of the book is built up, composed, woven of threads of metaphor, image, motif, or whatever we call the elements. The "poetic" element of the prose ceases to appear as simply an addition to the basic narrative, but begins to supplant it. The "poetry" begins to force us into a whole new way of seeing what is being presented. We are not given a story created out of things we know at first hand or by empathetic identification, but a story created almost entirely out of impressions, symbols, dislocated and extraordinary images, all of which force us into looking at the experience retailed through the most unusual eyes of the particular author.

It is this unusualness which constitutes the problem for the reader. The "poetic" novel, after all, is not new. 4 (Conrad, for example, and the whole movement of impressionism come immediately to mind.) But the demands made upon a reader by the prose—the imagery and symbols and impressions—of James, and Conrad, and Stephen Crane, or even of Joyce or early Virginia Woolf, are different in kind from one of the demands made by the prose of Faulkner and Lawrence and Patrick White, to name only these three. Once again, an illustration may clarify:

But in the last movement Moraitis rose again
above the flesh. You were not untouched. There were moments of laceration, which made you dig your nails in your hands. The 'cello's voice was one long barely subjugated cry under the savage lashes of the violin. But Moraitis walked slowly into the open. He wore the expression of sleep and solitary mirrors. The sun was in his eyes, the sky had passed between his bones.\(^5\)

In this passage (from *The Aunt's Story*) there is an obvious contrast established between the 'cello and the violin, and the conflict between these two personified forces of communication (the "cry" and the "lashes") evidently has some direct relation—grammatically established by the "but"—with Moraitis' walking into the open, and the expression on his face. That expression ("of sleep and solitary mirrors") somehow signals to the narrating consciousness that the sun is in Moraitis' eyes, and that the sky has passed between his bones. What does it all mean? If we read in isolation the description "the sun was in his eyes," we can certainly supply a reasonable interpretation: He is radiant with a certain beauty; Theodora (the narrating consciousness) is very much attracted to him; he is a source of vitality, like the sun. Thus taken out of context, the fact of the sun being in Moraitis' eyes appears to be a simple impressionistic detail subject to straightforward interpretation on at least one level. But "the sky had passed between his bones." There we are beyond impressionism. Obviously the writer is telling us something in a
language which we have to learn like a foreign tongue; and without that learning, the meaning of the statement is perfectly obscure. Even at the superficial level at which we interpreted "the sun was in his eyes," there is no sense in the statement about the sky and his bones. That is why I say there is a difference in kind between the prose of *The Aunt's Story* or *The Plumed Serpent* or *As I Lay Dying*, and the prose of impressionists or stream-of-consciousness writers, or other "poetic" novelists. With other "poetic" writers, the meaning of the prose is available to any reader who cares to think a little imaginatively. In *Jacob's Room* (to take a random instance) the British Museum appears first as metaphor, then as simile, of the human mind wrestling with the paradoxes of existence in a continuing tradition of intellectual effort:

> The rain poured down. The British Museum stood in one solid immense mound, very pale, very sleek in the rain, not a quarter of a mile from [Jacob]. The vast mind was sheeted with stone... Stone lies solid over the British Museum, as bone lies cool over the visions and heat of the brain.

Here the details "very pale, very sleek in the rain," easily identify Jacob with the Museum (particularly as he is constantly presented as a lank, pale intellectual, and as his walk in the rain has just been described before this passage), and it is not difficult to apprehend
the expanding meaning of the bone/stone, brain/books sim­ile. We are given a perceived image which helps us to con­ceive of the person of Jacob. But all of this is in known terms, unique combinations of images perhaps, but familiar enough for all that. Virginia Woolf is giving us life as she sees it, but life as she sees it is not something radically new to us; all we are asked to do is conceive of Jacob's mind as a museum, which is rather easy, consid­ering that both are storehouses of knowledge. By contrast, in the prose of The Aunt's Story or Absalom, Absalom! we are presented with a new vision, that is, a new process of envisioning reality. The terms in which the stories are told are unfamiliar and initially unintelligible and as­tonishing. Such novels are "novels of vision," in which the very process of envisioning and recording the subject matter is radically new; words take on unconventional and unique meanings, producing a new texture of reality for those who can see it.

Yet, of course, because the development of art methods is an evolutionary process, prose of "vision" has not simply emerged without antecedents. Symbolism and impressionism differ from prose of "vision" as I have sug­gested, but they stand as prototypes and sources of the new technique. The evolution is observable in Lawrence's prose,
where symbolistic and impressionistic interpretations make for partial understanding; but Lawrence goes beyond symbolism and impressionism, and his prose (especially the later works) contains elements of something utterly new. If we become used to reading Lawrence as a latter-day Romantic writer, or as a symbolist or a florid impressionist, we may tend to slide over this other important element in his prose. Having obtained some kind of meaning out of *The Plumed Serpent* or *The Man Who Died*, enough to satisfy us, we may well just pass off the rest of the confusing masses of words where they occur, as sheer excess. Once again, an example may clarify my point:

The wind was suddenly roaring, the lamp was leaping with a long, smoky needle of flame, inside its chimney. Leaves and dust flew rattling on the terrace, there was a splash of lightning. Ramon's body lay there uncovered and motionless, the bandage was already soaked with blood, under the darkening, leaping light of the lamp.

And again Kate saw, vividly, how the body is the flame of the soul, leaping and sinking upon the invisible wick of the soul. And now the soul, like a wick, seemed spent, the body was a sinking, fading flame.

At first sight, this passage seems easy enough to understand. Impressionistic details like the "long, smoky needle of flame" and the "splash of lightning" create a vivid picture in which the lamp obviously is a symbolic analogue
of Ramon: the wind is roaring on the lamp, causing the flame to flicker up and down, and likewise Ramon's life is flickering in the delicate balance of fate; the wind may blow out the lamp, Ramon may succumb to his wounds and die. So much is evident.

But what are we to make of the strange fact offered, "that the body is the flame of the soul"—the converse of what we normally think in, say, Christian theology where the body is the clay housing the intangible soul, or in Plato's philosophy, where the soul or spirit is the purest essence of the essential life substance, and the body the most corrupt? How, in the first place, is it possible even to conceive of the image of body-as-flame, soul-as-wick? Does the soul reside under the body, like the wick under the flame—or is the image simply carelessly inappropriate, grotesque even? And then, why does the lightning actually splash, water-like? And is the flame really like a needle? Suddenly it becomes apparent that there are many extraordinary facts about the prose of the passage, and that our normal responsiveness to symbols and impressions is not quite adequate to explain them. The sheer concentration of extraordinary facts in such a short passage causes us to hesitate about passing it all off as imprecision or mere verbiage. Leavis suggests that The Plumed Serpent
is "the least complex of Lawrence's novels," and adds that "it is the only one that [he] find[s] difficult to read through." Perhaps part of the difficulty stems from the fact that the prose is more complex than it first appears. Its texture is made up of many strands of unusual images, offering the reader a new way of envisioning reality.

The problem under discussion, then, is that in certain novels one finds a strange and initially unintelligible prose texture, as illustrated by the quotations above. The imagery is often obscure and puzzling. Structure too is often quite confusing in such novels, as in Absalom, Absalom! where different time schemes and different narrators mesh without clear distinction, or Part Two of The Aunt's Story where we are not sure at first whether events are imaginary or real, whether people are speaking or whether someone is imagining their thoughts. Readers are baffled at first by these and other elements of strangeness, as the reviewers indicate when they speak of such things as a "tense, defiant obscurity, the self-sufficient dislocation of thought which withdraws itself from facile understanding" (of As I Lay Dying). "From the first page of [Absalom, Absalom!] to the last we are conscious that the author is straining for strangeness," comments one writer, adding, "He will say nothing simply."
Another admits, "I cannot suggest why Patrick White should choose to use words in this way." This is precisely the question I seek to answer, for White, Lawrence, Faulkner or any novelist who presents his reader with a barrier of strangely mannered prose which draws attention first and foremost to a particular, idiosyncratic way of envisioning reality; that, in brief, is my definition of "the novel of vision." "A novel of vision" is a novel in which the artist creates a self-contained value scheme which differs radically from conventional value schemes, because it is expressed in language invented by the novelist to convey his personal vision of reality. Thus in "a novel of vision" the way of seeing is a major part of the artistic communication, and usually more important than the thing seen—in which respect the Impressionist novel is clearly a forerunner of "the novel of vision."

To further clarify my conception of "the novel of vision," I turn next to consider certain aspects of the way in which art functions in society. If we can understand why the "novelist of vision" imposes his mannered idiom upon us rather than just telling a tale in simple terms and directly, then I think we are closer to the point where we can accept and explore the vision offered, rather than resisting it or simply remaining bewildered.
THE DYNAMIC OF VISION: ARTIST VERSUS SOCIETY

The social context in which an artist embodies his vision of reality in a novel will obviously affect the nature of the product, for art is a process of communication as well as of self-expression. The Freudian concept of art as neurosis helps to explain the relationship existing between some artists and their works, but it does not add to our understanding of the communicative function of art. In order to understand that, it is necessary to postulate some kind of sociological aesthetic; for it is only in a social context that art has any significance for anyone other than the artist—even for him too perhaps. So-called Marxist critics such as Caudwell, Kettle and even to a degree Leavis, have done much to develop the concept of the artist as a moral agent whose function is to engage society in a quest for moral values. The major limitation of the various Marxist approaches is that they (intentionally) define values in social rather than personal terms. Kettle, for example, brushes off Huxley, Orwell, Koestler, Green and Waugh, as "unhelpful" novelists, because "the picture of the human situation that emerges from the novels of these writers is in the last degree unhopeful." 12 He objects to Aldous Huxley because he has "no respect for life." 13 Similarly, Leavis
discusses Decoud in *Nostromo*, for the exclusive purpose
of exposing Decoud's antisocial self-sufficiency, and
contrasting this with the socially-oriented strength of
Dr. Monygham and Georgio Viola. Caudwell sees such
writers as Lawrence and Gide to be rooted in a collapsing
bourgeois society, with "no constructive theory" and further limited because "they cannot see the new forms
and contents of an art which will replace bourgeois art." The aesthetic of such critics is evidently predisposed to
the affirmation of society and proletarian values; hence
they tend to rank the artists whom they criticize in a
value scale of social history. Obviously such an approach
obstructs the full range of communication between artist
and reader.

To understand the communicative function of art
in its social context I would look for a theory of art
which is socially based, but does not involve preconcep-
tions as to what the artist may or ought to be saying. The
most helpful concepts I have found towards the construction
of such a theory are those developed by the Russian For-
malist critic Victor Shklovsky in an essay recently trans-
lated for English readers. "The purpose of art," says
Shklovsky, "is to impart the sensation of things as they
are perceived and not as they are known." This statement
is reminiscent of Conrad's famous announcement of his purpose in the Preface to "The Nigger of the Narcissus" ("...before all, to make you see,"), but Shklovsky dwells more emphatically than Conrad on the difference between that which is perceived and that which is known. Throughout his essay, Shklovsky stresses the Formalist principle of "defamiliarization" as the primary function of art images. The purpose of an image, he says, "is not to make us perceive meaning, but to create a special perception of the object—it creates a 'vision' of the object instead of serving as a means for knowing it." [Shklovsky's emphasis].

To create "a special perception," the artist must obviously possess a special capacity for perception (or vision) himself; and if we accept that "special perception" is the primary endowment of the artist, we see that the concepts of vision and art appear to be very close to one another: art is simply the rendering of vision. Consequently, although part of our final judgement of an art work will relate to technical success or failure, in the first instance our judgment will be based on the informing vision of the art work, namely the artist's "special perception." The artist defamiliarizes familiar
objects and experiences, and his social function is to challenge stereotypes of perception by offering in their place new ways of seeing. For, as Shklovsky says, "as perception becomes habitual, it becomes automatic," and "art exists that one may recover the sensation of life," that one may redeem one's consciousness from the wooden automatism of perception based on habit, and see things newly.

Now this process of replacing the stereotype with new vision makes demands on the reader, the society, the audience—whenever it is that the artist is interacting with in the process of communication. And the more radical and new an artist is, the more will society tend to reject or repudiate him at first. This is always the case with artists of importance, especially in the Twentieth Century, as David Lodge points out in his discussion of "modern" and "contemporary" writers: "Moderns"—and I would place "novelists of vision" among them, for reasons that will become obvious in a moment—are writers who "seek a radical transformation of conventional forms of communication, through which to express poetically an inner crisis of sensibility," and for whom "life is something elusive, baffling, multiple, subjective." "Contemporaries" on the other hand, are "those who engage in a direct, prosaic way with their social and political circumstances," and for whom
life "is what common sense tells us it is, what people do" [Lodge's emphasis].

The modern disturbs us with the novelty of his vision and his technique; and since most critics and readers are basically conservative, he tends to be neglected and despised in his youth and maturity, and revered in his old age or when he is dead. The contemporary, on the other hand, is usually much more accessible to the general public. He may attack them, but he does so in terms they understand, in the language they use, appealing to experiences they share.

This description of the neglect afforded to what Lodge calls the "modern" is clearly evident in the instances of "novelists of vision" whom I'm discussing. One thinks of Faulkner's long obscurity, before Malcolm Cowley finally took up his cause and got him some serious attention. Lawrence's case is even clearer: "With few exceptions, the reviewers of his works were either condescending or savage, and the wide public knew of Lawrence only as a man whose books were sometimes suppressed. His death in 1930 brought forth some bitter obituaries, still shocking as one looks over them today." In White's case, the process of rejection continues at the present time, despite a general swing to acceptance now that he is in his sixties and has attracted considerable international interest. Peter Shrubb, in a fairly recent article, still complains of finding White's "most attractive truth to be
death," and his vision "a reformist vision gone bitter and sour, frustrated, made angry, and thus trivialized." To sum up my point: "the novelist of vision," because he is an artist offering his radically new, "special perception" in his work, draws hostility and misunderstanding, or at least neglect from reviewers, critics and the general public, for a while. The artist who has something really new to say in the Twentieth Century takes acceptance as a mark of decline, and even expects to arouse hostility in the first instance. The phenomenon is nicely documented in a 1967 popular magazine: Jean-Jacques Lebel, producer of Picasso's play Le Désir Attrapé par la Queue, is quoted by Time as saying that "he would have felt better if there had been just a few cries of moral outrage at opening night. 'The fact that there's so much opposition to the kind of thing we're doing,' he explains, 'is what gives me confidence that we're on the right road.'"

For certain artists then—the ones Shklovsky is talking about, Lodge's "moderns," my "novelists of vision" --the expression of "special perception" is linked with an experience of social alienation, hostility. Whether the alienation results from the special vision or produces it, I can't say. For my purposes, what is important to notice
is that this sense of conflict between artist and society exists, and, secondly, that it appears to provide some of the dynamic motivation which leads the artist to produce further work. Indeed, there is some evidence that the artist actually welcomes it and chooses it, whatever pain it may bring him in his social life. Lawrence, for instance, made a point of continually rejecting English society, even as he continued to write about the English. One could quote many passages from his letters to evidence this phenomenon. At one point he tells Catherine Carswell that he is about to complete the last chapter of his textbook *Movements in European History*, and continues, in the same letter, to vilify his subject:

> By now I am utterly bored with social and political England--Europe too--I don't believe in them in the least--none of 'em--don't even want to any more. I've really fallen out of the reckoning.  

I use this quotation (even though it doesn't refer to a work of fiction) because its petulant, excessive tone conveys precisely the attitude I am describing: an attitude of willing alienation from society. Like a hurt child, Lawrence declares himself, "*Je m'en fiche* of the whole show," and soon leaves England, only to continue for the rest of his life writing about English men and women. Likewise Faulkner's self-imposed isolation and
alienation from his society is very clear in the documents of his life. Isolating himself in Oxford, with a ditch dug across the driveway, rudely refusing invitations to social functions, he continues to write about the South. In France he resists the questions of journalists and forces them to hunt him like "a lion in the garden." He projects the public myth that he is a simple farmer, too busy for literary talk. Once, delighted that the myth is accepted by an interviewer, he tells her coyly how he saves himself from the public:

"Les journalistes vous laissent-ils en paix dans votre ferme?"
"Non. Mais quand ils entrent dans la grande porte, je me sauve par la porte de derrière."

Certainly Faulkner came out of hiding in the latter part of his life, but why should he have felt it necessary to convey the image of saving himself by running from interviewers out the back door?

The answer is not difficult to deduce. If we consider that the artist is the man of special vision, it is quite understandable that a state of isolation and even social antagonism is his chosen environment; for only when he is cut off from society's norms, from the compromises which social involvement inevitably demands of his honest and secret self, can he attempt to be absolutely true to his private vision. It isn't that he simply rejects
mankind, but that he wishes to preserve his vision of reality from dilution or distortion by societal stereotypes. He knows there is a discrepancy and contradiction between what he, as artist, sees, and what society sees and calls "truth." Faulkner shows his awareness of this discrepancy in American culture in the following excerpt from an interview in Japan:

SAKANISHI: Now there is another tendency in this country which to us is constantly puzzling, but that is an easy way for the newspapers and journalists to solve the problem. If anything sensational or vital happens, they always get hold of a novelist to ask his opinion. Now there is a mass drowning of school kids and a novelist is called upon by telephone or by interviews to see what he thought about it as the highest authority in the matter of events. He gives out his opinion.

FAULKNER: To me that is a symptom of your culture and I think a very good and an important one. In my country, an artist is nothing. Nobody pays attention to him. He has no part in our ideology and our politics, but in an old culture, an artist is a wise man, is important and looked up to with respect which I think is fine. I wish it were true in my country.

SAKANISHI: Really.

FAULKNER: In my country, instead of asking the artist what makes children commit suicide, they go the Chairman of General Motors and ask him. That is true. If you make a million dollars, you know all the answers. 38

Anticipating by some fifteen years the campus radicals of
the early ’70’s for whom "the Chairman of GM" is the paradigm of wrong-valued thinking, Faulkner here asserts the fundamental contradiction between the "special perception" of the artist and the vision of society at large in America. Patrick White expresses a similar awareness of the alienation of the artist from Australian society:

In all directions stretched the Great Australian Emptiness, in which the mind is the least of possessions, in which the rich man is the important man, in which the schoolmaster and the journalist rule what intellectual roost there is, in which beautiful youths and girls stare at life through blind eyes, in which human teeth fall like autumn leaves, the buttocks of cars grow hourly glassier, muscles prevail, and the march of material ugliness does not raise a quiver from the average nerves.

It was the exaltation of the "average" that made me panic most, and in this frame of mind I began to conceive another novel.39

The last half sentence here is crucial: "in this frame of mind," in disgust with society, White conceives a new novel (The Tree of Man), in which he creates the life history of two simple, ordinary Australians; but at the same time they are quite extraordinary Australians whose half-articulate consciousnesses focus on values quite other than those characteristic of "the Great Australian Emptiness".40 And in another place White again asserts the contradiction between the vision of the artist and the values of society, this time using the terms "reality" and "the superficial"
to convey the opposition:

I have the same idea with all my books: an attempt to come close to the core of reality, the structure of reality, as opposed to the merely superficial. The realistic novel is remote from art. A novel should heighten life, should give one an illuminating experience; it shouldn't set out what you know already.

White hopes his vision will produce "an illuminating experience," in place of what "you know already," for what we know already is "the superficial," and what his vision can illuminate for us is "the core of reality." Not to become entangled in "the superficial," the artist maintains his isolation from society, and develops his vision of "the core of reality."

In Lawrence's case, the scheme to found the community of Rananim is an excellent illustration of the fact that the alienation of the artist is not simply misanthropic, but positive and revolutionary. His statements about Rananim show the inherent social outlook of an artist of "special perception:" he wants society, but he wants it remade according to his own perceptions of value—in Lawrence's case, the main value being in the quality of relationships between people:

We will also talk of my pet scheme. I want to gather together about twenty souls and sail away from this world of war and squalor and found a little colony where there shall be no money but a sort of communism as far
as necessaries of life go, and some real decency. It is to be a colony built up on the real decency which is in each member of the community. A community which is established on the assumption of goodness in the members, instead of the assumption of badness.\textsuperscript{42}

The "pet scheme" was never realized except in the sense that the values it might have embodied are channelled through fiction into Lawrence's expression of his vision.

So far I've tried to show that the artist is alienated, that his alienation and isolation are a sort of pose of the artist behind which he continues to express his vision in art works. His motive for continuing to produce such works is the hope that he will perhaps one day revolutionize the society in which he lives (as I think is clearly implied in the White quote above, about conceiving a new novel at a time when he was in a panic about the "exaltation of the 'average'"). Henry Miller describes this hope of revolution in his "Reflections on Writing:"

I am not in revolt against the world order. "I revolutionize," as Blaise Cendrars said of himself. There is a difference. I can as well live on the minus side of the fence as the plus side. Actually I believe myself to be just above these two signs, providing a ratio between them which expresses itself plastically, non-ethically, in writing. I believe that one has to pass beyond the sphere and influence of art. Art is only a means to life, to the life more abundant... All art, I firmly believe, will one day disappear. But the artist will remain, and
life itself will become not "an art," but art, i.e. will definitely and for all time usurp the field. In any true sense we are certainly not yet alive. We are no longer animals, but we are certainly not yet men. Since the dawn of art every great artist has been dinning that into us, but few are they who have understood it. Once art is really accepted it will cease to be. It is only a substitute, a symbol-language for something which can be seized directly. But for that to become possible man must become thoroughly religious, not a believer, but a prime mover, a god in fact and deed. And of all the detours along this path, art is the most glorious, the most fecund, the most instructive. 43

The artist "revolutionizes" not against any particular political or moral order, but towards the positive recreation of society in terms of the vision he has of man's realities. The vision of such an artist continues to be bodied forth in works, until it is no longer needed. At that time, when mankind has made life into art, by seizing directly the values which art works only symbolize, art will disappear. Meanwhile, the vision of the artist is "fecund," providing those who can understand it with life possibilities "more abundant."

How exactly does the antagonism between artist and society produce this dynamic motivation to revolutionize society's vision? Why should the artist care? These questions can't easily be answered, but it does seem that there exists a perpetual struggle between the
conservatism of society and the revolutionism of the artist, which is the very life-force of the communication of the art work. The integrity of each side of the struggle demands the submission of the other; and the demand continues to be resisted on both sides: "That's not what Australian society is like!" shout the reviewers of White's novels. "The dingoes are howling!" White cries back. A lead article in Saturday Review complains that "in book after book now," Faulkner "has dropped tears like the famed Arabian tree, in a rapture of sensibility amounting to continuous orgasm. The medium in which his novels exist is lachrymal, and in Absalom, Absalom! that disconsolate fog reaches its greatest concentration to date." Faulkner ignores such enmity and writes on, confident that what he is doing will "uplift man's heart," and not be "just a series of horror stories that are essentially false." It appears that only in this struggle between artist and society can the artist's vision achieve a moral or illuminating function, a revolution of sight. The artist who submits to the dictates of common perception and common taste loses his vision; his antennae (to twist Pound's image of the artist as the antenna of the race) have become gummed to the public gullet; his scripts become recipes of experience which is already known and accepted;
he is society's lackey, no longer his own man. Lawrence, in his book reviews, demonstrates just this distinction between art which is created from conventional perceptions (and which is therefore useless), and art which proceeds from the private vision of the artist. In a review of an American verse anthology, for instance, he invents a memorable, scathing image for the first kind of art:

_It's_ as if the whole nation had whispered or chanted its inner experience into the ear of a gramophone.

And the bulk of the whisperings and murmurings would be candy: sweet nothings, tender trifles, and amusing things. 48

Lawrence's particular objection is that the verse all seems to him derivative; it has no "strange sound" in it to make us "prick our ears:"

There is an element of danger in all new utterance. We prick our ears like an animal in a wood at a strange sound.

Alas! though there is a modicum of "strange sound" in this contemporary spiritual record, we are not the animal to prick our ears at it. Sounds sweetly familiar, linked in a new crochet pattern. "Christ, what are patterns for?" But why invoke Deity? Ask the Ladies Home Journal. You may know a new utterance by the element of danger in it.

The vision of these poets appears to Lawrence very like White's catalogue of the "Great Australian Emptiness" quoted above: their values are "a nut sundae or a new beau, a baby or an automobile, a divorce or a troublesome
appendix." Lawrence would have them seek new vision, let their sky "crack like a glass" and release them from the "goldfish bowl" they live in. To achieve that renaissance, Lawrence says, it takes somebody "to jump like a desperate clown through the vast blue hoop of the upper air. Or hack a slow way through the dome of crystal." Likewise, in reviewing the Russian novelist Rozanov, Lawrence again draws the distinction between poor art, which draws on the familiar, and fine art, which has a new voice: the worst of Rozanov contains "characters such as Dostoievsky has familiarized us with, and of whom we are tired," while the best contains "the voice of the new man in him." To stay within the bounds of social familiarity is death to the artist; he must be willing to jump through the sky "like a desperate clown;" no matter who laughs at or de­ rides him.

As the artist struggles against society, so society keeps up its end of the struggle. It does so largely through the mediation of literary critics, and, at the more popular level, reviewers. In time, norms change and the "radical" vision of the artist becomes acceptable, not to say standard. Thus the artists--and Lawrence is typical here--who reap violent censure today, are standard subjects of study tomorrow. Middleton Murry's many re­evaluations
of Lawrence texts that he had previously damned, provide a capsule illustration of this process of continual struggle. In 1920 Murry sees *The Lost Girl* as "a return to the slime from which we rose," but eleven years later he speaks of it as an affirmation of sensitive and intelligent life. For his part, the functional artist of vision maintains a distance of incomprehension between himself and his readers, which is the dynamic tension on which his art function feeds; he does so by developing ever new vision beyond the slowly shifting norms. As long as society continues to struggle against him, so it continues to absorb his earlier distortions of normal vision—without yet accepting the new distortions. Earlier distortions become society's new norms, as the Murry quote suggests in a general way. The great artist of vision may be defined as one who, by inscrutable means, continues to induce society to struggle against him, to deny the truth of his perceptions with a hostile vehemence which will later tend to turn into approbatory enthusiasm. The artist who ceases to engage society's opposition loses the struggle, and society gains nothing new from him. (Many aspects of the struggle are delineated in the portrait of the artist contained in *The Vivisector*, as I shall show in my last chapter.)
Not all artists, of course, stand in antagonistic relationship to society. Jane Austen, Thackeray, Tennyson, Fielding, Robert Frost, Graham Greene . . . many names spring immediately to mind of writers whom we acclaim as artists without question, but with whom society has had no great or bitter quarrel. Conversely there are those artists with whom society has been profoundly disgusted from time to time, but whose status as artists seems to us comparatively slight: Frank Norris, Dreiser, Cleland (Fanny Hill), the Earl of Rochester, Oscar Wilde, and so on. These exceptions certainly tend to contradict any sweeping assertion I might make relating artistic stature to social repudiation; but that is not my intention. I am talking about only one kind of artist, the "artist of vision," who, for reasons probably stemming from the disintegration of public values in the modern world, chooses to offer in his art a radically new basis of realism to society. There are no obvious radicals in the first group of names above: their vision of life is by and large conservative, socially familiar and acceptable. And the second group of names includes those who are often radical in outlook, but whose weaknesses of range and craftsmanship relegate them to the category of minor artists. Not every artist outrages society, and not every outrageous
writer is an artist. But where the phenomenon arises of a person whose vision of life is strange enough and new enough to unsettle some basic security in social thought, and whose gift and skill of craftsmanship can produce, as vehicle for that vision, intense and believable images of life, than we have an "artist of vision." To such an artist, the conflict which inevitably arises between himself and society provides some kind of inner energy of creation. (There is perhaps a new relevance in this context of Christ's warning to his disciples to beware when all men speak well of them: not only does the universal acceptance indicate a corrupt evangelism, like that of the false prophets, but the disciples are in danger of losing their drive, without the stimulus of opposition. The first Christians, like "the artist of vision," were concerned with offering society a radically new basis of reality—a view of life in salvationist terms.)

At this point my description of and argument for the existence of a dynamic of vision is formally complete. But in order to emphasize the intensity of the force involved, I should like to focus on certain texts which show evidence of enmity and anger between the artist and his society. Most such evidence can be found in letters and other discursive and informal writings of the artists
themselves. Henry Miller, for example, becomes quite angry at the suggestion made to him that he belongs in a literary tradition, and thereby has an established place in society. In a letter, he writes:

But again, when you talk of the literary tradition, I can't follow you. I regard myself, like many other writers too, as being outside 'the literary tradition.' In fact, that is what I set out to kill. . . . What I owe to tradition is the urge to destroy it.53

"To kill," "to destroy," "like many other writers too"... there's a certain irony here in which Miller joins the ranks of the unranked: an army of killers, wielding the mighty pen! Lawrence sees the artist as a man with a knife who goes around cutting slits in the "umbrella" of received perceptions by which people in any society protect themselves from seeing an "unspeakable inner chaos."54 Society then patches over the slits with a "weak simulacrum" of the vision outside, but a relentless army of artists keep pulling out their knives and slitting the fabric again and again. The poet is at war with society. He is "the enemy of convention," in the guise of "lion," "unicorn," and "leopard that may snarl."55

One of the Twentieth Century's most aggressive and angry "artists of vision" was the Australian painter and novelist, Norman Lindsay. Even more than Lawrence's,
Lindsay's discursive writings reveal a terrific force of hostility against the institutions of society. In 1924 he published a double volume designed to show how the vision of the artist provides a means of transcending the religious conservatism which, he felt, held people's minds in a narcotic prison. The tone of the books throughout is vehement, and both the tone and the theme of specific passages reveal the antagonism he feels between the "highest morality" of the artist, and the "lowest morality" of religious belief:

That good and kindly people accept a creed, does not vindicate the creed, but the simplicity of good and kindly people. All one can say is that perhaps such people would be better without a creed, for they would add tolerance to goodness and kindness, and that would be so much gained. But goodness and kindness, all that is understood by the humanitarian instinct, exist by necessity, as part of the social structure. It is self protective most where it seeks to protect others . . .

As the highest morality is expressed in asserting the individual vision of Life—in going alone, so the lowest morality exists in a general expression of belief, in agreeing to a common formula suitable to the lowest intelligence in the community.56

Lindsay's contempt for those of "lowest intelligence;" who refuse to "go it alone," is transferred into an attack on the priests, who, he says, create social inertia by the "bribe" of faith in salvation. By contrast, the creative artists challenge men to develop "the individual belief
in life."^57 For this educational service, the artists can expect no reward or recognition in this life, but only the constant danger that they will be "torn to pieces by wolves, and trampled on by pigs." By this time in the book, Lindsay's anger is flowing juicily, and he lets fly at the church:

They discard the whine of the mendicant, the rags of poverty. Where they once begged, now they demand. The active ones among them dress up in uniforms, red robes, lace, gold tinsel. They adorn their shadow currency of "Spiritual good" also in fancy dress, ritual, mysticism, chanting, and incense. Finally they borrow help of the highest impulse, of Art, in order to make this masquerade of dignity impressive to the common mind.

What! The Catholic church has encouraged Art! Yes, the dunghill encouraged the rose to grow in order that all might admire the dunghill.^58

All this emotional excess and uncontrolled petulance, in a book supposedly devoted to aesthetics, shows once more how the artist nourishes his own alienation from society, by anger.

The context of anger is particularly noticeable in Australia. Patrick White refers to his critics, in a passage quoted above, as "dingoes howling," and in another place he's quoted as saying "the critics have murdered his plays, and that he won't do any more."^59 Yet the truth, as John Rorke demonstrated a few years ago, is that the vast
majority of critics have been extraordinarily generous and laudatory, to the point of adulation at times. White, it appears, would rather remember the hostile reviews than the adulatory:

... I am anathema to certain kinds of Australian intellectual. It irritates me when I think of some of those academic turds, and the great Panjandrum of Canberra who described my writings as pretentious and illiterate verbal sludge.

The last phrase quoted here is a reference to A. D. Hope's review of The Tree of Man in a Sydney newspaper, eleven years previously. The fact that White remembers the single, stinging phrase, and revives it by quoting it in an interview, and the fact that he never once mentions—in this interview or anywhere else—his acceptance by the majority of his critics, suggests that he is perversely tenacious of hostility between himself and his society. Like Norman Lindsay, he finds himself surrounded by a materialistic society whose values he despises. In the discrepancy between his values and society's, some angry motive drives the artist to objectify his vision in an art work. And because the Australian cultural conditions perhaps make for the enlargement of this discrepancy to unusual proportions, the tension reverberates from the artists to their critics and followers. Indeed, Australian literary
criticism is some of the angriest and least controlled in the English-speaking world. The following quotation, referring to the Hope review mentioned above, epitomizes this tendency:

A. D. Hope (Sydney Morning Herald) had the time of his life. In his first eighteen paragraphs he laughed the novel out of court. Then he brought it back into court by suddenly crediting the author with "passionate and tender concern, a sense of the mystery of all living, the ability to create real people and a real world for them to live in". This was part of the game; the next move was a prim little curtain lecture on what a novelist should be and do. Ridicule re-entered the fray with a series of quotations ripped out of their context. There was one extraordinary passage in which the author of "The Lingam and the Yoni," of all people, confronted by a compassionate endeavour to convey the inwardness of a man's lovemaking with his wife, was so embarrassed that he cried for a row of asterisks. Returning soon to his game, this catlike critic again resuscitated his mauled mouse, going so far as to declare that "he shows on every page some touch of the born writer," only to slaughter him at long last by denouncing an essential component of his style as "pretentious and illiterate verbal sludge."

Thus not just the artist, but the critics too maintain the animosity which helps to motivate the artist. The climate in which the artist produces his vision and publicizes it is whizzing with angry exchange. Far from trying to avoid such social tension, the "artist of vision" courts it, as a means of releasing his creative energies. Norman Lindsay,
for instance, refused to keep his socially obnoxious art out of the public gaze, as his son tells us:

In his exhibited pictures, which attacked the ideas of sin and pollution, and which affirmed the joyous, ruthless fecundity of life, he continually risked prosecution and imprisonment. Again and again the bishops and the whole pecksniffian press shouted for his suppression. He could easily have kept his drawings quiet, sold them direct to collectors, but he insisted on public shows. (my emphasis)

Lindsay offered his dionysiac vision to a community whose values were the rugged, utilitarian values of the pioneer, the explorer, the miner, the bush ranger, and they rewarded him accordingly with abuse and even physical attack. Patrick White cherishes the wounds inflicted by his attackers, and keeps on writing. Lawrence spends his life in obstinacy and anger; censored and suppressed, he keeps churning out the books containing his vision. Faulkner defines the dynamic of vision in a nutshell: "I don't think the writer finds peace. If he did, he would quit writing."

In the course of my argument so far, I have shown in part how critics get involved in the dynamic tension existing between artist and society, even helping to create it. The question arises, "Is such partisan and emotional involvement the best role a critic can play in this context?" Certainly if the hostility of a critic works like the
grain of sand in an oyster, and helps the artist to produce his pearl, I would not want to suggest a different function which would deprive us of that pearl. However, it does seem to me that both artist and his public might expect another useful function to be performed by the critic—illumination. Let the popular reviewers and the egg-throwing members of the public irritate the artist into producing his pearls, if that irritation is necessary. Let more sober critics do what they can to bring the artist's vision, unmuddied, into the focus of public attention. What kind of criticism will achieve this focussing? My answer lies in the work I have tried to do in the six chapters ahead. However, one or two guiding principles seem to emerge from the theory of vision as I have so far developed it.

Firstly, as I have argued, "the novelist of vision" defamiliarizes reality in offering us his vision. Therefore it seems essential that the critic should scrupulously avoid any temptation to reverse that process by making the defamiliarized vision once more familiar. The vast majority of critics of the six novels here studied, seem to me to have fallen directly into this error. For example, in The Man Who Died, Lawrence strikingly and startlingly distorts the Christ story, in order to render
his "special perception" of life. Along comes a critic who tells us that this book "can be appreciated better, can be understood and assimilated better, if it is analyzed through a parallel body of thought having an outlook similar to its own, through a body of thought in which Lawrence's views and concepts will be accepted as genuine and reliable and not classified as 'heretical.'" The particular "parallel body of thought" suggested is "the approach to life as signified in the Vedas." This critic's suggestion is, then, that it is better to understand and assimilate *The Man Who Died* as an orthodox text in the Vedic tradition, than to be startled by its heresy. I don't at all deny that a comparison with the thought contained in the Vedas might be an interesting, though peripheral, consideration for a reader. But to suggest that that approach is the best one is to work against the function of defamiliarization which Lawrence has achieved in his novel. To offer a reader a means of seeing an abnormal thing as normal is to change the nature of his relationship with that thing; in the case of "the novel of vision" it amounts to robbing the novelist of his capacity to catch the reader off-guard. A number of other examples of critical attempts to (so to speak) "refamiliarize the defamiliarized" are noted in the individual chapters ahead.
A second guiding principle for critics of "the novel of vision" is related conversely to the first: it seems to me that since a "novelist of vision" is, by my definition, deliberately using words and structures in a particular, idiosyncratic way to present reality as he sees it, the critic can best illuminate such a novel by immediately confronting the way in which that reality is presented. That's a vague statement. What the principle leads to in practice is that the critic begins by asking the question, "What are the terms of this book?"--and by "terms" I mean the entire fictional medium as a reader experiences it. In other words it seems to me that the critic, in order to illuminate the text for a reader, should make a judgment about what seem to be the strongest-acting forces in the book, and focus his attention on those. If this seems an obvious principle to have stated, it certainly isn't one that has been followed by the majority of critics. Again and again I give instances in the chapters ahead, of critics who seem to me to have avoided dealing with a novel on its own terms, in and for itself as a piece of fiction, and instead have interpreted the novel as evidence or example of something else. To put it most simply: a critic who wishes to illuminate a novel by showing that its structure is that of, say, the
traditional epic poem, may well be diverted from his purpose and end up illuminating the structure of traditional epics, using the novel as pretext; in such a case the novelist's vision slides out of focus.

Finally, a note on critical terminology. The inherent novelty of "the novel of vision" inevitably challenges the lexicon of critical terms in common use. In order not to falsify or detract from the novelist's achievement of defamiliarization, it seems to me that the critic should freely adopt or invent terms to define that achievement. Thus for instance I use many terms with special meanings which I define, among them "motif," "videologue," "rhythm," "defamiliarize," and of course, "novel of vision." Some such terms may have no use outside of a particular book examined; so much the better. The more fluid and adaptable our critical terminology remains, the less is the danger of our imposing preconceived thought structures on the novels criticized (though obviously it's important to make clear what we mean by any term we use in an unconventional sense).

iii

THE TOOLS OF VISION: TECHNIQUES

Any novelist has two basic tools at his disposal: the immediate texture of language, and the larger
structures into which it is arranged. Through the flow of words he engages the reader, minute by minute, in the continuum of consciousness. The words and images, paragraphs of description, explanation and narration, constitute the "now" of the communication between writer and reader; and the quality of the flow of language therefore determines the quality of perception offered: simple or complex, new or familiar, interesting or dull, logical or illogical, credible or incredible, trivial or serious, joyous or sickening, and so forth. By his use of language, line by line, the writer conveys his sensibility in direct communication, speech.

Through larger structures the writer may convey something indirect: not so much his way of seeing as his way of making sense of the totality of what he sees--or of inviting us to make sense of that totality: not so much his sensibility, as the way in which his intellect responds philosophically or schematically to the experience portrayed. The structure of a novel is not experienced in a flowing continuum, as the flow of language is, but in ordered moments of realization which aggregate finally into a stable perspective. To understand this difference, it is helpful to imagine a novel as a person's life: a novel, like a person, is made up of a continuum of consciousness (the immediate texture of language in the novel) and the
form of events which that consciousness passes through (the structure of the novel). We are not totally aware of a novel until we have finished reading it, just as we are not fully aware of a man's life till it is completed in death; but at the same time, when we finish reading the novel we have already forgotten some of the detail on page 63, just as, when a man dies, the nature of his consciousness at some moment the November before last has become buried in memory. We derive one kind of knowledge from the "is-ness" of the man living, and we see him in another way when his life is over. Similarly, the flow of language gives us the "is-ness" of the writer's story, and at the end it becomes a new entity for us by virtue of being complete in a particular shape and outcome.

"The novelist of vision" differs from other novelists in using either or both of his primary tools (language and structure) to create an unusual new vision of the reality of life. By language steadily flowing through the pages, he inducts us into the world of his particular sensibility, and by structure he conveys the placing of that sensibility in time, his philosophic scheme or outlook. The two together, sensibility, and philosophic scheme (which we might call simply "metaphysic"), constitute his vision. Often, his use of one of these elements is more radical
and innovative than the other. For instance, in Lawrence structure is often quite conventional, whereas in Faulkner structure tends to be as unusual as the texture of the language.

It follows from what I've said so far, that the critic of "a novel of vision" has a simple and useful strategy available to him: in confronting such a novel on its own terms he can usually divide his attention between the immediate flow of language, and the larger structural elements. Not that the two can be totally separated; but in order to manage his work of illumination, the critic can consider those fine details of texture which build up the sensibility— or idiom—of vision, and those larger, formal effects which create the overall scheme or metaphysic of vision. My reader will see ahead how I use this strategy to make my chapter divisions. For instance, in considering The Aunt's Story, I first treat elements which I call "external structure," "internal structure," and "the Theodora archetype," all of which are uses of the second basic tool I've described, larger structure; I then examine motif usage and elliptical syntax, both of which are uses of the first basic tool, the flow of language. By such division, arising from the distinctions between basic tools of the novelist, I hope to have produced a piece of criticism which has a clear order derived from the craft of fiction itself.
Because of its inherent strangeness, "the novel of vision" does not conform to any technical model. Each book presents the reality of its subject matter in ways peculiar to each author's unique vision. One has elliptical sentences, another has run-on sentences; one has a standard, chronological time scheme, another contains severe disjunctions of time, and so on. Nevertheless, I find one particular characteristic common to all the novels studied in this dissertation, which seems worth discussing here in the introduction, namely a particular way in which extraordinary images are used.

Earlier, I referred to the fact that "a novelist of vision" invents his own language, for the purpose of creating a texture of his own idiosyncratic vision of reality. The following contrast will help to clarify my point: In *Finnegans Wake*, Joyce writes:

> Reefer was a wenchman. One call smell off his wetsments how he is coming from a breach of promisck.

But here Joyce is not performing the function of "a novelist of vision," for his invented words are essentially mimetic in a perfectly familiar way. The language is new, but it does not create an idiosyncratic vision, it does not defamiliarize experience; it defamiliarizes words in order to make them symbolize entirely familiar experiences.
of reality. Crudely, we can translate the language back into formal English thus: "From the smell of sexual fluids on his damp clothing one can tell that Reefer has just come from one of his frequent sessions with a wench—a promiscuous act, and a betrayal of some loyalty." Even if we extrapolate the subtleties, such as the connotation of "sick" in the form "promisck," we still are not jolted out of the world in which our minds move familiarly. But when White writes:

Maroon roses, the symbols of roses, shouted through megaphones at the brass bed. Remembering the flesh of roses, the roselight snoozing in the veins, she regretted the age of symbols, she regretted the yellow object beside the bed which served the purpose of a chair. She could not love the chair, or rather, she could not love it yet.

we are lost! Finding ourselves on completely unfamiliar ground in reading such a passage, we cast around for some handle which will lift the meaning clear for us. If that fails, we tend to shrug the passage off as something too "poetic" for us, and pass on. However, if we're willing to submit to re-education in the process of reading White's novel, we can learn how a technique is operating here, and come to understand what Theodora (the consciousness here) feels, and why. Our eyes may be opened to a vision of roselight snoozing in the veins (for instance) which may become part of our own sensibility, even our speech.
The technique used here is obviously a kind of symbolism. But "symbolism," like "poetic," is too inclusive for critical use. The characteristics of the technique are: first, repetition of a symbolic word within a framework of meaning established by associations or contrasts in the text; and second, subtle variations in the repetition, which provide the reader with an index of some kind of development—essentially what Forster and E. K. Brown call "rhythm." The fact of subtle—sometimes not so subtle—variation makes "emblem" too rigid a term to use for the technique. The term "leitmotiv," borrowed from music criticism and commonly used for techniques of this type, I find just too ponderous for convenient use, as well as slightly inappropriate; for me leitmotiv carries a certain romantic connotation which I would wish to avoid, since it jars with the contexts in which I find the technique frequently used. I should prefer the simpler term "motif," and I intend to use it with the definition supplied above. To show in detail how the technique operates, I return to the White passage quoted.

In the context, Theodora has just arrived at the Hôtel du Midi, and has been shown to her room by Henriette. The passage quoted contains her first impressions as she turns to survey her new bedroom. Alienated and weary,
Theodora has broken away from Australia to seek some kind of new reality and satisfaction for her life, in Europe. Now she has travelled thousands of miles from city to city, only to find disappointment of all her expectations. She comes to the Hôtel du Midi, her last hope. She sees artificial roses, the brass bed, a yellow chair. The roses shout at the bed and the chair is unloveable. Superficially, it's obvious that Theo doesn't much like her room. But there is much more than that in the passage— in fact the whole theme of the book is implicit in this single paragraph, carried through the motif of the rose. One of Theodora's earliest memories is of picking roses and finding bugs in them, and we are told that she accepted the reality of the bug in the rose, and could not subtract it. At the end of the book, the last image we have of Theodora in her final state of alienation, is an image of her hat on which a black, artificial rose trembles. The roses Theodora sees, or which are connected with her are symbols of her spiritual condition; or, to put it another way, we might say that the way she looks at roses indicates the way she regards life, at any given stage of her story. Here, at the Hôtel du Midi, she sees only the symbols of roses— paper roses presumably— and this corresponds with her dessicated state of consciousness. Her body is like an object misplaced in another
world; she is like the symbol of a person, not the real thing. She remembers the days when she felt young and more alive in the flesh, days in which she moseyed around in her mother's rose garden, and she regrets the age of symbols. The meaning here is quite complex, for we remember that it is the process of thinking, of symbolization, which led her in the first place away from simple childish living, through a recognition that life is a rose with bugs in it, to a mature state of frustration and alienation. The fact that the roses are shouting at the bed is similarly rich in meaning: the bed is the place of copulation and death and birth, and the unloved, alienated. Theodora feels the shouted challenge of her unfulfilled life in the presence of the symbol of marriage and death, and birth. At the end, we have the black rose on Theodora's hat--where we can see it, but she can't--suggesting that her life has become totally schizoid. She is living a kind of death of the flesh, a life totally in her own mind, as though the black bug in the rose of her childhood has taken over the whole flower. Her consciousness denies the reality of flesh, which is rosy, and which dies, and it accepts that which exists in the mind as the only reality--the black rose, placed where she can't even see it.
The complexity and subtlety which the use of motifs lends itself to is astonishing, and demands extremely detailed treatment, if one is to bring out all the meanings connoted. For instance, in the treatment of the rose motif just given, I haven't mentioned the chair. I could continue my discussion by showing how the motif of furniture exists in the book, and how its meaning here interacts with the rose motif to produce an additional layer of experience rendered in the idiom of White's vision. But since this is only an illustration, I'll stop here. Hopefully, in the analyses which follow the function of various techniques will become clear, as I attempt to illuminate the strange textures of vision produced in six separate novels.
FOOTNOTES

1 William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 126. Subsequent page references to this work are incorporated in the text.

2 William Troy, for instance, titled his review of the novel "The Poetry of Doom," Nation, 143 (31 October 1936), 524-525. Troy refers throughout to the "lyrical" qualities of Faulkner's vision. All the major reviewers of the novel on its first appearance in 1936 comment on the unusual style, and many of them use catch-all terms such as "poetic." The following is typical: "there are passages of great power and beauty ... and other passages which ... drop into a pure blank verse and are estimable for their sheer verbal music," New York Times Book Review, 1 November 1936, p. 7. The same use of vague catchalls is true of the reviews and criticism containing first reactions to many of the works of the three novelists studied in this dissertation. John Barnes, noting this tendency, complains that "terms like 'myth,' 'visionary,' 'metaphysical,' and 'poetic' have been used by White's critics, particularly those who admire his work, with a reckless disregard for their precise values," "A Note on Patrick White's Novels," An Introduction to Australian Literature, ed. C. D. Narasimhaiah (Mysore, 1964 [published as a special issue of The Literary Criterion], rpt. Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1965), p. 94. J. McCormick, in Catastrophe and Imagination (London: Longmans, 1957), pp. 42-66, makes an interesting study of the phenomenon of "poetic prose." Berating critics (including Howe on Faulkner) who use catchall phrases but do not investigate the language of fiction minutely, McCormick goes on to argue that the presence of "poetic" elements in fiction results from cultural catastrophes in which our public values are supplanted confusingly by the private vision of writers.

3 "Like a skein of loose silk blown against a wall /
She walks by the railing of a path / in Kensington Gardens /

4 The earliest recorded use of the term of which I am aware is Sir Walter Scott's comment on Mrs. Radcliffe, that she was "the first to introduce into her prose fictions a beautiful and fanciful tone of natural description and impressive narrative which had hitherto been exclusively applied to poetry ... Mrs. Radcliffe has a title to
be considered the first poetess of romantic fiction." Preface to Vol x of Ballantyne Novelists Library (1824), reproduced in Ioan Williams ed., Sir Walter Scott on Novelists and Fiction (London: Routledge, 1968) p. 103.


11 R. F. Brissenden, "Patrick White," Meanjin Quarterly 18, 4 (1959), 411. Brissenden is referring to instances of sentence fragmentation in Voss. Commenting on White's style generally he says: "Although in all the novels there are passages of great power and beauty, much of his writing seems crabbed, awkward, and unnecessarily mannered. Even the most adulatory of his critics could not deny that the style is one thing the reader is never able to forget: to some extent the words seem to stand between the reader and the characters."


13 Kettle, 170.


16 Shklovsky, pp. 3-24.

17 Shklovsky, p. 12.

18 In the "Preface" to "The Nigger of The Narcissus," Conrad makes a comparable distinction, between the "external" world of science, and the "internal" world of art.
Shklovsky, p. 18.
Shklovsky, p. 18.
Shklovsky, p. 12.


Lodge, p. 244.
Lodge, p. 245.
Lodge, p. 243.
Lodge, p. 245.
Lodge, pp. 248-249.

Cowley’s function in this regard has been well documented in *The Faulkner-Cowley File; Letters and Memories 1944-1962* (New York: Viking, 1966).


During this period Lawrence appears to have brooded angrily and written very little for two or three years, but in November 1919 he went to Italy where "he began to write prodigiously,"—about the English of course (for instance he completed *The Lost Girl* soon after arriving in Italy). Harry T. Moore and Warren Roberts, D. H. Lawrence and his World (London: Thames & Hudson, 1966), p. 68.


There are many anecdotes of Faulkner’s isolationism in the authentic record of memories, James W. Webb and A. Wigfall Green, eds., *William Faulkner of Oxford* (Baton...


37 Lion in the Garden, p. 234.

38 Lion in the Garden, pp. 193-194.


40 For detailed analysis of the consciousnesses of Stan and Amy Parker, the central characters in this novel, see my "The Vision of Alienation: An Analytical Approach to the Works of Patrick White through the First Four Novels," M. A. Thesis U. of British Columbia 1966, pp. 101-137.


44 The most recent example is not a review but a critical article, Terry Smith, "A Portrait of the Artist in Patrick White's The Vivisector," Meanjin Quarterly, 31, 2 (June 1972), 167-177. Smith argues that the main character in this novel is not plausible as an Australian artist.


A typical statement from such an artist is that he does not consider his readers. Patrick White says, "I am not writing for an audience; I am writing, and if I have an audience I am very glad." *In the Making*, p. 220.

Luke 6, 26: "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets."


Lindsay, p. 68.

Lindsay, p. 70.

*In the Making*, p. 220.


*In the Making*, p. 220.


67 White, The Aunt's Story, p. 144.

68 The passage occurs less than halfway through the novel. White makes an interesting comment in this regard: "Even those who did take any notice [of The Aunt's Story] didn't read it—I went into Angus & Robertson's library, just twenty-five years ago, and noticed that people had read only the first quarter, they were the only pages which were soiled." In the Making, p. 220.


70 Lee T. Lemon uses the term in essentially the same sense that I apply to it, in "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: Motif as Motivation and Structure," MFS, 12, 4 (Winter 1966-67), 439-450. There he describes a motif as different from a conventional symbol in that it derives its meaning within the text in which it is used, rather than from outside. As Lemon says, "The meaning of a motif . . . is a function of the context; and . . . the context is a function of the motifs that make it up."
CHAPTER THREE

D. H. LAWRENCE'S THE PLUMED SERPENT: PROGRESS AND ANATOMY

"Does one need gods?" she said. "Why yes. One needs manifestations, it seems to me."¹

The Plumed Serpent has attracted a rather large amount of critical attention, ranging all the way to a book-length study. An interesting fact from my point of view is that a large majority of these critiques are negative. Why should critics take the trouble to put down a book which has seldom been granted any eminence outside of the honorific reminiscences of some of Lawrence's friends? My argument in Chapter Two above, on "the dynamics of vision," provides a possible answer. Critics probably attack the book because it disturbs them. One cause of the disturbance may well be that the book doesn't fulfill certain preconceptions and expectations brought to its reading, as I shall argue shortly. But a more important source of the disturbance, I suggest, is Lawrence's vision as rendered in the book, its value system or basis of realism. The majority of this chapter will be devoted to analyzing that vision by looking at its technical components. But first a brief review of published responses.
In the first chapter of his study of *The Plumed Serpent*, L. D. Clark gives an accurate and useful resume of critical reaction to the novel, including the Mexican authors usually ignored in English language writings. In all the material surveyed, Clark finds a huge mass of negative reaction but only minor and rudimentary help to an appreciative reading of the novel. The pattern in most publications since Clark's (1964) confirms this trend. Again and again we read that *The Plumed Serpent* is a badly flawed novel and then, just once in a while, there appears a short article illustrating something in the text. The pattern of rejection is consistent, through various approaches: *The Plumed Serpent* is measured against some yardstick of theory, and found wanting. For example, critics object that the narrative voice keeps intruding in the story. It's assumed that narrators must not intrude in novels, otherwise the fiction fails. Or again, we are told that Lawrence presents the character Ramon as a saviour, but that he doesn't have the proper attributes of saviours. And so on.

I do not belittle the judgment of these critics; indeed I hasten to add that in most cases the theoretical yardsticks by which the novel is shown to be flawed are given logical justification, and then the critics generally
turn from the alleged flaws to matters of peripheral interest or merit in the novel. My point is that criticism has laboriously imposed external standards of judgment on *The Plumed Serpent*, instead of either ignoring it, or else trying to accept it on its own terms, as I shall try to do. There seems to be a reluctance on the part of critical readers to accord Lawrence a wide range of données in this novel, and instead, considerable energy goes into proving that it is a failure as art though interesting as travelogue or evidence of the power of Madame Blavatsky, or something else. I cannot believe that all this negative energy is focussed on the book simply because it was written by D. H. Lawrence. Rather, these signs of rejection energetically conducted signify to me that there is something in *The Plumed Serpent* profoundly disturbing to trained and intelligent readers. There's something in it, quite apart from technical "flaws," which distinctly puts us off reading it. That element, I believe, is Lawrence's vision of reality here created. Even those critics (apart from Lawrence's gushy friends) who admire the book, do try to find some convenient, orthodox framework in which to locate it. This is just another way of refusing to confront the novel on its own terms. Just as Conrad's novels lose their disturbing power of personal, moral challenge. 😞
for readers who can call them "just some more sea stories," and just as the Bible does for readers who can see it merely a chapter in the history of myth, so The Plumed Serpent is more comfortable to live with when placed in the tradition of the dark night of the soul or defined as the working out of Jungian archetypes than it is when confronted directly, on its own terms.

To confront The Plumed Serpent—or any novel—on what I call "its own terms," means simply sitting down and opening the book at the first page, and trying to keep oneself as open and responsive as possible to what starts to happen. By the end of the first chapter, two things have happened: firstly, Kate's actions and reactions (emotional and physical) to people and events have established themselves in centre focus of the reader's attention; secondly, the narrator, from a point of view which is sometimes his own, sometimes Kate's, sometimes either or both, and sometimes some other character's, has begun to impose on the reader a very idiosyncratic vocabulary of description.

The first point needs little argument. Although in the bull-ring the focus moves from Kate to the surroundings, when she gets up to leave the story follows her outside, through the meeting with General Viedma, ultimately
to the tea-house "to drink her tea and eat strawberry shortcake and try to forget" (p.19). Later in the story the reader may well reflect back on this first chapter and notice that throughout the story Kate's actions take on a characteristic pattern of which the events of Chapter One are the model: involvement followed by retreat.

The second "happening" I've attributed to the reader needs some detailing. The most obvious of the idiosyncracies of vocabulary in this chapter is the use of bird images. Villiers is "the bald eagle of the north bristling in every feather" (p.7), and his eyes show "a primitive, birdlike fire" (p.7), and then again he glares around "coldly, like a bird that would stab with its beak if it got the chance, but which would fly away at the first real menace" (p.4). Next come the beetles: The bullring is "a trap—a big concrete beetle trap" (p.2) and the intruder on Villiers' feet is "beetle-like" (pp.7-8). To add to this bestiary, the other Mexicans at the fight are "like lost mongrels" (p.6), "the mongrel men of a mongrel city" (p.15). Other descriptive impressions are less obtrusive than these animal totems, but achieve extremely distorted pictures by selectivity and accumulation. For instance, the toreadors first appear marching in "a little column . . . wearing tight uniforms plastered with silver
embroidery" (p.8), which is not particularly unusual, except perhaps for "plastered." However, by the end of the chapter, the toreadors have become totally caricatured as graceless, effeminate game-players. We see nothing of them except such images as this: "With their rather fat posteriors and their squiffs of pigtails and their clean-shaven faces, they looked like eunuchs, or women in tight pants" (p.8); or: "The toreador skipped round with a ladylike skip, then tripped to another point" (p.12). Their cloaks are red "rags" (p.12) and their working the bull is "a rag game" (p.13). On top of the animal metaphors and the strong, subjective impressionism, the reader begins to notice a kind of symbolist insistence, for instance on people's eyes. We have already seen Villiers' birdlike eyes. Villiers' intruder's eyes "took on that bright, abstract look of pure demotic anger" (p.7)—whatever that may be—and Owen watches the fight "with all his eyes" (p.10)—however many that may add up to—while the fat mammas outside have "a pleased excited look in their eyes, almost sexual, and very distasteful in contrast to their soft passive bodies" (p.15); finally, General Viedma's eyes are "dark, quick, with the glassy darkness that [Kate] found so wearying," but are "tilted up with a curious slant," giving him "an odd look of detachment, as if he looked at life with raised brows" (p.16). When he speaks, she
notices "his quick eyes glanced at her and at his surroundings, like those of a man perpetually suspecting an ambush" (p.17). Later, Kate recalls "those black eyes, like black jewels, that you couldn't look into, and which were so watchful" (p.18). One significant fact common to all these examples I've given of specially charged descriptive language is that they refer almost exclusively to people.

What happens to the reader in Chapter One goes on happening to him throughout the rest of the book. That is to say, 1). Kate's story, and 2). the specially charged description of her human (and to a lesser extent her non-human) ambience, are the essential heart of The Plumed Serpent. Therefore, these two considerations shape my chapter: the story or progress of a character, and the descriptive anatomy of their world. These are "the terms" of Lawrence's vision in this novel.

KATE'S PROGRESS

Here are six imaginary newspaper headlines for the story of Kate's life, in the time limits of the novel:

a) "IRISH REVOLUTIONIST'S WIDOW MARRIES MEXICAN REVOLUTIONIST"

b) "ASTUTE WHITE WOMAN TAKEN IN BY MUMBO-JUMBO"
c) "LOST SOUL UNDERGOES RITES OF SEPARATION, INITIATION"
d) "AGNOSTIC TURNED ON BY AZTEC REVIVALISTS"
e) "FOREIGNER SETTLES IN OAXACA"
f) "KATE LESLIE FORESAKES COGWHEELS, FINDS MORNING STAR"

The first five of these offer capsule definitions of Kate's experience in what I would call "known terms." They place her experience in a common and predetermined framework, thereby reducing the novelty factor of the story. The sixth headline uses terms found in, and peculiar to, the book, with their specific meanings developed—if not absolutely clarified—there. To understand Kate's progress in terms of Lawrence's vision, it is necessary to abandon the safety and convenience of known terms, and focus our consciousness on such things as "cogwheels," eyes, birds, "spermlike water," blackness, the "Great Breath," reptiles, cats, "auras," "the evening star," "the morning star," "balance," "Quetzalcoatl." To do so requires very close attention to the text, and a "suspension of disbelief" which is "willing" in the sense that the reader must really open himself to the connotations and symbolic meanings of the terms used, and stifle or postpone any impulse he may have to irreverence, contumacy or jeering.
The list of terms just given contains the main motifs by which the various stages of Kate's progress are marked in the texture of the narrative. There are innumerable other, minor ones. Together, the motifs make up a texture of reality, or we may call it a world of vision, or a way of being or seeing, or of being conscious. This world is one of Kate's worlds, the one into which her progress takes place. (She has at least one other current world, which is rendered mostly through beautiful but not unusual descriptions of landscape.) I shall examine next the nature of her progress as expressed by these motifs, and later turn to consider the pattern or rhythms of her "oscillation" between one world and another in the course of her progress.

The "cogwheel" motif occurs throughout Chapter Six, "The Move Down the Lake." As the title indicates, this chapter records Kate's move closer to the heart of the Quetzalcoatl revival, and away from Villiers and all that he represents to her. "Cogwheels" signifies precisely the people and values that she rejects along with Villiers. "Every one of them, like Villiers, was like a cogwheel in contact with which all one's workings were reversed" (p.100). She wants to be alone, "to turn one's back on the cogwheel world" (p.100). Achieving this isolation in her *casa* down the lake, Kate resolves: "Now I am alone. And now I have
only one thing to do: not to get caught up in the world's
cogwheels any more, and not to lose my hold on the hidden
greater thing" (p. 106). At this point, she doesn't really
know what "the hidden greater thing" is—indeed, she is
"surprised at herself, suddenly using this language" (p. 105).
But she does know what she is leaving behind: cogwheels.
In other words, the arrival of the label "cogwheels" into
her vocabulary of introspection marks a point of definite
progress for Kate, a point at which she is able to roll in­
to a single, symbolic concept Villiers' "American note... of mechanical dominance" (p. 89), and all the "widder­
shins" contacts with people who "reversed her real life
flow" (p. 100). Kate has gained a perspective onto the
values of white men whose lives have "started to spin in
the reversed direction, widdershins" (p. 73), and by labell­
ing them she acquires a power to reject them. Bah! Cog­
wheels!

The symbol epitomizes not only the world of
mechanical technology, but, more interestingly, those re­
lationships with people which reverse one's own direction
of personal growth, just as cogwheels mesh to reverse one
another's motion--withershins relationships in fact. At
this stage of growth, Kate simply rejects all relation­
ships, even (in the last paragraph of the chapter) rather
petulantly breaking up the "face to face symmetry" of two settees which Juana has placed together in response to her "one social instinct more dreary than all other social instincts in the world . . . the Mexican" (p.107). Much later, when Kate has had time for a lot of growing in her new life, she no longer needs to use her blanket label of rejection (cogwheels), but instead can discuss with Ramon her need for a man, making distinction between relationships of domineering entanglement and relationships of balance (pp.247-8).

Kate rejects cogwheels and finds the morning star. The morning star is the most complex, most allotropic and probably the most important of the motifs in the novel. It contains the essence of positive value in Lawrence's vision. To experience "the Morning Star" might be described as the highest lesson or gift that *The Plumed Serpent* has to offer. Kate's progress is a steady, ramified induction into consciousness of the star, beginning in Chapter Three and continuing through at least a hundred moments of specific reference in the unfolding story. By the end of the book, the star and its many meanings have become as important to her, as central to her life, as the cross might do for a convert to Christianity.
The star first appears in the newspaper account of the Quetzalcoatl revival, as part of the emblematic trappings of the new cult. The man who encountered the god in the lake was given "a new hat with star embroidery," and a blanket with "flowers like stars at the centre" (p. 52). Rehearsing in her mind her slight knowledge of the god Quetzalcoatl, Kate remembers "the eyes that see and are unseen, like the stars by day. The eyes that watch behind the wind, as the stars beyond the blue of day" (p. 53). Two chapters later, when she has her first exciting encounter with a naked man of Quetzalcoatl, the star comes into her consciousness along with the theme of balance which had been in her mind at the time she read the newspaper story. "'We will wait till the Morning Star rises!'" (p. 87), the naked man tells her, and when she asks what that means, he replies enigmatically, "'It is a name.'" But the star provides a focus for their mystical conversation:

He watched Kate's face with that gleaming, intense semi-abstraction, a gleam that hung unwavering in his black eyes, and which suddenly reminded Kate of the morning star, or the evening star, hanging perfect between night and the sun. "You have the morning star in your eyes," she said to the man. He flashed her a smile of extraordinary beauty. "The Senorita understands," he said. (p. 88)
In subsequent chapters, the morning star figures prominently in the rituals and "Hymns," as a central symbol of the Quetzalcoatl revival. The star is revealed as both a sign of the god—e.g. "I am Quetzalcoatl, lord of both ways, star between day and the dark" (p. 225)—and as a symbol of the ground of relationship between people, under the new religion. Thus, for instance, Ramon tells Kate and Cipriano in their marriage ceremony: "This is the symbol of Quetzalcoatl the Morning Star. Remember the marriage is the meeting-ground, and the meeting-ground is the star. If there be no star, no meeting-ground, no true coming together of man with the woman, into a wholeness, there is no marriage" (p. 329). Also, in the chapter called "Huitzilopochtli's Night," the execution of the traitors is carried out under the justification that "while they lived, the Morning Star could not be seen" (p. 380), which is to say that the traitors muddied the ground of relationship, bringing division among the people. Kate hears and reads and sometimes participates in all this symbolic and ritual activity, meanwhile struggling to deal with her revulsions from Mexico and from Quetzalcoatl, but for a long time she does not think for herself in terms of the star. She listens to Ramon preaching about the star, both as a personal goal and as an ideal
ground of relationship between the sexes (e.g. in his sermon beginning "I am the Son of the Morning Star . . ." p.337), but while never outrightly rejecting Ramon, she does not yet use his language. She isn't yet converted, in fact she is sometimes a little afraid of what she senses is happening to the new converts.

Kate's repugnance at the new religion comes to a crisis, rendered by the star motif. She sits beside the dying Carlota, reading one of the tracts that have been distributed, an invocation to Quetzalcoatl:

Put sleep as black as beauty in the secret of my belly.
Put star-oil over me.
Call me a man. (p.348)

While reading this she hears a woman whose voice "clear almost as a star itself, went up the road at the verse: 'Blue daylight sinks in my hair. / The star comes out between the two / Wonders . . .'" and next we read: "Kate was frightened. She laid her hand on Cipriano's knee, lost." Holding his hand, she hears once more the line praying for sleep and star-oil. Then comes the significant sentence: "She could almost feel her soul appealing to Cipriano, for this sacrament." A page later, yearning for Cipriano, she hears again the two lines, "Put sleep as black as beauty in the secret of my belly. / Put star-oil over me." This is immediately followed by a dissolution
of "the hardness of self-will" in her and an opening of herself to Cipriano, which he senses in a very powerful, inner and mysterious way. Clearly, what has happened is that Kate has finally submitted to the religion of the star. At the end of the chapter she has a reversion to the old self of London and Paris and New York and her maiden days as Kate Forrester (p.369). But it is only a brief falling off. For the executions suddenly occur, and they shock her back into the struggle to define or come to believe in a satisfactory relationship with Cipriano.

Now, for the first time in the novel, Kate's vocabulary is flooded with star imagery. In the beginning of the "Malintzi" chapter, she wrestles with the problem of how to maintain her "own very soul and star-self" (p.386) in the face of Cipriano's apparent will and destructive dominance. Must she lose her identity, must he lose his, she asks herself, in order for the two of them to come together in the morning star, a third thing (pp.386-7)? Cipriano's arrival in the flesh overwhelms her, and she again relinquishes her old "European" concern about individuality, and submits to the marriage ceremony with him. Together, with separate candles explicitly symbolic of their separate lives, they light their lamp. Then they blow out the candles, and he tells her that the lamp is
"our Morning Star" (p. 390). Kate is tremendously moved by the ceremony, and can hardly look at "that bud of light which he said meant their united lives, without a catch at her heart" (p. 391). But there is no going back. She feels virginal again, and is filled with wonder and joy as the chapter ends. In the last three chapters of the novel, the morning star appears only perfunctorily. The significance of this omission is clear enough: Kate has come as close as she is going to get to the heart of Quetzalcoatl. From here on out her story is one of deciding whether or not to stay permanently with what she has found.

What she has found, a way of being in relationship, is symbolized by the motif of the star, and the progress of her searching and discovering is marked, as I've tried to show, by recurrences of the motif. As a symbol, the term "morning star" contains many meanings which are explicitly emphasized in the story, and which are worth discussing because they contribute to our understanding of the "way of being in relationship" which Kate has found. Other meanings (such as the Roman mythological significance of Venus) are not brought out in the text, and I therefore avoid going out of the way to import those significances to a reading of The Plumed Serpent.
First of the explicit meanings is the concept of balance. The term "balance" itself, like "widder-shins" mentioned already, is an important part of Kate's vocabulary even before she moves to the lake. Just as she rejects Villiers and Western, technological civilization because of the cogwheel relationships that drive her withershins, so she rejects the social reformist zeal of the Mexican painters whose work she sees, because they have an unbalancing hatred in them. "To anyone with the spark of human balance, the things are a misdemeanour" (p.47). To Garcia she insists: "One must keep a certain balance," but he retorts "brightly, his plump cheeks flushing. 'In Mexico you can't keep a balance, because things are so bad. In other countries, yes, perhaps you can remain balanced, because things are not so bad as they are here. But here they are so very bad, you can't be human. You have to be Mexican'" (p.49). Kate takes this last point very seriously and spends time here and throughout the novel, wondering whether there is something inherent in Mexico which keeps the people perpetually frustrated. Pessimistically, she rejects everything around her:

The thing called "Life" is just a mistake we have made in our minds. Why persist in the mistake any further.

Owen was the mistake itself; so was Villiers; so was that Mexico city. (p.55)
And so she determines to retreat from it all, and live alone somewhere. However, when Kate meets the naked man of Quetzalcoatl in the lake, new hope is born in her, accompanied by a series of images of balance, specifically associated with the morning star and the evening star:

And for the first time Kate felt she had met the mystery of the natives, the strange and mysterious gentleness between a scylla and a charybdis of violence; the small poised, perfect body of the bird that waves wings of thunder and wings of fire and night in its flight. But central between the flash of day and the black of night, between the flash of lightning and the break of thunder, the still, soft body of the bird poised and soaring, for ever. The mystery of the evening-star brilliant in silence and distance between the downward surging plunge of the sun and the vast, hollow seething of inpouring night. The magnificence of the watchful morning-star, that watches between the night and the day, the gleaming clue to the two opposites. (pp.89-90)

This flight of rhetoric, beginning with the "mystery of the natives," comes back down to the boatman: Kate feels "this kind of frail, pure sympathy" with him. The syntax and logic are vague here, but the statement is nonetheless illuminating: angered at the lack of balance in the paintings, Kate rejects Mexico and seeks isolation, but quickly finds a new ground of relationship ("frail, pure sympathy") associated in her mind with an image of a poised bird, and of stars poised between night and day.
Kate's predilection for "balance" makes the morning star of Quetzalcoatl specially attractive to her, because it is the star "between the two / Wonders" (p.348). She accepts Quetzalcoatl, in part, because the religion is based upon this concept of balance in the individual and in relationships, which is what Kate herself has been seeking. The last three chapters of the book contain the record of her worrying as to whether Cipriano will dominate her, or whether he will truly accept the morning star as she has done, and thus allow the two of them to live in a relationship of balanced independence.

The second special significance of the term "morning star" explicitly brought out in the text is the concept of rebirth. I mean rebirth not as a single event, but as a state of mind, a living sense of continual renewal. In the "Lords of the Day and Night" chapter, Ramon preaches a chanted sermon in which he asserts the primacy of "Now" as opposed to "Before" and "After." In the hymn that follows, the morning star becomes the Dawn Star, which, like the Christian Holy Ghost, is "always here" (p.174). Thus we see that the "way of being in relationship" symbolized by the morning star includes the concept of an everlasting, living Now, which initiates in the religion perceive (unlike "the multitudes" [p.175])
and thus become "the Lords of the Way." In other words, the way of life which the star symbolizes is not something that Kate achieves once for all, but something to which she commits herself and which she endlessly renews, or finds renewal from. This is a major reason why the ending of the novel is rather inconclusive: It isn't that Kate has "got her man," or he her, but that she will stay with him in the delicate balance of a relationship which rests on a continuing present, not the achievements of the past or the plans for the future.

These two concepts, of balance and perpetual renewal in oneself and in relationships, don't exhaust the symbolic meaning of the star, though they are central to it. Other meanings are brought out in many places, especially in "The Opening of the Church" (Chapter Twenty-one), which is where Kate yearns for the star-oil to be poured over her. In the hymns of this chapter, the star takes on the power of a religious sacrament, equivalent to the Christian sacramental wine and bread and oil which the dying Carlota vainly calls for. The star is a power shining in the lives of the converts and keeping them from turning into husks, or "rat-gnawed pomegranates hanging hollow on the Tree of Life" (p.338). Just as the Christian sacraments put worshippers in touch with the power
of divine grace, so the star-power of Quetzalcoatl gives the converts a sense of integration with all life. The morning star, for instance, shines at "a gate to the innermost place / Where the Breath and the Fountains commingle, / Where the dead are living and the living are dead . . ." (p.383). Likewise, Ramon preaches: "I tell you, you are not men alone./ The star of the beyond is within you . . ." (p.338). This power of the star to give a person a sense of integration becomes very important to Kate in the last chapters. For thirty pages, as she works out her decision about staying, she yearns for both an integration of her own self components, and a communion with others. She realizes that Quetzalcoatl offers both things: the first in the influence Ramon has on her, as the spiritual leader, and the second through Cipriano. Ramon, she finds, "had that starry power for bringing together the two great human impulses to a point of fusion" (p.417), namely the physical and the spiritual. Meanwhile, Cipriano has the particular effect on her of making her feel at peace within a relationship—a far cry from her agitated rejection of people at the beginning of the book. Watching Cipriano swimming in the lake, Kate loses her European, cerebral sense of alienation: "She let her effort at knowing slip away from her once
more, and remained without effort, within the communion" (p.422). When she makes her decision to stay, she feels she is right to reject her other life because there is "another kind of vastness here" (p.438).

Having looked a little at the cogwheel and star motifs, I've only just begun to work my way through the list of major motifs given, several pages back. To proceed exhaustively would be tedious. My main point here is to exemplify a method in which the reader can open himself to the terms of the book, learning their significance cumulatively as he goes along, and understanding through the motifs the nature of the progress in Kate's consciousness. Nevertheless, before passing on to examine the pattern of her movements, I shall look at one more motif used very extensively in this book—eyes. Apart from its inherent significance in the text of The Plumed Serpent, this symbol has two other points of interest for me. First, it relates obviously to the term "vision" which is central to my thesis, and second, the same motif is used extensively in another novel I shall be examining, Faulkner's As I Lay Dying.

Open any page of The Plumed Serpent, and the odds are good that there'll be a description of somebody's eyes. Often these descriptions are not unusual enough
to draw attention to themselves ("his eyes shone as he said the name"[p.157], or "the black-eyed man"[p.103], etc.). But it doesn't take long reading before any reader can feel that sometimes the descriptions of eyes are very heavily charged, and that overall the references to eyes seem to fall into some kind of emblematic divisions (for instance, all the nasty cogwheel people seem to have eyes some other colour than black). In time the reader comes to realize that the narrative manipulation of the eyes motif tells a lot about what's happening to Kate. Eyes are usually the first things—sometimes the only things—she notices about people she meets. At times she becomes quite obsessed with thinking about the "black, centreless eyes" of Indians and other Mexicans, and her growth in relationship with Mexico and Quetzalcoatl is marked by the nature and course of these thoughts. Unlike the "star" vocabulary, which Kate adopts only after her conversion to Quetzalcoatl, the motif of eyes is a consistent and personal idiom of her perception through the whole story, before and after her conversion. Thus for instance, when she is deciding near the end to give up Europe and stay with the Quetzalcoatl people, she rationalizes her decision to herself by saying that "the power of the world, which she had known until now only in the eyes of blue-eyed
men . . . was now fading in the blue eyes, and dawning in the black" (p.398).

Kate's awareness of the mysterious power in the Quetzalcoatl religion begins with her awareness of Cipriano's eyes, in the first chapter, even though she knows nothing of the revival at this point, nor of Cipriano's connection with it. I quoted the instance earlier—her recollection of Cipriano's "black eyes, like black jewels" (p.18). Excited by this vision of Cipriano, after her jaded relationships with Owen and Villiers whom she has left behind in the "nauseous stench" (p.13) of the bull-ring, Kate has a premonition of her later conversion, "that Mexico lay in her destiny almost as a doom" (p.18). So the theme of the book is actually implicit in the first chapter, and the eye motif as used in that chapter conveys in a simple way the polarities of human values which the theme concerns. Against Cipriano's dark eyes, with their jewel-like gleam, the narrator develops the constrasting eyes of Villiers, which are cold and birdlike, and have a "bright abstract look" (p.7) about them; Owen too has unsatisfactory eyes, utterly unselective in their vision (p.14), so long as he feels he is "seeing LIFE" including, Kate suggests, "somebody else's diarrhoea" (p.14). In the next two chapters, as Kate
becomes more and more repelled by the eyes of the white people she meets, and more and more attracted to the quality of concentration in Cipriano's (e.g. p.37, where Cipriano watches the bad-mannered white judge "with black, snake-like eyes"), she nevertheless is confused by an oppressive quality in the eyes of most of the Mexicans around her. Their black, centreless eyes trouble her throughout most of the book. In the sixteenth chapter she comments directly: "You see Mexico is really a bit horrible to me. And the black eyes of the people really make my heart contract, and my flesh shrink. There's a bit of horror in it. And I don't want horror in my soul" (p.232). But along with the horror, the eyes hold for her also a fascination; the eye motif throughout renders Kate's wavering ambivalence to Mexico. Her fascination with Cipriano's "black, big, glittering eyes," is tinged with fear" (p.62). And although she is often attracted to the peasants, "large-limbed, silent, handsome men looking up with their black centreless eyes, speaking so softly" (p.45), at other times they dismay her: "[Mexico] always makes my heart sink. Like the eyes of the men in the big hats--I call them peons. Their eyes have no middle to them. Those big handsome men, under their big hats, they aren't really there. They have no centre, no real I. Their middle is a
raging black hole, like the middle of a maelstrom" (p.35).

Kate's progress, as delineated by the eye motif, is quite subtle—except that it's easy to see how she rejects Europe in rejecting Villiers' and Owen's kinds of vision, as I've shown above. But rejection is only the first stage of her progress. The body of the story involves her slowly coming to terms with Mexico and Quetzalcoatl, eventually arriving at a point of acceptance, though not complete transformation. Kate never does finally embrace Mexico; to do so would quite possibly be contrary to the Quetzalcoatl way of being, as I showed in discussing "balance." The eye motif shows how her ambivalence remains to the end. For example, she finds her mozo both attractive ("his black eyes shining, and a timid sort of smile on his face") and on the same page repellent, with "a sharp watchful look in the corner of his eye" (p.441). Yet she has progressed, for the thing she fears at the end is different from what she feared earlier. She loses her earlier fear of dark centrelessness, and comes to fear domination—the same thing that she hates, in retrospect, in her husband Joachim.

Kate loses her fear of "dark centrelessness" in the important "Marriage by Quetzalcoatl" chapter, by suddenly realizing what the power in Cipriano actually is,
the power symbolized by his dark eyes:

The mystery of the primeval world! She could feel it now in all its shadowy, furious magnificence. She knew now what was the black glinting look in Cipriano's eyes. She could understand marrying him, now. In the shadowy world where men were visionless, and winds of fury rose up from the earth, Cipriano was still a power. Once you entered his mystery the scale of all things changed, and he became a living male power, undefined, and unconfined. The smallness, the limitations ceased to exist. In his black, glinting eyes the power was limitless. (p.307)

In other words, the power in Cipriano, unlike the void she found earlier in the dark, centreless eyes of the peons, is a non-cerebral and overwhelming sense of identity. Beneath this "darkness that was himself and nothing but himself," Kate swoons prone, "perfect in her proneness" (p.308). Having abandoned the world of Villiers by physically moving away to her casa, she at first still retained in herself the very thing that Villiers' eyes symbolized for her—a cold, European abstraction; she was still hostile to the non-cerebral, un-analytic mode of life which the dark, centreless eyes of the Mexicans symbolized for her. But now, she has lost that fear and is able to submit to the blind, intuitive vitality of Cipriano's world. "Ah, what an abandon, what an abandon, what an abandon!--of so many things she wanted to abandon" (p.308). Through Cipriano she finds her way "back to the twilight of the ancient Pan
world, where the soul of woman was dumb, to be forever unspoken" (p.309). Not surprisingly, the eye motif, by which Kate symbolically arrives at her consciousness of Cipriano's power—"his black, glinting eyes"—is another name for the symbol of Quetzalcoatl: "the Quetzalcoatl symbol, called the Eye" (p.219 et passim).

The development just shown—Kate's eventual acceptance of the dark, centrelessness in Mexico—is actually foreshadowed in capsule form as early as the seventh chapter. Just after she dismisses Villiers and makes her resolution "not to get caught up in the world's cogwheels any more" (p.106), Kate turns to her Mexican criada, thinking: "There was nothing to do but go ahead and trust the dark-faced, centreless woman." Her progress in the story is a journey into darkness, learning to trust the power she finds there.

But there is still, at the end, something in the eyes of her Mexican friends that Kate fears. It is no longer the dark centrelessness, but the strength of domineering will. At the very end, having wrestled with her fear of totally losing her individuality, having seen even the eyes of the mozo wanting her to "acquiesce," Kate comes to Cipriano humbly, ready to a degree to be limited by him, but still afraid. "He was standing erect
and alert, like a little fighting male, and his eyes
glowed black and uncannily as he met her wet, limpid
glance. Yes, she was a bit afraid of him too, with his
inhuman black eyes" (p.443).

Reading the texture of the prose in the manner
I have illustrated, following out the progress of Kate's
story through meanings cumulatively established by the
motifs, the reader begins to experience the vision of­
fered in the novel, in its own terms. Kate moves from
cogwheels to the morning star, and other motifs (such as
that of eyes) develop more fully the ramifications of
this progress. I pass on to Lawrence's second major tool
of expression in this novel, the rhythms of narrative
progression.

In some ways, the plot of The Plumed Serpent
is quite conventional and ordinary. There is a more or
less unified narrative point of view, and a straight,
chronological time scheme. This novel is no Absalom, Ab­
alom! or As I Lay Dying, with shifts of viewpoint and
chronology occurring with startling suddenness. What is
distinctive about The Plumed Serpent however--though it's
a technique we find in much of Lawrence--is the pattern
of rhythmic cycles by which Kate and the sympathetic
reader are inducted more and more fully into the experience
of morning-star consciousness. This is the pattern of "oscillations," as Hough calls them, which Kate makes between the known world and the world of new vision into which she is progressing. She is constantly venturing into the unknown, then retreating to the privacy of herself in her known world, to take stock and catch her breath. As a narrative tool, the pattern is very effective: it allows the reader (in identification with Kate) to go through steps of acquaintanceship with the unfamiliar world of Lawrence's vision, the world of Quetzalcoatl, and it creates tension, which is the essence of interesting story. Kate's story keeps bringing the reader back to flowers and beautiful landscapes and other likeable, ordinary things, before plunging him once more into the mumbo-jumbo of Quetzalcoatl which undoubtedly the reader finds strange and probably unpleasant at first. That Kate herself needs this slow rhythm of induction into the mysteries of the revival is nowhere clearer than in those passages near the end of the book where she thinks directly about the changes she is going through:

Kate was glad to get back to her own house, and to be more or less alone. She felt a great change was being worked in her, and if it worked too violently, she would die. It was the end of something, and the
beginning of something, far, far inside her; in her soul and womb. The men, Ramon and Cipriano, caused the change, and Mexico. Because the time had come.--Nevertheless if what was happening happened too rapidly, or violently, she felt she would die. So, from time to time, she had to withdraw from contact, to be alone.

She would sit alone for hours on the shore, under a green willow tree . . . (p.412)

Not that she is running away from Quetzalcoatl at this point--though she does still speak of going to Europe "for a time" (p.427). She simply needs time to grow accustomed to the changes. She feels it's more than simply a spiritual change that's happening, "it was her body, and the constitution of her very blood . . . the terrible katabolism and metabolism in her blood, changing her . . . and if it went too fast, she would die" (p.419). "The change, Kate felt, must not come on her too soon and too suddenly, or it would rupture her, and she would die" (p.414). What's true for Kate is also true for the reader who gets deeply involved in the story. We can see evidence of reader-resistance to the world of Quetzalcoatl in those critiques which dwell on the beauties of landscape, the known world, and downplay the Quetzalcoatl component of the novel. For instance: "The primitivism is ridiculous because it is ersatz. . . . On the other hand it must be acknowledged freely that the book contains
many virtues . . . . As a poetical documentary, *The Plumed Serpent* is almost as good as anything he ever wrote, . . . the beauty and the freshness of the country after the rains, the tenderness of the tropical dawn,"13 or: "The ideology of *The Plumed Serpent* is repugnant to many who nevertheless admire the prose-poetry of the book."14

Kate's need to retreat into the privacy of her own world is established early on, when the things she is retreating from are not even connected with Quetzalcoatl. I've referred already to the fact that in the first chapter she retires from the bull-fight in dismay at the cowardice and the smell that it seems to her to consist in (pp. 13, 14). She goes to a tea-house to "try to forget" (p. 19), and apparently does forget, for she never again thinks about bullfighting in the story. Again, in Chapter Two, she tries to escape from the artificial, tea-party talk, feeling that the table is "like a steel disc to which they were all, as victims, magnetized and bound," and asking desperately, "Where is your garden, Mrs. Norris?" (p. 39). She agrees with Owen that the party was "ghastly" (p. 43), and never again returns to that sort of company. Instead, in the next chapter, she climbs alone onto the flat roof of the hotel, to contemplate the direction of her life at this "dividing line"—her fortieth
birthday (p.43). She descends to fulfil a promise to view the Ribera frescoes, and comes home again, after tea with Garcia, in retreat from life: "She wanted to get out, disentangle herself again" (p.55). Instead, she keeps an appointment to have dinner at Ramon's.

Now Kate's outer world changes, as she begins to get a little involved with the ideology and personalities of the Quetzalcoatl revival. She is moved by the glimpses she has of this unfamiliar world:

She felt, for the first time in her life, a pang almost like fear, of men who were passing beyond what she knew, beyond her depth. (p.62)

This is her first conscious recognition of the unknown in the world of Quetzalcoatl, and it is immediately followed by a retreat reaction: In "a strangled voice" (p.67), she announces that she wants to go and look at the flowers, and off she dashes to the garden. Henceforth the pattern of involvement-retreat grows ever stronger; I mean that Kate gets more deeply involved, and her retreats are more substantial than a quick dash out of doors. The involvement consists in physically moving to live close to the centre of the revival, hearing and participating in the rituals, having long conversations with Ramon, Cipriano, Teresa--not to mention fighting for her life against
bandits, paying visits to the headquarters of the revival at Jamiltepec, watching over the dying Carlota, getting married in two separate ceremonies, and tentatively adopting the role of the goddess Malintzi. And all the while that her involvement deepens in these ways, so her retreats become longer and more necessary to her. They consist in periods of domesticity, negotiations over prices and meals, a good deal of detached spectatorship of the peasant lives around her, and many delightful hours of heightened awareness of landscape and flowers and birds, sitting alone in the casa, or down beside the lake.

The rhythmic or "oscillating" pattern functions then, to give Kate and the reader time to grow into the new way of seeing and being. It also does a lot to win the reader's credence, even his sympathy for Kate. In both these functions, the pattern works very strongly, as I'll try to show by detailed example:

The first point is easily seen; the clearest example is in the eighth and ninth chapters. Here Kate has just come through her first in-depth experience of the Quetzalcoatl ritual (in Chapter Seven). After the dancing in the Plaza, the drumming, the hymns, the sermon, and a very strange finger contact with one of the men of Quetzalcoatl, she has hurried home and sunk into sleep (p.128).
Now, in Chapter Eight, bandits are abroad, so she can sit shut up at home, thinking about what's been happening, remembering her first husband, listening to the storm outside and the snores of Ezequiel, her guard. Chapter Nine, the fear of bandits gone, shows her sitting alone "rocking on her verandah, pretending to sew" (p. 138), but actually just watching the life of the peasants around her. She thinks no more of Quetzalcoatl. Her involvement was heavy, and now for two chapters she just forgets about it all. At the end of this time, she is rested, amused by the petty lives of her household, and ready to come out of retreat and get involved once more with the fearful mysteries of the revival. So she visits Ramon and Carlota (Chapter Ten), sees the conflict between them, inspects the Quetzalcoatl headquarters, listens to a lot of the liturgy, converses and argues, and finally, after three more chapters, retreats home again to tortillas and "to sit and rock on her terrace" in the sun, surrounded by greenery and red flowers, palm trees and oranges (p. 210). Thus, between the excitement and fear of the Plaza (Chapter Seven), and the mysterious aura and energies at Jamiltepec (Chapter Ten etc.), the eighth and ninth chapters provide time and diversion for Kate and the reader to take stock. Then, after the visit to Jamiltepec Kate returns to her rocking chair
(Chapter Fourteen), and the pattern continues its cycles. The cycle just traced takes something over a hundred pages, so the reader gets a few hours to go through this "oscillation."

The pattern also helps to establish credibility. The retreats are easy to accept as données of the story, simply because they are so natural and lovely—Kate enjoying the Mexican landscape. They establish the reader's confidence that she hasn't turned into a fanatical kook. After sitting with her under a willow tree on the beach, watching the women wash clothes and enjoying the bright colours in the sunshine (p.212), we find it a little easier to take something like her listening to Julio reading aloud about Quetzalcoatl travelling "the longest journey. Beyond the blue outer wall of heaven, beyond the bright place of the Sun, across the plains of darkness where the stars spread out like trees, like trees and bushes, far away to the heart of all the worlds, low down like the Morning Star" (p.222). Also, there's more chance that we will empathize with a Kate who silently prays, "Put sleep as black as beauty in the secret of my belly, / Put star-oil over me" (p.348), when we have already willingly identified with her in her down-to-earth resistance to all the liturgy of the cult.
"I, a goddess in the Mexican pantheon?" cried Kate, with a burst of startled laughter.

"I don't feel like a goddess in a Mexican pantheon."

The more readily can we accept Kate's conversion, because we have lived with her through cycles of retreat to a more familiar world:

It all oppressed her and made her afraid. She lay forming plans to escape. She must escape. She would hurriedly pack her trunks and disappear... to Los Angeles or San Francisco. Suddenly escape, and flee away to a white man's country, where she could once more breathe freely. How good it would be!—Yes, this was what she would do.

Obviously what I'm saying isn't true for all readers. The majority of published critiques, as I've said, disparage the Quetzalcoatl side of the book, and praise the retreats into travelogue and landscape—indeed, Knopf first republished the book not as fiction, but as belles lettres. Nevertheless, while it may not be enough to overcome the repugnance of some readers, for others, the rhythmic oscillations which Kate makes from one world to the other tend to increase our sense of her as a person like ourselves, whose perception of landscape is delightful and therefore whose religious experiences are perhaps worth at least a second look, as she progresses in it deeper and deeper.

It's worth remarking, finally, that Kate views her own progress into the heart of Quetzalcoatl in terms
quite consistent with her love of the natural landscape. She sees herself frequently as an unfolding flower. E.g. "... the unfolding flower of her own soul" (p.54 et passim). The language of Ramon and his followers is similarly laced with floral imagery. For instance, in one of the Hymns, Quetzalcoatl says "I am unfolded on the stem of time like a flower, I am in the midst of the flower of my manhood" (p.223). Ezequiel tells Kate that Quetzalcoatl is "a god in the flower of life, and finely built" (p.222). Such floral images link up with the many descriptions of actual flowers to suggest the naturalness of being which Ramon is trying to bring about through the revival, and which Kate, for one, begins to experience in precisely that way. Her progress is a blooming of selfhood.

ii

AN ANATOMY OF KATE'S UNIVERSE

Kate's progress takes place in a social context. The people around her make up an anatomy of the body of good and bad values in which she is trying to emerge into a new guise of self. I've defined her progress as a rejection of cogwheels and an acceptance of the morning star; another way of saying the same thing is that she accepts one set of people as she rejects another. The people
embody the concepts which the motifs convey. Kate's interaction with the people who make up her universe helps her to understand at the concrete level of day-to-day drama, the choices that are available to her. And the reader's cumulative acquaintanceship with the several focal characters around Kate provides him with another way of understanding the nature of her growth, and of experiencing the positive and negative values of Lawrence's vision in the novel. I shall examine several of the main characters.

First, there are the gods. Source-hunting critics who have searched out the literary origins of Quetzalcoatl and Huitzilopochtli, Malintzi and Itzpapalotl, prevent themselves from undistorted encounter with the terms of the book. To import meaning to *The Plumed Serpent* in this way, I believe, is to miss the main significance of gods in the book. For they are not gods which have independent existence, but products of Ramon's mind (and to a lesser extent of Cipriano's). Their identities keep growing, as Ramon thinks out his philosophy further and further and writes it down in the hymns. Ramon himself gives the clue to a proper understanding of the gods, in conversation with Kate:

> But you know, Senora, Quetzalcoatl is to me only the symbol of the best a man may be, in the next days. The universe is a nest of dragons, with a perfectly unfathomable
life-mystery at the centre of it. If I call the mystery the Morning Star, surely it doesn't matter! A man's blood can't beat in the abstract. And man is a creature who wins his own creation inch by inch. (p.270)

From this we see that what's important about the gods is their symbolization of the stages of a "won creation," namely Ramon's spiritual (existential?) self-development, which he offers to his followers as an alternative to the kind of development offered by Christianity. The Christian Church, he says, is degenerate, for it has turned its people "into humble, writhing things that shall crave to be victimized, to be ravished" (p.271). By contrast, the gods which Ramon invents and for which he uses legendary Aztec names, are "manifestations" for men to "live by" (p.358).

If then Ramon's gods are symbols of human self-development, what do they make manifest; what do they symbolize? In the first place, the nature of the god Quetzalcoatl is clearly the same as the nature of the morning star, already discussed. He is the god of life lived in balance, lord of both ways as opposed to Jesus who is spiritually lopsided (p.225); he's the god of body as well as spirit, serpent-earth as well as bird-sky (p.225); in a land where the people have "swallowed the stone of despair" (p.224) and from which Jesus and his Mother have
departed "like a tottering old man and a woman, tearless and bent double with age" (p.225). Quetzalcoatl is a god of new energy, "as a man who is a new man, with new limbs and life" (p.225). He is not a militant god, but one whose way must "spread of itself" (p.351). His way involves a return to nature in some senses, a refusal to be dominated by machinery or the new technology, a return to hand-woven serapes, to the membrane of the drum as signal of time, instead of the metal and machinery of the clock (p.359). His way calls for a return to the deep emotion of the Indian dances, in place of flippant party-going and jazz music "without enough kick" (p.124). In place of the "flappers" who flap "with butterfly brightness and incongruous shrillness" (p.110), the men of Quetzalcoatl display a "strange nuclear power" (p.118); and while Quetzalcoatl fosters in his adherents this "nuclear" self, at the same time he is a god of universal communion drawing people together in a "soft, quaking, deep communion of blood one-ness" (p.416). It's this last characteristic particularly which turns out to be a big stumbling block for Kate. In the Western tradition of individualism, she finds it hard to accept the mysterious blutbruderschaft which appears to be implied in the way of Quetzalcoatl.
She could not relax and be with these people.
She could not relax and be with anybody.
She always had to recoil upon her individuality, as a cat does. (p.436)

But her resistance breaks down in the end, when she realizes that the final product of her cat-like isolation will be the "grimalkin" existence of an aging London hostess, and she decides to acquiesce tentatively in the communion of Quetzalcoatl rather than pay "that ghastly price" (p.437).

The above list of attributes of Quetzalcoatl is not as precise and illuminating as one might wish, but this very imprecision is part of the essential value of the symbol. Within the limits I've sketched or suggested above, Quetzalcoatl is fundamentally something new; a desire to break free from old formulations of selfhood and discover new life. Even Ramon's first and staunchest convert has only a fuzzy idea of what the revival means. When Kate asks Cipriano to tell her an alternative to what he frustratedly labels her "U. S. A. thoughts," he can only define Quetzalcoatl for her as, "other thoughts, other feelings" (p.202). Even Kate never arrives at a clear definition of what she is converting to, but in a time of despair feels that it is simply "the only escape from a world gone ghastly" (p.227). Teresa comes closest
to an understandable definition, when she quotes Ramon in her explanation to Kate of why she is willing to be a goddess of the cult: "It is accepting the greater responsibility of one's existence ... to try to be my sacred self" (p.431).

Next in the pantheon is the god Huitzilopochtli. In his association with Cipriano, who embodies him, Huitzilopochtli symbolizes militant self-defence. His characteristic posture is "watching at the gates" (p.360). His colour is scarlet and he is a source of indefatigable power in a man: "If you can summon the power of the red Huitzilopochtli into you, nobody can conquer you" (p.365). He is not a provoker of wars, no Thor or Mars, but he does actively seek out and destroy those qualities that betray a man's spiritual integrity, collectively symbolized as "the grey dog:"

From the liars, from the thieves, from the false and treacherous and mean
I see the grey dogs creeping out, where my deer are browsing in the dark
Then I take my knife and throw it upon the grey dog. (p.373)

Therefore it is given to Huitzilopochtli to perform the ritual killing of the attackers of Jamiltepec in "Huitzilopochtli's Night" (Chapter Twenty-three). His function is specified in the hymn "Huitzilopochtli's Watch" (p.382)
as that of a guardian, so that the men of Quetzalcoatl may have "peace of nightfall," and "men in their manhood walk out / Into blue day, past Huitzilopochtli."

So, if we read the two main god symbols as qualities within an individual's life, we see that the revival asserts the value of a new and natural surge of energy (Quetzalcoatl), and a militant determination to keep one's soul free from falsehood or meanness in all their forms (Huitzilopochtli). These two gods are "manifestations" of moral philosophical concepts, supplied by Ramon with liturgical and emblematic trappings for the people, to replace the old Christian images and emblems and liturgy. Quetzalcoatl manifests the new way of being, and Huitzilopochtli manifests the determination to hold to that way.

Just as the gods are manifestations for the people, so the secondary characters are manifestations for the reader. Kate is the reader's locus in the story, and the other characters are manifestations of different ways of being, amongst which she makes her choice and progresses in spiritual growth. Whereas the gods are rather static in the sense that there is no personal intercourse between them and Kate—and to that extent the narrative is often a bit tedious--the other characters are live and fluid, not at all overweighted with symbolic significance because
their manifest significance is carried in natural motifs (mainly their eyes) rather than through theological emblemism; their significance emerges from the way they interact with Kate (or are observed by her) and with one another. It's not a significance spelled out in liturgy, but a significance implicit in motifs of description and patterns of action.

To discuss the full significance of even one of the characters would be exhausting, perhaps impossible. I can only sketch and exemplify:

The range of values stretches in a triangle with cogwheel Villiers at one apex, morning-star Ramon at another, reptile Juana and the Mexican peones at the third. Everyone else can be plotted within the boundaries of that diagram. Owen, for instance, is near Villiers, and Cipriano is near Ramon. Carlota sits somewhere along the line between Villiers and Juana, Teresa slightly on the Juana side of Ramon. Kate originates from the apex of Villiers and moves towards the apex of Ramon, but finds it a difficult journey because the route involves getting closer to the apex of Juana which she finds very repulsive, though fascinating; she is never absolutely sure that Ramon's apex is quite different from Juana's.

Since we've already spent time looking at cogwheels
and the morning star, I might as well begin the expansion of my crude diagram with the new term, the reptiles. This is one of several motifs consistently applied to the peones in Kate's universe. For instance, much as she appreciates the gentleness, goodness and generosity of her household at the casa, Kate feels herself perpetually confronted by "that unconscious, heavy, reptilian indifference in them, indifference and resistance" (p.147). Though they have the strength to tote a piano single-handed through the streets, the Mexican peasants appal Kate by their lack of energy and initiative. They "lie through the small hours like lizards, numb and prostrate with cold" (p.150), when all they would need to do to be warm would be to carry home some corn husks or "even cover themselves with banana leaves. But no! On a thin mat on damp cold earth they lie and tremble with cold, night after night" (p.150). Right from the start, Kate has felt that "in this Mexico, with its great under-drift of squalor and heavy reptile-like evil, it was hard for her to bear up" (p.22). "It ought to have been all gay . . . . But no! There was the dark undertone, the black serpent-like fatality all the time" (pp.44-5). These generalizations about the reptilian fatalism of the peones fill Kate's mind around the time she is deciding whether or not to stay in
Mexico (Chapter Four, "To Stay or Not to Stay"). She thinks of the traditional Quetzalcoatl snake symbol as "this all-enwreathing dragon of horror of Mexico" (p.75), and only decides not to leave the country at this point because Ramon tells her he has a different vision to offer: "To me, the men of Mexico are like trees . . . . The roots and the life are there" (p.76).

So Kate moves away from the city, towards Jamiltepec; but instead of finding the signs of new, sprouting life that Ramon envisioned, she at first goes on encountering such reptilian things as "the man in the bows coiled up like a serpent, watching" (p.101); and in her own household, "a basic, sardonic carelessness in the face of life" (p.135), "a reptile mask" (p.144), and "a slightly imbecile face . . . [with] very black eyes still shining exposed and absorbedly in a rapt, reptilian sort of ecstasy" (p.211). Again and again, when she thinks out her commitment to the land and the people of Quetzalcoatl, the horror of their fatalism and lethargy overwhelm her with revulsion. However, as Kate gets deeper into the heart of Quetzalcoatl, this revulsion is considerably alleviated in the direction of acceptance; the reptile motif subtly indicates the change. In the events in the Plaza, the fascinating "nuclear power of the men" (p.118)
is also described as "something dark, heavy, and reptilian in their silence and their softness" (p. 117) which places the motif in a positive context. And in an astonishing transformation much later on, Kate at one instant sees Cipriano as having blood "different ... from hers, dark, blackish, like the blood of lizards" (p. 314) and in the next instant is repelled by the thought that he wants "his blood-stream to envelop hers" but goes right ahead and marries him!

Kate's attitude to the reptile element in the Mexicans finally comes clear in the "Teresa" chapter (Twenty-five) where she sees that the Quetzalcoatl revival doesn't imply acceptance of the reptilian fatalism of Mexico; rather, Quetzalcoatl is at war with that element, just as the political establishment of President Montes is. "Cipriano also had it up against him. But he succeeded best. With his drums . . . ." (p. 402). Significantly enough, at this point in the story, Juana, the chief "reptilian" person in Kate's household, has dropped out of sight; when we last saw her, seventy pages previously, a brief reminder of her "reptilian eyes" (p. 331) was immediately followed by the information that her family was in the process of converting to the new way, and then by Juana's admiring cries at the sight of the
Quetzalcoatl symbol on the church: "No more crosses on the church. It is the eye of the Other One. Look! How it shines! How nice!" (p.332). The fatalistic, reptilian peones, who oppressed Kate earlier—a "ponderous down-pressing weight upon the spirit; the great folds of the dragon of the Aztecs, the dragon of the Toltecs" (p.44)—are undergoing transformation just as Kate is, from the new energy and life of Quetzalcoatl. The old reptilian eyes of Juana and her kind, which once gazed passively at the symbols of the executed Christ, now look up in wonder at the shining "Eye of the Other One." Kate can accept the peones of Mexico, because the ponderous, oppressive weight of the old dragons is now lifted by wings to the morning star, the old coiled snake has become a plumed serpent—perhaps.

Cogwheel Villiers' apex in the triangular anatomy of Kate's universe is easy enough to understand, especially since I've already discussed the cogwheels motif. But it's probably worth spending a little time on Villiers' closest neighbour in the triangle, Owen Rhys. In rejecting Owen, Kate turns away from a particular kind of vision. He is characterized as a typical "American" tourist: "Swept with an American despair of having lived in vain, or of not having really lived, . . . he would stand craning his neck
in one more frantic effort to see—just to see. Whatever it was, he must see it. . . . It was Life" (p.22). Kate rejects his unselective, panoramic approach to "Life," thanking God that she isn't Argus-eyed (p.22). Owen is a political liberal-socialist, interested in Russia and China, a dilettante collector of objects d'art, whose feelings are so jaded that he is always "rather pleased" to have his "susceptibilities . . . shocked" (p.47). "All his poetry and philosophy \[are\] gone with the cigarette end he \[throws\] away" (p.22). He stands in direct contrast to the men of Quetzalcoatl: they have a "darkly glowing, vivid nucleus of new life" (p.118), whereas he is diffuse, part of "the pallid wanness and weariness" (p.118) of the world Kate has known up till now. The superficiality of his vision contrasts with the "wondering, childlike, searching eyes" of Cipriano, "searching for himself" (p.170). Owen will never have "haunted eyes" (p.185), like Kate, because his search for "Life" is a search after external titillation rather than inward vision. Kate parts from him easily at the start of the fourth chapter, and never thinks of him again. Owen is fatally infected with "the insidious modern disease of tolerance" (p.20), whereas Kate learns in time that "one must be limited. If one tries to be unlimited, one becomes horrible" (p.438).
The Ramon apex is obviously the most important of the three. Clustered around him are those who exhibit manifestations of life in the way of Quetzalcoatl—Cipriano, Teresa, ultimately Kate herself. Ramon and Cipriano to a large degree embody the qualities of their respective gods. They differ from the gods qua gods, in that they interact with Kate, so her perceptions of them as people are about the closest the reader comes to the direct, practical meaning of morning star-dom. Cipriano in particular comes alive as a marvellous embodiment of Lawrence's vision:

Cipriano, his rather short but intensely black curved eyelashes lowering over his dark eyes, watched his plate, only sometimes looking up with a black, brilliant glance, either at whomsoever was speaking, or at Don Ramon, or at Kate. His face was changeless and intensely serious, serious almost with a touch of childishness. But the curious blackness of his eyelashes lifted so strangely, with such intense unconscious maleness from his eyes, the movement of his hand was so odd, quick, light as he ate, so easily a movement of shooting, or of flashing a knife into the body of some adversary, and his dark-coloured lips were so helplessly savage, as he ate or briefly spoke, that her heart stood still. (p.62)

His intense moral seriousness, coupled with enormous energy and charismatic appearance, make Cipriano the most vivacious person in the book. He inspires Kate with a wonder at the beauty of the natural world, uncorrupted by Western
technological intrusions. She awakes after seeing him the night before "with a new feeling of strength" (p. 234), and finds herself unable to resist buying the natural wares that are thrust at her daily and which she usually rejects: cactus vegetable, and a young red cockerel that flutters and crows and delights her (p. 236). Married to Cipriano, Kate finds a new and deeper sexuality than ever before: no longer "the white ecstasy of frictional satisfaction," but something "dark and untellable" (p. 421). This development comes about because their relationship (at least at first) contains an equal balance of the auras of one another's presence (p. 422). He embodies the morning star, both in the brilliance and balance of his own life, and in entering a ground of relationship with her which is balanced, not disturbed by the will to dominate—at least that's what she thinks at first. By the end of the novel Kate isn't so sure any more about his will (or is it her will?)—she just doesn't know. In some uncertainty on this point, she decides to stay with him for the overwhelming reason that "his touch could fill all the world with lustre" (p. 437). Cipriano represents to her the physical culmination of the revival of man in Quetzalcoatl.

Ramon is the spiritual counterpart of Cipriano. His body isn't as attractive as Cipriano's: his eyes, for
instance, are simply "dark" not "black as jewels" like Cipriano's, she notices (p.62). He never appears to Kate in that aura of physical splendour which Cipriano gives off in, for instance, the bathing scene (pp.422-3). But he does have an aura, an immensely powerful one. His aura is internal, spiritual, Kate sees "the strange, soft, still sureness of him, as if he sat secure within his own dark aura, . . . [from which] he emitted an effluence so powerful, that it seemed to hamper her consciousness, to bind down her limbs" (p.181). Ramon has, in modern parlance, quietly "got it together." In contrast to his "dark stillness," Kate feels herself "hampered" and "cursed" and "pulled" by an "itching, prurient, knowing, imagining eye" (p.181). What she finds so attractive about Ramon is that he has his own way of being to teach her, which will save her from "greedy vision" (p.181). What she's greedy for, we don't have defined for us in the text, but the term suggests her restlessness, in contrast to Ramon's quiet, self-containment. Again and again she feels the power of attained and isolate selfhood emanating from him, particularly in the middle portion of the story. He has the strength of a powerful father: "The mystery, the nobility, the inaccessibility, and the vulnerable compassion of man in his separate fatherhood" (p.185). His spirit spreads
over his own world at Jamiltepec "like a soft, nourishing shadow, and the silence of his own power gave it peace" (p. 167).

Ramon embodies what might be called the "personal" morning star. I mean that he is the one who has most fully achieved an inner selfhood, and as such he is a perfect model for Kate, at the level of an individual life. Cipriano on the other hand embodies the "ground of relationship" morning star, and becomes a perfect—or nearly so—partner, rather than a model of individual being. Because of these different roles (in relation to Kate) played by the two men, they wax in importance to her at different places in the story: Ramon is in the main focus during the middle part of the book, when Kate is mainly interested in the significance of Quetzalcoatl to her as an individual. Thus, from the seventh through about the twentieth chapter, in her oscillations into the unknown world of Quetzalcoatl, it is to Ramon that she turns for company and advice. Even in the sixteenth chapter, entitled "Cipriano and Kate," it is Ramon round whom her thoughts continually revolve; apparently recognizing this orientation of her thought, Cipriano uses Ramon's name and opinions as the main topic of conversation with her. Even his marriage proposal is couched in these terms: "Marry me, and help Ramon and me. We need a woman, Ramon says, to be with
us" (p.232). The chapter concludes with her decision to go again to Jamiltepec, "to see Ramon. To talk to him even about marrying Cipriano" (p.243). In the twentieth chapter, Ramon marries her to Cipriano, and from that point he moves into the background. When she thinks of him it's usually in conjunction with Cipriano; also she is interested in his relationship with Teresa, because from that she may be able to learn something useful to her relationship with Cipriano.

In this last portion of the book, Kate no longer feels overwhelmed by the mystical power of Ramon's aura, because she has assumed the morning star already into her being; her old "greedy vision" has given place to "the new mystery of her own elusiveness" (p.318). Because she is preoccupied now with trying to understand marriage and relationships, in the new way of being, she passes out of the limits of Ramon's relevance to her as teacher. For Ramon himself has never succeeded in attaining to this aspect of the morning star—the ground of relationship. In the church where Carlota makes a spectacle out of her resistance to the revival, Kate "hears" Ramon saying, "There is no star between me and Carlota" (p.341). From this point on she sees him as more or less an equal with herself in this respect, trying to find an adequate basis of relationship in marriage.
"He was human as Kate was human" (p.417), she realizes. Ramon himself never falsifies the fact that he has failed in social relationships. To Kate, he confesses both his long-term misanthropy—"I despise and detest masses of people" (p.246)—and his failures with women: "I have not a very great respect for myself. Women and I have failed with one another, and it is a bad failure to have in the middle of oneself" (p.269). 18

Teresa, entering at the end of the story, provides Kate with a confusing standard of comparison for herself. Teresa is a manifestation of total womanly surrender, in Kate's eyes. For all the "secret, savage indomitable pride in her own womanhood," Teresa has given up her soul to Ramon because, "that other way of women, where a woman keeps her own soul—ah, what is it but weariness!" (p.411). Kate reacts violently to this: "The slave morale!" she objects. She feels that Teresa's surrender to Ramon contradicts the fundamental principle of the new life in Quetzalcoatl: it upsets the balance: "Did not this Teresa throw herself entirely into the male balance; so that all the weight was on the man's side?" (p.397). This question is not resolved by the end of the book. Teresa suggests that Kate is mistaken about the nature of her and Ramon's marriage: "He does not ask
submission from me. He wants me to give myself gently to
him. And then he gives himself back to me far more gently" (p.432). Further, she suggests that the two couples are
quite different because of inherent personality traits, so that comparisons are not valid: Ramon and Teresa are
gentle, Cipriano and Kate both "soldiers in their spirit" (p.432). But whether or not Kate agrees with this anal-
ysis, we never find out. Through the last, tortuous pages, Kate wrestles with the problem of her own individualism.
The function of Teresa as an instrument of Lawrence's vis-
ion is to manifest one of the choices open to Kate. We leave Kate trembling on the brink of that choice, married, as Teresa is married, but not yet ensconced in marriage as Teresa is ensconced. Thus Lawrence provides, as an ending, an image of the two aspects of the morning star in un-
resolved suspension: the determination to be true to one's essential self, and the effort to attain a relationship of balance with another.
FOOTNOTES


7 Clark presents this approach in *Dark Night of the Body.*

8 Kessler, "Descent in Darkness."

9 Vivas, p. 81: "But we are an irreverent, contumacious lot, and remembering Ramon's painted face, his breechclout and his feathers, we have all we can do to suppress our jeers."


11 Lawrence uses this form of the word "withershins."

12 The most striking instance of Lawrence's use of this kind of pause in the midst of complex or charged passages of language is the digression on trees in the fourth chapter of *Fantasia of the Unconscious.*

13 Vivas, pp. 71-72.

Kate never does fully and absolutely embrace Quetzalcoatl, and this unresolved matter is a feature of her delicate balance at the end. Some critics find this a flaw in her characterization. For instance, Hough calls her inability to decide finally whether to be Malintzi or Kate Forrester the book's "fatal weakness" (Hough, p. 145). There are also several studies which point out that Kate doesn't complete a proper mythic pattern of "psychic death and reintegration, a return into life and renewed activity." R. E. Pritchard, Body of Darkness (London: Hutchinson, 1971), p. 177. Such criticism imposes on Lawrence, rather than illuminating his vision.

See, e.g. Moore, Life and Works, p. 201, and William Y. Tindall, D. H. Lawrence and Susan his Cow (New York: Columbia U. Press, 1939). Clark, in Chapter Four of Dark Night of the Body, wisely reminds us that the religion of Quetzalcoatl is an invention of Lawrence's, and one of the données of the book that we simply have to accept, but in the next chapter he belies his good intentions by engaging in such discussions as whether the Morning Star signifies Christ or Lucifer.

For a discussion of Carlota's symbolic role in the novel, see Clark, pp. 61 ff.

Note the masturbatory nature of Ramon's prayer posture in the first five paragraphs of Chapter Eleven.
"It was not the truth, but the stirring, live quality in Lawrence's truth which upset people."

"Lawrence went at the reversal of values not with indifference but with poetry, with religious fervor, and he hit lower than either Huxley or Gide. He hit the center, the vulnerable center of our bodies with his physical language, his physical vision."

--Anais Nin
The plot and the language of *The Man Who Died* are both strikingly unusual; they are mannered fictional devices which call attention to themselves and thus to the vision of reality which they express. The fact that the plot is a radical distortion of Christianity's central myth suggests that the vision expressed has a deep seriousness, and invites a seriousness of reading equal in energy to the traditional study of the scriptures. To read this novel seriously, and on its own terms, requires a rather special suspension of disbelief, a rather special submission to both plot and language. In other words, the book tells a remarkably strange story in strange language, and the response a critical reader owes it is, first, to experience those strange elements as directly and deeply as possible. The strangeness I refer to includes (apart from the distortions of the Christ story), such things as: The pervasive recurrence of verbal motifs (like the "crest" motif) and symbolically highlighted objects (such as the cock); the strong undulations in the narrative style, full of climaxes, cumulations, antiphonal movements; the use of jargonesque terms (such as "the little day," "the greater day," and
various kinds of "suns"—"day suns" and "invisible suns" and "wounds that are suns" etc.).

The strangeness of the story disturbs readers. My experience of both critics and undergraduate students suggests that it is very hard simply to pay close attention to the text and accept it and try to experience it for what it is. On the one hand, freshman and sophomore readers are often so startled by the eccentricity of the plot, that their awareness of the range of the narrative elements is swamped by this consideration and stops there. On the other hand, more sophisticated critics, squelching whatever surprise they might have felt, in general merely attempt to relate the story to something outside itself or else dismiss it outright as bad art. Apart from three qualified exceptions, I really can't say I have encountered a critique of this story which left me with an increased awareness of it. Such reactions of shock and/or repudiation on the part of readers are entirely consistent with my basic thesis: As artist of vision, Lawrence takes the primary source-book of Christian values and extends it into a presentation of radically different values; society, informed by Christian values, retaliates by denying the validity of his vision in one way or another.
Published criticism of *The Man Who Died* falls into the same pattern as that of responses to *The Plumed Serpent*, already discussed. Therefore I shall not repeat myself in this chapter by documenting the many instances of critics who import expectations to the text and then go on to deprecate the story for its failure to measure up to these expectations, and who end up reevaluating the story as something else: the working out of a myth; or a parallel expression of some pre-existent tradition of thought; or evidence of Lawrence's health at the time of composition, etc. Leaving such critics aside then, I shall try to deal with the text on its own terms.

*The Man Who Died* offers the reader a compact way of experiencing the development of a personality through physical and mental rhythms. To emphasize the unusual qualities of the book's prose I offer an odd definition: This story is a dramatically vivid script of a series of vital convulsions--spasms of motivation followed by exhaustion--together with a series of waves of understanding that develop out of the experiences. This all takes place in the Man, and by identification in the sympathetic reader. For any reader willing to make that identification, I think the story has a powerful force which exerts itself not as doctrine or disembodied idea, but as a personal, dramatic
experience of growth—a sort of "trip" of the psyche. To provide myself and my reader with a convenient discursive framework, I choose to separate the physical from the mental rhythms, but in the actual reading experience of the story, as in all human living I suppose, the two levels of experience are integrated, not separate.

I

RHYTHMS OF BODY

Between lying inert in the tomb at the start of the story, and rowing off into the future at the end, The Man Who Died undergoes a developing series of physical experiences. The experiences are rhythmic in a crudely biological sense, i.e. they intensify and then dissipate: begin in stillness, move to a climax of energy, pass through the climax, then revert to stillness; like the systole-diastole of the heartbeat; or like orgasm; or the sleep-wake-work-play-tire-sleep pattern of daily life. Most evidently in Part One, this series of bodily rhythms makes up a large portion of the "felt life" of the story, for the Man and for the reader.

The first rhythmic movements in the series are those of the rooster. The little sketch of the gamecock's first surge to freedom is a preliminary capsule analogue
of the rest of the story; and as such we might expect to find the sketch rendered in the flat vocabulary of conceptual patterning. But is isn't. Rich physicality of diction, together with the cumulations and discharges of the narrative movements even in this short sketch, provide a strong kinaesthetic entrance into the rhythms of the larger story. The cock starts out as an "acquired . . . shabby little thing," who transforms within fifty words to a bird "re­splendent with arched and orange neck." (p. 3). From that brief climax of energy and colour, the narrative drops at once to the mediocre, languid world of the peasant couple with their "dirty little inner courtyard" and "three shabby hens that laid small eggs," the "dull donkey," the lazy man and his wife who also "did not work too hard."

Now twenty lines into the story, the narrative rises again to the cock, to "a certain splendour," "a dandy rooster" with "a special fiery colour to his crow," and finally, "unexpected outbursts."

Back down (line 28) to the petty, fearful world of the peasants, who begin to fear their cock will fly away, so they slyly trick him with grain and tie him up to the "dull donkey's" post.

For three paragraphs the tethering of the cock's energy reduces him to the low level of the peasants'
ambience, but then, in the last paragraph of the sketch, up
he rises to freedom on "a sudden wave of strength," cry­
ing out, first with a "wild strange squawk," then in "a
loud and splitting crow."

The bird's freedom has bloomed out of the dreary restrictions of the peasants' yard, and
the rhythm of this blooming is carried in the waxing and
waning of narrative and diction. (At this point I urge
my reader to pick up the text and read these first two
pages, in order to really feel the rhythmic physicality
and kinaesthesia that I am merely talking about. Such a
reading will reveal that there are in fact many more,
small/rhythmic waves within the larger undulation of nar­
rative that I have traced.)

A transitional paragraph ("at the same time, at
the same hour . . .") immediately connects the cock with
the Man in the tomb, whose story now begins. His story
too is a blooming conveyed through rhythms of word and
story line, and the reader's involvement is incremental
with each new cycle and movement of rhythm. The limited
physical progress achieved by the Man in Part One is a
progress from utter numbness and immobilizing nausea, to
a healed state consisting in a sharpening of the physical
senses and a ready mobility. He reverts, at the end of
Part One, to feeling nauseated, but in a different way
than earlier: At the start it was "a deep, deep nausea [that] stirred in him at the premonition of movement." (my emphasis). At the end of Part One, his nausea is his reaction, not to motion in general, but to the prospect of social intercourse. Rather than immobilizing him, this latter state of nausea is highly motivational, causing him to flee: "So always he must move on" (p. 22). Then, in Part Two, the Man progresses from a hermit-like isolation, through the increasingly physical rhythms of intercourse (ultimately sexual intercourse), to a climatic moment of what he calls "atonement" (p. 44) in which he feels himself to be a wholly integrated part of the physical universe, "in its perfume, as in a touch."

An important difference between the cock's story and the Man's is that the first is rendered from an external viewpoint, while the second is rendered from an internal one (despite the fact that the story remains throughout a third-person narrative, not an internal monologue). This difference creates a progressive inductive effect on the reader: He feels first the rhythms of the cock's resurgence through a description of how the cock is seen to act, following which he begins to feel much more deeply the rhythms of the Man's resurgence, by being drawn into a continuum of sensation and thought, not just a continuum of appearance and action. The cock's story
creates the pattern of events, and the Man's story develops the internal sensation of like events in an amplification of the pattern.

To demonstrate the bodily rhythms of the Man's story would involve tediously tracking the narrative, line by line, if I were to cover the whole ground. Therefore I shall discuss just one rhythmic cycle in each of the two Parts, in order to make my points without tedium.

In Part One, as I've said already, the Man progresses from a state of nausea to a state of being healed. Of the many cyclic stages in this progress I shall examine the one involving the confrontation with Madeleine. When he meets her, the Man has already made quite a lot of progress. He has overcome his stasis, and risen from the tomb; he has overcome his revulsion to food, and eaten; at the peasants' home, he has emerged from "a kind of coma" (p. 10) and taken to lying in the sun to feel the cool morning air and watch the "pale sky:" he has developed a detached attitude of superiority tinged with compassion for the peasants. Now, in a state of moderate strength and self-sufficiency, he decides to go back to the garden outside the tomb. The words are worth noting:
And at dawn when he was better, the man who had died rose up, and on slow, sore feet retraced his way to the garden. For he had been betrayed in a garden, and buried in a garden. (p. 12)

Evidently he feels strong enough to go back to a scene of failures, perhaps because—consciously or subconsciously—he wishes to confront the past and transcend it. Whatever his motive, his arrival in the garden creates an inner conflict between his past values and those which are germinating in his present life. He is at first overcome by the conflict, but then he is resurrected by it to new strength. This decline and resurgence takes place in a directly physical way, and Lawrence uses a number of prose techniques to force the physicality of the experience on the reader. At first the Man is obviously feeling pretty strong, strong enough to engage in a long conversation with Madeleine in which he repudiates his former role as saviour. Her disappointment sets up the first tension of conflict:

"And will you not come back to us?" she said. "Have you risen for yourself alone?"
He heard the sarcasm in her voice . . . .
"I have not risen from the dead in order to seek death again," he said. (p. 14)

The expenditure of energy in thus resisting Madeleine's challenge weakens his morale and his body:

She glanced up at him and saw the weariness settling again on his waxy face, and the vast disillusion in his dark eyes, and the underlying indifference.
Notice how these last three phrases—"the weariness...," "the disillusion...," "the indifference..."—create a rhythmic/alliterative effect like the spasms of nausea which he is experiencing, and which is soon detailed further.

His strength is crumbling fast. He had wanted the support of old friends, but he realises that his former followers will reject him "for having risen up different from their expectation." So, as though to confirm their rejection of him, he asks Madeleine now for money and an invitation to live in her house; and her domineering acceptance of the request ("'Now?' she said with peculiar triumph,") revolts him, "who now shrank from triumph of any sort." His strength is gone:

The words faltered in him. . . .
A revulsion from all the life he had known came over him again, the great nausea of disillusion, and the spearthrust through his bowels. He crouched under the myrtle bushes without strength. Yet his eyes were open . . . . (pp.14-15)

In these words we see him at the nadir of his cycle of strength, crouching speechless under the bush (after standing and virtually preaching at her two pages previously), and immediately following the nadir, the beginning of the "up" cycle: That "yet" is the turning point. From here on he begins to revive, at the same time as and because her
power begins to decline: She sees in his eyes the evidence that he is different ("not the Master she had so adored") and she is "thrown out of the balance," and departs at once, "perturbed and shattered." (Notice however that as she goes she begins an "up" cycle of her own, motivated through fantasy: "Yet as she went, her mind discarded the bitterness of the reality, and she conjured up rapture and wonder, that the Master was risen . . . .")

In the passing nadir of his strength, the Man "gathered himself together at last and slowly made his way to the peasant's house." Once there, his energy of self-gathering disappears and he lies down "sick with relief at being alone again." Another brief nadir: 

\[ \text{He turned utterly away from life, in the sickness of death in life.} \]

But the peasant's wife quickly rouses him with food. Now, back from the garden and revived, the Man finds himself very much strengthened by the cycle of conflict with Madeline; he quickly and permanently comes to the realization that he does not need immediate human contacts. He can afford to wait "an eternity of time" (p. 17) for a new kind of human relationship such as he has never before had. He cuts his simple ties with the peasants and sets off into another cycle—the last in Part One, which ends in a temporary reversion to nausea.
The cycle just sketched, then, is a movement from limited strength, to conflict, to terrible weakness (crouching inarticulate under the myrtle bush), to resurgence and healing ("the sun and the subtle salve of spring healed his wounds, even the gaping wound of disillusion through his bowels was closing up" [p.18]). It is only one of a series of cycles, a major one, taking up six of the twenty-odd pages in Part One. The physical rhythm of the experience is rendered partly by the sequence of events, partly by mechanisms of prose—one of which I've noted above on p.132. The most obvious of these mechanisms is the constant placement of verbal connectives in incremental or contrastive logic: "But," "so," "and," "yet," "meanwhile," "then," "as," "again," "now," "instead," "any more," "at last," and so on. No reader can fail to feel the pattern created by these connectives; it carries the narrative in a perpetual oscillation of consciousness which is evident even in the bits of quotes above. Earlier, we find this fairly compact example:

The peasant man came home, but he was frightened, and had nothing to say. The stranger too ate of the mess of beans, a little. Then he washed his hands and turned to the wall, and was silent. The peasants were silent too. They watched their guest sleep. Sleep was so near death he could still sleep.
Yet when the sun came up, he went again to lie in the yard. The sun was the one thing that drew him and swayed him, and he still wanted to feel the cool air of morning in his nostrils, see the pale sky overhead. (p.10)

Notice how this passage contains a decline in energy from the beginning to the end of the first paragraph, beginning with the "but" phrase and extended by "and," "too," "Then," "and," "and," "too," "still." The second paragraph reverses the flow of energy in the narrative with its opening "Yet" and extends it in the new direction by "again," "still," and a paratactic construction. This device is quite common in Lawrence, though there are few places in his writings where it is used so extensively. Probably this technique more than any other in the story helps to place the action in a very immediately sensed continuum of the Man's consciousness, both physical and mental (—a rather unusual effect, given the third person narrator.)

Variation of sentence tempo is another technique used extensively in the Madeleine section and elsewhere to mark different stages in the cycles of bodily strength. In moments of greatest strength, the words come tumbling out in compound and often appositional constructions, creating in the reader precisely that same sense of energy (in reading) as the Man at those moments feels. For instance:
"My public life is over, the life of my self-importance. Now I can wait on life, and say nothing, and have no one betray me. I wanted to be greater than the limits of my hands and feet, so I brought betrayal on myself. And I know I wronged Judas, my poor Judas. For I have died, and now I know my own limits. Now I can live without striving to sway others any more. For my reach ends at my finger tips, and my stride is no longer than the ends of my toes. Yet I would embrace multitudes, I who have never truly embraced even one. But Judas and the high priests saved me from my own salvation, and soon I can turn to my destiny like a bather in the sea at dawn, who has just come down to the shore alone." (p.13)

Speed Readers, I imagine, won't feel the technical impact of this. But to any reader doing even a minute amount of subverbalizing as he reads, the effect of such a passage is an excitation and sense of energetic fullness directly comparable to the Man's bodily sensations. By contrast, at the lowest point in the garden scene, "the words faltered in him" (p.14). He manages to utter only five or six clipped syllables, "Nay! . . . I didn't ask that," corresponding to his state of nauseous exhaustion as he sinks to crouching under the myrtles. A short while later his weariness and disillusionment from the encounter are objectified in the heavy slow tempo of the conversation-stopping words as he hands the money to the peasant's wife: "Take it! . . . It buys bread, and bread brings life" (p.16). This sequence of plosive bilabials (buys, bread, bread, brings) followed
by the sigh-like, high diphthong and fricative of "life" create in the reader's mouth the precise sensation of exhaustion of a man dropping "down in the yard again, sick with relief."

In Part Two the progress from physical isolation to physical intercourse takes place through numerous cycles of contact and withdrawal. The focus of action is the Temple of Isis, where the Man and the Woman meet several times in a growing intimacy. I should like to examine the second meeting, of which the plot is as follows: Having sent for the Man in his cave, the lady emerges from the temple to meet him for a second time. She accuses him of having "the marks of a malefactor" (p.31) and he responds "with a gray weariness," by offering frankly to depart. Evidently he wishes to avoid the debilitating mess of explanations and recriminations. However, looking at him she has a "sudden impulse" (p.32) and invites him into the temple to look at Isis, "pondering that this was the lost Osiris." His energy is roused by her initiative: "Something stirred in him, like pain," at her invitation. He accepts, enters and makes his obeisance to the goddess. Watching him, she grows more excited and convinced that this is the man she is looking for, Osiris. "She felt it in the quick of her soul." He senses her designs on him
and immediately retreats from the temple in a panic of "the wild commandment: Noli me tangere! Touch me not!"

She begs him not to go away. He agrees to stay in the cave for another night, which delights her, and they part for the rest of the daylight hours. He (virgin that he is) spends the rest of the day fretting over her, and eating shellfish. Meanwhile, she is back in the temple, working herself into submission "to the woman flow and to the urge of Isis in Search" (p.196). At sundown she comes to find him, they converse and she promises him food and clothing which she then goes off to arrange. Later that night they meet at the cave, and later still they have their third temple meeting, during which they make love.

The physical and emotional vacillations of the Man in this second meeting with the Woman (and in the brief aftermath of isolation) are a good deal more subtle as fictional material than either the events of the first meeting, which precedes it, or the third, which follows (the consummation scene). This second meeting is the delicate courtship in which the positive qualities of the sexual relationship as envisioned in the novel are most clearly and finely delineated. These qualities are: selectivity based on mutual tenderness, respect for the individuality or privacy of the other, and desire. These
three qualities are rendered in a cumulation of physical sensations leading to a feeling (in the Man) of the inevitability of union: "He was startled (when she arrived at sundown, looking for him) yet he expected her" (p.33 my emphasis). Of the three, desire is the easiest to illuminate, so I'll begin with that. It begins, I suppose, when he first sees the image of the goddess, in an extraordinary, sensuous simile: "Striding like a ship, eager in the swirl of her gown" (p.32). This sight evokes from him the emotionally alliterative cry, "Wonderful is such walking in a woman, wonderful the goal." Further unusual images evoke further emotion: He sees her face "open like a flower," and "his loins stirred." Later, he sees her "like a soft, musing cloud," and he is smitten "with passion and compassion" (p.34). The mannered peculiarity of these unexpected similes is striking to a sensitive reader, and thus brings home the freshness and the strength of the Man's gradually rising desire. Similarly mannered images evoke the climax of that desire later: He experiences her embrace as "a power of living warmth, like the folds of a river" (p.42), and as "the girdle of the living woman." At last, in a startling dislocation of Christ's words to Peter, she is "the soft white rock of life" (p.43).
The other two qualities, tender selectivity and respect for one another's privacy, are conveyed by several intricacies of plot and diction. The slow stages of progress in which the lovers touch and part, touch and part, render both qualities, and in a manner which is saved from becoming comic (like the little toy dogs on their magnets) by intervening periods of feverish self-searching ("Shall I give myself into this touch? Shall I . . ." "Dare I come into this tender touch of life?" (p.33); "and art thou not Osiris?" (p.34); "Ah! how terrible to fail her, or to trespass on her!" (p.39) etc.) The delicacy and decorum of language, sustained throughout, draw the reader steadily to a climax of naive delight and gentleness. After a long sequence of mainly incremental connectives ("and," "so," the continuum of the Man's consciousness in the last three pages resumes its earlier contrastive logic ("but," "yet," "yet not") so that the story ends back once more in the seesaw rhythm of conflicting motivations:

"She is dear to me in the middle of my being. But the gold and flowing serpent is coiling up again, to sleep at the root of my tree. "So let the boat carry me. Tomorrow is another day." (p.47)

Any reader who submits his sensibility to these physical rhythms in the story, comes through it with a gutsy knowledge of the experience of personality revival:
cycles of being down, then up, down again, up again, continuously but not repetitiously. For there is progress, not repetition; there is a perpetual progress into new kinds of activity, leaving the last behind, all of which amounts to a blooming of the self through rhythmic stages first of debilitation, then of renewed energy. This progress is the vision of life's reality woven into the prose texture of the book.

The Man's growth or progress is rendered by techniques of cumulation. I.e. the "up" stages in the cycles at the beginning are less complete and less powerful than the "up" stages at the end. In his early successes in the process of coming back to life, there is still a portion of death. (E.g. "... now I am risen in my own aloneness and inherit the earth..." is followed in the same paragraph by "... already I am tired and weak, and want to close my eyes to everything" [p.20]). In his later success however, especially in his climactic moment three pages from the end, there is no such qualifying weakness. (See, for instance, the paragraph "But the man looked at the vivid stars..." [pp.43-44]). Thus, at the physical level alone—and perhaps most strongly at this level—the reader experiences the progress in the Man's resurrection. The other level, the level of mental rhythms,
is probably less powerful as an instrument of "felt life" though it is the more clearly definable of the two prose idioms by which the Man's progress is marked.

THOUGHT RHYTHMS

In the course of the Man's personality growth, his intellectual self-awareness keeps pace with the cycles of bodily revival. This intellectual progress is rendered largely by means of the recurrence of certain motifs, some of them imagistic, some purely abstract. The imagistic motifs include such things as: Flowers (narcissus, lotus, rose, etc.); the sun, in several variations of perception (warm sun, dark sun, invisible sun, etc.); birds (cock, dove, nightingale, etc.); the four elements (rock, flame, sea, space.) Among the abstract motifs are such terms as "the greater day" and "the lesser day," (corresponding to "the greater life" and "the lesser/little life"), "compulsion," "will," "touch," etc. The "crest" also figures very prominently as a motif, appearing sometimes as an image and at other times as a concept. I wish to show how the use of motifs is a technique by which Lawrence creates a texture of intellectual progress in the narrative, complementing the cycles of physical progress. To do so,
I shall treat the motif of plants (imagistic), and the motif of the greater/the lesser day (abstract).

The motif of plants is by far the most complex of all the motifs in this novel. In one form or another it occurs at practically every major point in the Man's progress, so that it would be possible for a reader, by following only this one strand in the texture of narrative, to know pretty well what changes the Man's head is going through. On a second or third reading one discovers amazingly subtle usages of the motif, and I shall begin with one of these subtleties in order to make my point as finely as possible, before going on to track major usages through the narrative.

When the Man emerges from the tomb, he sees the world around him specifically in terms of dull vegetation, alien to him. "... past the olives, under which purple anemones were drooping in the chill of dawn, and rich green herbage was pressing thick. The world, the same as ever, the natural world of morning and evening, forever undying, from which he had died" (p.6). Ten lines later he is electrically jolted out of his "half-consciousness" in this dull environment by "the shrill, wild crowing of a cock." Shivering with excitement from the electrical effect, he looks up and sees the cock sitting on a branch, like a vivid
flower. The narrative explicitly contrasts this vision with the dull vegetation through which he has just picked his disillusioned way: "Leaping out of greenness came the black and orange cock, his tail feathers streaming lustrous" (my emphasis). The colourful cock, bloomlike against a dull background, catalyzes a reaction in the Man who, from this point on, begins to see around him a natural world full of energy and colour.

The man who had died looked nakedly on life, and saw a vast resoluteness everywhere, flinging itself up in stormy or subtle wave-crests, foam tips emerging out of the blue invisible, a black and orange cock or the green flame-tongues out of the extremes of the fig tree. (p.10)

In other words, because the Man looked around in the dull vegetation and saw a brilliant, colourful cock sitting on a branch where a flower or a leafy twig might have been, his perception of the natural world changes: before it was simply a dull world "from which he had died" and to which he did not really want to return; but now it has become exciting, a world of "green leaves spurting like flames" (p.9). The quasi-floral appearance of the brilliant bird has literally opened his eyes to the world; he lies still, "With eyes that had died now wide open and darkly still, seeing the everlasting resoluteness of life . . . [the] sharp wave of life of which the bird was the crest." It's
as though the appearance of the bird on the bough taught him that things in the known world aren't necessarily as humdrum as they appear, that in fact it might be possible to have a different sort of existence, to leap out of greenness.

This example illustrates subtle usage, as I said; yet the subtleties lie there in the text, for the second or third reading. I pass on to more overt usages.

In discussing the physical rhythms of the story, I said that the Man progresses from nausea to healing to being in touch. The same progress, as rendered by the plant motif, is a progress from alienation to progressive integration with the natural world, through the following stages: First he sees the world as an alien, vegetable continuum; next as a dual world made up on the one hand of individual plants, amidst which he is a (rather alienated) part—"some strange flower" (p. 9)—, and on the other hand of people, from whom he is totally alienated; next he sees the world as a place in which there is a special group of solitary people who are like special flowers (narcissus, lotus) and with whom he hopes he can relate; and finally, he sees the world as itself flowerlike and himself as totally integrated with it as a result of relationship with a flower-like woman.10
The "alien vegetable continuum" I have already shown briefly above. Emerging from the tomb, the Man finds drooping anemones and undying, thronging greenness. He doesn't feel he belongs here—he has already died out of this world. The cock precipitates a change in his consciousness, and the plant motif symbolically records the nature of that change. He begins to notice the separate-ness of each plant:

He felt the cool silkiness of the young wheat under his feet that had been dead, and the roughishness of its separate life was apparent to him. At the edges of rocks, he saw the silky, silvery-haired buds of the scarlet anemone bending downwards. And they too were in another world. In his own world he was alone, utterly alone. These things around him were in a world that had never died. (p.8)

Despite the alienation implicit in the last part of this quotation, the Man is coming closer to relationship with the natural world: notice that the "buds of the scarlet anemone" are "bending downwards," which suggests a less gloomy ambience than that of the earlier perception where "purple anemones were [merely] drooping" (p.6). Soon the Man sees himself in a floral image, suggesting a definite progress in his sensation of partial integration with the world: He has perfumes coming from his body "as if from some strange flower" (p.9). As he moves slightly in the direction of kinship with the plants, he realises that he
wants nothing whatever to do with people. ("It was life, in which he had no share any more . . . . Yet he was there and not extinguished" [pp.9-10]. "And he wanted no one, for it was best to be alone; for the presence of people made him lonely" [p.18]). His aloneness, which he has chosen voluntarily by now, will be in the company of plants. Like Birkin who fled from Hermione's party to be in the company of trees and grass, The Man Who Died considers that the "green jets of leaves" and "bright, translucent, green blood" of the fig tree (p.19) will provide him with a suitable environment.

He said to himself: "I will wander the earth and say nothing. For nothing is so marvellous as to be alone in the phenomenal world, which is raging, and yet apart . . . . Now I will wander among the stirring of the phenomenal world, for it is the stirring of all things among themselves which leaves me purely alone," (p.19)

What he wants is companionship of some kind, without any kind of intercourse.

Part One ends here, with the Man recovered from death, but not yet come back into society, choosing "phenomenal" things for company, because human society would probably "lay a compulsion" on him (p.22) and "violate his intrinsic solitude."

In Part Two, the Man enters his next stage of growth, what I have called "a world in which there is a
special group of people who are like special flowers, and with whom he hopes he can relate." The woman of Isis appears like a flower, "alone," and "in her yellow robe" (p.23). Her identification with the narcissus is made explicit. She is "yellow and white and alone like a winter narcissus" (p.24). Her temple, likewise, stands alone "pink and white, like a flower in the little clearing" (p.25). Having just witnessed a "violation of intrinsic solitude"--the rape of the slave maiden--the Man, we might expect, would leave this place. But he doesn't because the terms in which he has perceived the woman and her temple (i.e. the flower images just quoted) are attractive to him. When she asks him why he's there, he tells her explicitly: "I saw the temple like a pale flower . . ." (p.28). She meanwhile has an idiom of perception completely compatible with his: She thinks of herself as a flower, a lotus blossom (p.25) who is waiting for the right man to come "like the violet" (p.27) and make love to her, or, "caress" her so that she "opens with an expansion such as no other flower knows."

The growth of their relationship from this point is charted in variations of the plant (flower) motif. She quickly inclines to him, "her face open like a flower" (p.32). He resists her touch, but then realises it is a good touch, a flowerlike touch. ("Yet this girl of Isis is a tender
flame of healing. . . . The flame of this tender girl!
Like the first pale crocus of the spring. How could I
have been blind," he asks himself, "to the healing and the
bliss in the crocus-like body of a tender woman!"[p.33]

And finally, the Man, through relationship with
a flowerlike woman, becomes totally integrated with a
flowerlike world. She chafes his wounds, and her healing
touch is expressed florally: "This scar is the eye of the
violet" (p.40). He perceives his lovemaking with her as
"deep, interfolded warmth, warmth living and penetrable,
the woman, the heart of the rose! 'My mansion is the in­
tricate warm rose, my joy is this blossom'" (p.43). After
lovemaking he sees her close up as a flower does when the
sun has gone down: "brooding like the lotus softly shutting
again . . . her own petals were a sheath to her" (p.43).
At last he stands enraptured under the stars and applies
the floral vocabulary which he has developed out of his ex­
perience with her, to the world at large; he expresses a
reeling sense of total integration with the world in a
thick boquet of floral images:

"How full of curves and folds like an invis­
ible rose of dark-petalled openness that shows
where the dew touches its darkness! How full
it is, and great beyond all gods. How it
leans around me, and I am part of it, the great
rose of Space. I am a grain of its perfume,
and the woman is a grain of its beauty. Now
the world is one flower of many petalled
darknesses, and I am in its perfume, as in a touch." (p.44)

Notice how the transferral of the rose image from the woman to Space conveys the fact that his integration with the world is simply an extension or result of his union with her.

Even the final movement of the story (which I haven't defined as a stage of growth in the man--it's more like a coda--) is narrated in terms of the plant motif: "The time of the narcissus was past . . . the perfume of beanfield was in the air" (p.44). The narcissus, we recall was the floral symbol of her solitude; the smell of the beanfield suggest fruition. And indeed, we learn next that she is pregnant (--thus the motif suggests her integration in the natural world, as well as his). He even intuited her pregnancy in a vegetative metaphor: "Thou art like a tree whose green leaves follow the blossoms, full of sap" (p.45). He departs like a perennial flower ("I shall come again, sure as Spring"[p.46]), and his memory of her is floral to the last: "I carry her perfume in my flesh like essence of roses" (p.47).

The plant motif then, like the several other motifs in this novel is not just some sort of symbolical "poetic" overlay on the narrative style. It is a functional
part of the texture of narration; and a reader who experiences the motifs with the kind of detailed sensitivity I am here recommending, ends up with an awareness of the story that goes something like this: "The Man Who Died emerges from the nauseating deathless greenery of sheer existence in the lesser day, and learns to come forth; he cultivates his solitude like a rare bloom, patiently waiting until he meets another flowerlike soul and body; their time together is like the sensual experience of nestling in the heart of a giant rose; and then, at the proper time, they part, and go on living the proud bold lives of the greater day."

This last phrase brings me to consider the second type of motif, the purely abstract, as exemplified in the terms "greater day" and "lesser day". The terms themselves are the Man's, and they grow slowly and naturally in his consciousness, as a result of his experience with the peasants, Madeleine and the cock. The fact that he does develop the terms, as a way of making moral judgments, shows that his progress takes place at yet another level of personality, making three so far: a A progress of motivation, as rendered by the physical rhythm of the narrative. b A progress of developmental experiences, as rendered (partly) by the plant motif. c A progress of intellectual self-awareness and self determination, as
rendered by the accession into his vocabulary of such terms of discrimination as "the greater day," or "compulsion," etc. This last process of growth can easily be seen in actual life in the way in which people from early childhood onwards pick up new terms and test their application to themselves or others ("Am I a snob?" "Is Jack bourgeois?" "She has no panache." etc.) The three types of progress possibly correspond to conventional divisions of personality, such as body, soul and mind, or possibly not. My point is that the multiplicity of narrative techniques—the different levels in the texture of narration—allows Lawrence to render his vision with a complexity and sophistication somewhat corresponding to the complexity and sophistication of human life experience.

The development of the Man's awareness of the greater and lesser days is a slow process, beginning after he emerges from the tomb and sees the soldiers lying there. He is repulsed by their "inert, heap-like bodies ... a slow squalor of limbs" (p.6). Further repulsions follow. He sees the peasants as "limited, meagre in their life, without any gesture of splendour and of courage" (p.9). But soon, he notices a contrast between the peasants and the cock: "Even as much flaminess as that of the young cock, which he had tied by the leg, would never glow in
[the peasant]." Shortly, he begins to associate the word "little" with the life the peasants lead: "... her little soul was hard. ... her body had its little greed. ... the little, personal body, the little personal life of this woman" (p.16). At once this association gives rise to an opposite term, "greater." "The body, too, has its little life, and beyond that, the greater life." Then, for a while, he drops the terms, and his consciousness wrestles with others ("compulsion," "entanglements," "allurements" [pp.18-22]), though we are told that before this "he was absorbed, thinking of the greater life of the body, beyond the little, narrow, personal life" (p.17). By early in Part Two, his thinking has progressed to the point of recognising that there is an absolute separation between, on the one hand "the life of the little people and the little day," and on the other, "the other life, the greater day of the human consciousness" (p.31); and he realises that he once did live in the little day, but that he has returned "reborn ... in the other life, the greater day." And he feels his alienation from the little day to be a difficulty that he has not yet learned to live with: "Not yet had he accepted the irrevocable noli me tangere which separates the reborn from the vulgar" (p.31). His involvement with the Woman of Isis however
gives him the strength to live with that difficulty. Thus, at the end, when he sees that "the little life of jealousy and property was resuming sway again" (p. 45) in the person of the Woman's mother, he makes an untroubled decision to leave and be "alone with his destiny." This attitude stands in clear contrast to the same kind of decision at the end of Part One—where he decides to be alone because he can't stand "entanglements," and is nauseated about it. The difference between the earlier anguished attitude and this later easy one is precisely the strength found in the relationship with the Woman. For she is part of the greater day. So, in leaving, he realises he will be "yet not alone, for the touch would be upon him" (p. 45).

Clearly the two "days" symbolize opposing poles in an elitist social vision. Yet the values inherent in each pole are never entirely clear, except insofar as the nature of relationships is concerned. People of the lesser day relate to one another greedily, acquisitively, in fear. The Man sees this with ever clearer vision in Madeleine, the peasants, the slaves and the Woman's mother; in fact it's because of this aspect of people of the lesser day that he leaves: ("Not twice! They shall not now profane the touch in me" [p. 45]). By contrast, people of the greater day are "not greedy to give, not greedy to take"
The Man rejects his own mother because he sees her "clutching" for him (p.18), and by contrast, his relationship with the Woman of Isis is one of gentle "touching" followed by a "tender hanging back" (p.45). He decides not even to ask the woman her name, and she in turn is content to know him only as "Osiris" (p.44). So we see that the ethic of relationship which the Man develops is a non-possessive one; the goal is a self-containment which is open to certain selective relationships as certain flowers are said to be responsive only to the "invisible sun" (p.27). Yet while remaining open to these rare relationships, the Man is not afraid to be alone again. "All is good between us, near or apart," he tells the Woman before leaving (p.46). And she does not detain him, for "even she wanted the coolness of her own air around her." Certainly the two "days" can be seen as ambivalent. The greater day constitutes a different world from the lesser day, and is therefore perhaps illusory, a retreat from real life. But such a thought is the reader's, not the Man's; he, after all, rows off laughing.

Finally a note on the "rhythm" aspect of the thought rhythms, in case this is not clear from the preceding analysis. The process of understanding in the Man's consciousness is not a straight-line development. The
motifs which render the progress tend to cluster in parts of the text, then thin out, then recur in variations. This creates a wavelike effect of growing, spasmodic consciousness. This is clearly visible in the operation of the two motifs just dealt with. In the case of the plant motif, the Man early perceives a distinction between the dull greenery and the more vivid configurations of colour and energy, such as the cock on the branch, the scarlet anemone, and the general multitude of "things that come forth" (p.10). Then, as his consciousness becomes more precisely discriminating, he focuses on particular flowers, the narcissus, the lotus, the rose—then back again to the narcissus, and the lotus (p.44). Likewise his development of the distinction of the two "days" grows in pulses, beginning with the "slow squalor of limbs" of the tomb guards (p.6) and culminating some thirty pages later in the insistent use of the terms "greater and lesser day." As I said at the start, the rhythmic spasms of motivation and the waves of developing consciousness complement one another. Together the various strands make up a multi-level mimesis of the rhythms of the life experience. Thus the texture of the prose concretely and complexly renders Lawrence's vision of life in the book.
In separating out the two idioms of narrative and calling them "physical rhythms" and "mental rhythms" I do not intend to add gratuitously to the dowdy lexicon of critics' jargon. What I'm talking about in my analysis is simply two levels of perception in the man, the one sensory and emotional, the other more purely cerebral; or, simply, how he feels and what he thinks. Yet my main purpose has been to focus on rhythmic movement as the main form which reality takes in this book, as the Man progresses in the growth of his new self. The rhythmic manner is common to both types of his perception, and is in fact the core of the unusual vision of life which Lawrence offers here. The Man Who Died is a triumphant affirmation of life in the experiential, phenomenal world—life envisioned as the perpetual rise and fall of tidelike energy, seeking to throw off the dross of the little day, seeking to enter the life of the greater day, more and more fully, more and more fully . . . .
1 D. H. Lawrence, p. 33.

2 Unless of course one reads the story as simply an anti-Christian tract—not an approach I would have expected in any reader, but have been surprised at the number of students who adopt it. George H. Ford, Double Measure: A Study of the Novels and Stories of D. H. Lawrence (New York: Rinehart, 1965), pp. 16, 104, sees the story as central in the Lawrence canon.

3 It's interesting to notice a parallel (and perhaps a source) to the artistic method used here of distorting a familiar, model form. In "The Crucifix Across the Mountains," Lawrence reveals his fascination with the way in which artistic carvers can use the crosses which they carve as vehicles of self-expression. See esp. the passage beginning "There is a strange clear beauty of form . . ." through the paragraph "It is plain in the crucifixes . . .," Twilight in Italy (1916; rpt. London: Heinemann, 1950), pp. 8-12. The mannered treatment of crucifixes by the carvers parallels Lawrence's mannered treatment of the gospel story in The Man Who Died. For further discussion see Nin, p. 33.

4 E. g.: "One must come to treat the second part of the story as the kind of exaggerated and insistent exegesis of phallic communion which, to say the least, does not achieve unqualified success." G. A. Panichas, Adventure in Consciousness: The Meaning of D. H. Lawrence's Religious Quest (The Hague: Mouton), p. 132.


7 D. H. Lawrence, *The Man Who Died* (1928) rpt. in *The Short Novels of D. H. Lawrence*, II (London: Heinemann "Phoenix" ed., 1956). Subsequent page references to this edition are incorporated in the text, and where several quotations from the same page occur in close proximity, only the first is given page citation.

8 Anais Nin calls the technique "enchâinement." Nin, p. 61.

9 With two exceptions for modern readers: The crude line, "I am risen!" (p. 43) and the now unfortunately ambiguous term "plastic" (p. 44).

"But the truth, I would like to think, comes out, that when the reader has read all these thirteen ways of looking at the blackbird, the reader has his own fourteenth image of that blackbird which I would like to think is the truth."

-Wm. Faulkner

To read *As I Lay Dying* is to engage in a sort of puzzle game, the rules of which are not clear until one is well into the reading. Faulkner creates immediate confusion for the reader by thrusting him without preliminaries into an intensely imagistic monologue—a videologue—which is practically opaque, but which, for the reader willing to persevere, becomes in time transparent in the sense that one can begin to discover, through the videologue, what is going on. Here again is a novel—perhaps the prime example—which fits my concept of the dynamic of vision. An uneasy tension develops in the reader between his normal expectation ("once upon a time there was a man named Anse Bundren who had four sons and a daughter, and his wife lay seriously ill . . .") and the startling novelty which the author
provides ("Jewel and I come up from the field, following
the path in single file . . ."). Even the title heading
("DARL") and the opening word ("Jewel") are ambiguous, not
immediately recognizable as names of people. So one begins
in great confusion, struggling to find some handhold or
principle of unity or point of view, to assist in making
sense of what one is reading. Faulkner withholds such aid.
There is no conventional narrator, no frame of reference,
no immediately apparent principle of unity ("Who am I that am
lying dying?" the mystified reader asks again and again, as he
turns the pages.) The literary process is probably unique
in the history of the novel—even *Ulysses*, for instance,
involves a much more gradual immersion into monologue tex­
tures—and still today, in 1973, it's startling to new read­
ers, in my experience.

In this chapter I shall describe the game that
Faulkner is playing with his readers, and then examine the
texture of the novel in order to illustrate the values that
emerge from reading the book on its own terms. But first a
comment on critics.

A review of published criticism shows two kinds
of reaction from academic readers, both consistent with my
thesis: One group does not confront the novel directly,
on its own terms, but instead imports to the text
structures which help to place it in a familiar frame of reference. For example, such critics have wrestled valiantly with the problem of defining the narrator of this novel. It seems that fictive convention demands that we know who is telling the story.³ Others of this group, simply ignoring the mannered strangeness of the novel's format and contents, proceed to study its plot as myth or archetype.⁴ Then there's a second group of critics who do in fact examine the strange texture of the novel. More than the other two novelists of vision whom I'm examining, Faulkner has been fortunate in attracting a good number of critics who dig deep into his work to make sense of the vision. A notable example is Waggoner, whose chapter on As I Lay Dying focuses on "one image pattern . . . the stylistic key to the vision that shapes the novel."⁵

These two kinds of critical attention represent two different reactions to the dynamic exerted by the novel. The first is an attempt to subject the novel to a "taming" process involving comparison or induction into some asserted tradition; this amounts to an evasion or rejection of the dynamic. The second is an attempt to confront the extraordinary performance of this novel on its own terms; this amounts to an acceptance of and engagement in the dynamic. My own treatment, which follows, is of course an attempt of the second kind.
THE PUZZLE OF VIDEOLOGUES

There is some external evidence for my thesis that Faulkner is playing a sort of game with his readers, to be found in the author's campus conversations, collected in *Faulkner in the University.* Unfortunately, the taped conversation specifically concentrating on this novel was lost, and is not otherwise recorded. However, in several of the other interviews, in answer to questions about *As I Lay Dying,* the novelist often uses the words "trick" and "tour de force." Asked if the thirteen characters of the novel—there are actually fifteen—constituted a single mind of a man, for instance, Faulkner replied: "No. They were—I was writing about people again, and—that's a simple tour de force . . . simple tour de force. That was written in six weeks without changing a word because I knew from the first where that was going." Asked to explain the strange fact that Darl is able to "give such a detailed description of his mother's death while he is out cutting wood some place else," Faulkner replied: " . . . call it a change of pace. A trick, but since the whole book was a tour de force, I think that is a permissible trick." In these answers, suspect though they may be in coming from the writer, I draw attention to the admission of posturing or play implicit in
the two terms quoted, and also to his claim to have known
where the novel was going before he started. This evidence
suggests that the novel was conceived as indeed I for one
experience it: as a game or a puzzle, a tangle deliberately
created to be unravelled by the reader. It's as though the
writer conceived his story clearly at first, then wrote it
down in a way deliberately designed to obscure the story by
calling attention to the trick of writing. "It is a per­
sistent offering of obstacles, a calculated system of
screens and obtrusions, of confusions and ambiguous inter­
polations and delays." 9

What the writer intended is not, of course, a re­
liable guide to what the reader experiences. Yet in this
case my own experience suggests that there is a similarity
between intention and effect. When I first read this book
I felt I was being imposed upon by the factitious difficulty
of texture, and made a note in my journal at the time which
evidences my reluctance to play the game which the novel
seemed to demand of me: "After beginning this book of
Faulkner's I begin to think that a story or novel must
make concessions to the reader in its opening pages. It's
so loaded with significance from the first paragraph on
that I feel I'm being imposed upon, not offered a gift. It
seems to me that a writer ought to get straight into his
story in the first pages as simply and directly as possible. If I were writing this book I would feel that first I must allow my reader to arrive in the world of my novel, and then offer him places to go and things to see from different positions. I ought not to start rushing him around the house and showing him my pictures before I've taken his coat and sat him down so he can just look around him a bit and see what's going on here. Even cathedrals have their entrances."

This evidence—Faulkner's conversation and my own journal entry—may seem slight or even inadmissible in the logic of literary proof; but I suggest that they point directly to what's really going on when somebody reads *As I Lay Dying*, when the dynamic of vision is operating fullest, not sapped by subsequent reflection. Faulkner is performing his tour de force, his tricks. And the reader resists him, saying: "What's this all about? What the hell's going on here?" Such is the beginning of the tension built into the dynamic. What is really going on is that the novelist of vision is implicitly saying: "Come into this world, jump right in, and you'll have an interesting time—oh, and by the way, I'm not going to help you very much; you have to do the entering here, or else it will not seem as truly strange for you to be here as it truly is." Then the reader,
beginning in the attitude of "the hell with you, give me something easy, something I can recognise," proceeds either to cast the book away, or to carry on reading and submit to the strangeness in faith.

Given the act of faith, the question is, how does it pay off in new awareness or imaginative uplift, or whatever? The answer lies mostly in the sheer intensity of the vision which we are forced to realize if we are to succeed at all in making sense of the narrative puzzle. Faulkner does not provide us with immediately coherent monologues as Browning does. Nor is this a novel of ideas, in which the characters represent philosophic viewpoints (though there is such an element in this book, centered in the ADDIE monologue). The payoff comes through the depth of knowledge of human beings, attained by the reader precisely because the superficial texture is so obscure. To read the book, we are forced into a technical process of deep identification, of becoming temporarily the people behind the videologues.

Beyond the value of those individual identifications, there is another composite reward for the reader, implied in the quoted epigraph to this chapter. The words quoted are a reference of Faulkner's to *Absalom, Absalom!* but they are appropriate also to this novel, because the multiplicity of ways of looking at a blackbird is a concept directly comparable to the multiplicity of monologues.
(videologues) in *As I Lay Dying*. The statement is an excellent definition of the value in terms of vision, provided by this novel. I.e., not only does one come to enter the inner reality of each of the characters whose videologues one reads, but the overall experience produces an overall vision of the human condition ("the fourteenth image of the blackbird which I would like to think is the truth"). There are certain motifs, as I shall show, which help to link together the separate videologues into one luminous whole. (And I shall try to show in the next chapter a similar nexus of experiences in the reading of *Absalom, Absalom!*).

I should explain my term "videologue." I hold no special brief for the word: it's just a way of underlining the fact that image, sight, seeing things with the eyes or the "inner" eyes of the clairvoyant mind, is the predominant idiom of experience of all of the major characters in this book—greater with some, lesser with others, but predominant with all.

The difficulty of piecing out the puzzle of what is going on has the curious effect of causing the reader to be at least as much aware of and interested in the characters observing, as he is in the events observed. (Similarly Stevens' thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird tell us more about the states of mind of the looker(s) than they
do about blackbirds.) Thus, for example, a reader is able to notice how Cash develops emotionally and intellectually during the time span of the novel. Of his five videologues, the first three consist of mechanical considerations about the making and transportation of the coffin, while the last two—both relatively long, and both near the end of the book—reveal a sympathy and understanding for Darl which we might never have suspected earlier.

The first two videologues (DARL and CORA) shift the reader through surprisingly antithetical perspectives. Darl is precise, accurate, amoral, in the record he makes of the perceptions he has. The only value judgment he makes in this section is that Cash is a "good carpenter." Addie Bundren would not want a better one, a better box to lie in" (p.4). For the rest he is meticulous about shapes, numbers, distances, directions, and the reasons for things. He has the eye of a camera and the mind of a logician, at this point in the story. He notes that the path's right angles around the cotton house are "soft right angles," that it is from a "willow" branch that Jewel takes the gourd to drink, that the boards of the coffin bear marks of the adze "in smooth undulations." And he accounts for the "brick-hard" texture of the path: It's the heat of July and the passage of feet. He notes that the reason for (or result of) Cash's careful carpentry is that "It will give her confidence
and comfort."

On the other hand, Cora is tangled up with superficial moral complexities in her thinking about the eggs and the cakes, about the reason why God has placed Addie on her deathbed ("Maybe it will reveal her blindness to her,") and she observes only those things which help her to make judgments about human manners and proprieties, such as "the girl's washing and ironing in the pillow-slip, if ironed it ever was," and Eula's coquettish touching of her hair as Darl passes. In subsequent CORA sections we find that the woman actually perceives "wrongly," quite misinterpreting Darl's part and motives (for instance, in the wood-gathering incident) and quite wrong about Addie's illegitimate son ("A Bundren through and through") (p.21). She is "wrong" from somebody else's perspective, that is to say, not from her own; her view of things is "true" for her.

By placing the first DARL and CORA sections in juxtaposition at the start, Faulkner inducts the reader into the range of consciousness to be rendered in the videologues. The differences between the two sections is immediately striking. If, thrown off by Cora's apparent errors, we seize on Darl's videologues as the truest guide to reality in the story (as one critic does: "What Darl sees is true"12), then
we are subject to the uncomfortable experience of moving ever deeper into a schizoid world and finally being taken off to the asylum at Jackson. On the other hand, if we subscribe to Cora's self-induced illusions, we have a stable point as she does, but with very limited and distorted vision. The same sort of impossible choice is proffered by each of the other characters. No single videologue is attractive enough to invite reader identification for very long.

The differences between the characters become more clear as the videologues progress. But, whereas in the Lawrence novels studied there is a single, dominant vision informing the whole, in this book of Faulkner's there are several dominant and sub-dominant visions, so that the focus or major theme of the book is nothing less than "reality" itself—a reality with as many valid forms as there are perceivers, or perhaps we should say as many invalid forms. In *The Plumed Serpent*, as I have shown earlier, the positive and negative values embodied in the consciousnesses of the different characters are fairly easy to choose between: the reader identifies with Kate mostly, and scarcely at all with, say, Villiers. In *As I Lay Dying*, the subjective planes are credible enough, but none of them is really desirable or attractive. To read the story can
become a rather disturbingly schizophrenic experience, as we oscillate back and forth from one flawed reality to another. Even objective events lose their consistency and credibility to such a degree that the reader is thrown back from the events to the characters who perceive those events, and since the characters all occupy undesirable planes of reality, the ultimate effect is that we are left in our own ontological solitude.

The quality of the ontological uncertainty can be gauged by comparing *As I Lay Dying* (in respect to the shifting planes of reality) with a work such as Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet*. In the *Quartet*, certain events (such as Justine's lovemaking with Darley) appear in different lights in different volumes, depending on the narrative point of view. Yet, when Durrell shifts us from one narrative to another, the resulting reevaluation of events is illuminating, not disturbing. At the end we know what happened, and we know that different characters experienced the happenings in different ways, according to their levels of knowledge or ignorance of the full nature of the events. But in *As I Lay Dying*, we never do get a sense of the full nature of the events; quite the contrary, we are left puzzled and confused. (We are left with such unresolved questions as: Did Dewey Dell tell Gillespie about the arson, or is that just what Cash thinks? Was it definitely Darl
who fired the barn? What did Addie die of? Was it Anse
who leaped on Darl at the end, or was it Dewey Dell—who
is right about this, Cash or Peabody?)

Well then, if the "reality" of the narrative is so confusing, what continuum is it in the story that engages the reader's attention sufficiently to keep him reading through the puzzle, rather than hurling the book away in frustration? My answer, suggested already, is that it is the extremely powerful imagistic reality of each of the videologues. What we have in this novel, in effect, is not a unified vision of a number of characters moving through a plot, but several independent visions. My own approach to the novel is to experience each of the characters internally and subjectively, in a largely disjunctive way; and this approach seems to me to be induced by the structure of the book. To confront this novel on its own terms is to confront first of all the inside of each character's head, each of them separate and different in a world which they only partly share.

To become aware of the striking differences in the realities of the characters takes a little time, though Faulkner has helped us by placing the DARL and CORA sections in juxtaposition at the start. The second reading is easier. With familiarity, we come to recognise certain technical
means by which Faulkner makes us aware of the individual differences in the characters. Of these the most important is the sight motif.

THE SIGHT MOTIF

The sight motif pervades the novel very intensively, in different forms. First there are the actual eyes of the different characters, often described in strikingly unusual language. One thinks immediately of Jewel's eyes: "pale eyes like wood, set into his wooden face" (p.4), "eyes in which the glare swims like two small torches" (p.208), eyes, which according to Armstid, are capable of "blaring" (p.179), even as Dewey Dell's eyes are seen by Tull as "kind of blaring up and going hard" (p.118). No sooner does the reader begin to notice these odd descriptions, than they start coming at him from practically every page. The new Mrs. Bundren, according to Cash, has "kind of hard-looking pop eyes" (p.247), and we even discover at one point that a "horse's eyes roll with soft, fleet, wild opaline fire" (p.209). Tull says that Darl has "queer eyes...that makes folks talk" (p.118), and that Jewel's (again) are "like pieces of a broken plate" (p.120); Anse's eyes appear to Tull "like pieces of burnt-out cinder fixed in his face" (p.30). And so on. Then again, apart from actual
descriptions of eyes, there are many references to vision. For instance, we find that Dewey Dell and Darl communicate through their eyes; they look at one another and talk "without the words" (p.26). Darl senses that the mules have "already seen in the thick water the shape of the disaster which they could not speak and we could not see" (p.139). Cash and Darl "look at one another with long probing looks, looks that plunge unimpeded through one another's eyes and into the ultimate secret place" (p.129). And so on. The sight motif includes also those instances of clairvoyance whereby Darl describes in detail events he has not seen, principally the central event of the novel (Addie's death) and Jewel's savage contest with his horse which is so vividly presented (p.12). Anse too has a certain clairvoyance or special vision enabling him to see the rain or "same as see it with second-sight" (p.30).

What is the effect of the extraordinary concentration on eyes and vision? Firstly, I think that coming upon the extremely mannered images in many places ("driving his eyes at me like two hounds in a strange yard"[p.162]), the reader becomes very aware of vision as an important feature of each character—i.e. one simply begins to notice eyes and sight a lot, even as one's own imaginative eyes are envisioning the vivid scenes Faulkner presents—and secondly, one's attention becomes increasingly occupied with the
multiple processes of perception and communication—i.e. one begins to observe the details of each character's mental view of things. Thirdly, and arising from the other two reactions, I think one soon starts to rank the characters on a scale of sensitive perception. On this scale, the quality of the eye motifs helps, in each occurrence, to fix the character's level of awareness. For example, Darl's perpetual awareness that Jewel's eyes are wooden and pale, seems to come to mean that Darl considers Jewel shallow or perhaps insensitive to the meaning of things as he (Darl) perceives them. The fact that Dewey Dell's eyes are "as black a pair of eyes as ever [Moseley] saw" (p. 189), seems to stand in illuminating contrast to the perpetual paleness of Jewel's eyes. The nature of that contrast is a subjective matter for each reader I suppose, and yet one can't help feeling that the difference in their eyes indicates that Jewel and his sister have contrasting attitudes to life, or perceptions of "reality." Jewel with his "bone-white eyes" (Armstid, p. 178) "pale as two bleached chips in his face" (Darl, p. 138), is a man of shallow understanding, perhaps, non-cerebral, only dumbly aware of things. The blackness of Dewey Dell's eyes, on the other hand, perhaps suggests a depth of understanding of human affairs, which her pregnancy has forced upon her. Jewel's eyes only get a more
pleasant (?) epithet when they link him with a horse: both the horse and Jewel are seen to have eyes like marbles (pp. 174, 181), suggesting some similarity between their forms of consciousness. And if Jewel is at one end of the scale of whatever kind of consciousness the eye motif renders, then of course Darl is at the other. Darl's eyes are deep with hidden communication. Dewey Dell calls them "eyes gone further than the food and the lamp, full of the land dug out of his skull and the holes filled with distance beyond the land" (p. 25).

Not to belabour the point, the eye motif signifies—in some occurrences very clearly, in others rather obscurely—the quality of life in the characters. Tull sees that Anse's eyes are "like pieces of burnt-out cinder fixed in his face, looking out over the land" (p. 30) and this provides, I think, a marvelous imagistic detail of Anse's burnt-out energy and hopes. Similarly, in Addie's last hours, her state of consciousness is signified by the eyes: Peabody sees her eyes to be all that's still moving: "It's like they touch us, not with sight or sense, but like the stream from a hose touches you, the stream at the instant of impact as dissociated from the nozzle as though it had never been there" (p. 43), a brilliant and delicate rendering of Addie's detachment from him and the rest of the world; as she dies, she drives the stranger,
Peabody, from the room, to be alone with her kin, using her eyes to "shove at" him (p.44). Darl, imagining her death, sees her last flare of strength in an eye image: "Her eyes, the life in them, rushing suddenly upon them; the two flames glare up for a steady instant. Then they go out as though someone had leaned down and blown upon them" (p.47). We are left, I think, with a sense of Addie principally and primarily as a consciousness, not primarily as the baker of cakes or the bearer of children or any of the other female stereotypes which she also fills. The focus on consciousness is achieved not conceptually, but imagistically, very visually, by the numinous motif of eyes/candles here seen.

So far so good: The reader progressing through the text, notices the recurrence of the motif of sight, and begins to form judgments about the qualities of each of the characters' consciousnesses. Now arises a complication. How do we deal with the realisation that all these perceptions of characters are retailed through the eyes of particular characters themselves? For instance, as I have quoted above, Peabody observes the dying Addie "shove at" him with her eyes. This, taken in conjunction with Darl's (and other people's) perceptions of Addie's eyes, conveys the tremendous hostility in her consciousness. But what
does it reveal about Peabody? This question shows immediately that the motif operates with a double edge, and we now begin to reassess the videologues in terms of what they show about the perceiver, not just the perceived. Eventually, as I've suggested earlier, this level of meaning becomes dominant in the narrative (just as the thirteen ways of looking at the blackbird tell more about the lookers than about the blackbird.) I've mentioned already the progress evident in Cash, from consciousness of practical details of the coffin to an awareness of Darl's position and a sympathy for it. Indeed, Cash even becomes aware at the end of Darl's capacity for clairvoyance ("It was just like he knowed, like he could see through the walls and into the next ten minutes" [p.226]). Such progress in awareness seems to suggest that Cash now takes over the position as the most conscious survivor in the family group (Vardaman being too young at this point to appreciate much of what he sees, though his capacity for vision is evidently extremely great, so much so that one suspects that he will in time be following Darl to the asylum). As with Cash, so with Darl: the retrospective functioning of the perceptions in Darl's videologues shows him to be losing his hold on any manageable reality; Macbeth-like hallucinations invade his consciousness towards the end (especially: "In the sand the wheels whisper, as though the very earth would hush
our entry" [p.219]). He withdraws to the world of private perception, till in his last videologue Darl's consciousness splits off from his body in both time and space as he begins, "Darl has gone to Jackson" (p.243).

The motif of sight is an interesting and, to my mind, rather successful technique for the rendering of consciousness. Its subtle variations of symbolic meaning derive in part from the complex concept of "sight" in the English language. We say "I see," for any one of a dozen or more meanings—even my small desk dictionary gives fifteen. In this novel the motif of sight has a similar range of symbolic potential, to express states of cognition, capacities of awareness, in general the quality of consciousness, as I've shown briefly above. Once a reader appreciates the pervasiveness and mode of operation of the motif, the whole reading experience of the book becomes at once a good deal clearer and more illuminating. From this single strand in the narrative texture alone, it is possible to know quite a lot about the qualities of each of the characters, as I've illustrated. Secondly, as the reader experiences the different and sometimes conflicting perspectives which the videologues offer onto the events of the plot, he becomes increasingly aware of the relativity and subjectivity of each person's sight, including finally his own.
THE MOTIF OF TRAVEL

A second major technique by which Faulkner reveals the qualities and different identities of the characters is the motif of travel or motion. This motif also recurs in many forms, ranging from Anse's tree-like stasis and his meditation on the pernicious effects of roads ("keeping the folks restless and wanting to get up and go somewheres else when He aimed for them to stay put like a tree or a stand of corn" [p.35]), to Cora's religious affirmation that she is "bounding toward [her] God and [her] reward" (p.86) as she rides home from the funeral; to Darl's sisyphean image of the absurdity of motion in life ("That's why you must walk up the hills, so you can ride down again" [p.217]), and so on. This motif is rather less obvious in the text than the motif of sight, but is no less illuminating once recognised.

The most complex and symbolically significant appearance of the motif is, of course, the burial journey itself. The fact that all members of the family take it, despite several separate reasons for not doing so, renders the overwhelming power of unity in the family. Their attitudes to travel in general, and the attitudes each holds or develops towards the trip, reveal their separate
identities linked together in this communal purpose. For Darl, the journey seems early on to be pointless, "uninferant of progress, as though time and not space were decreasing" (p.101) and ultimately to be absurd, as noted above. Indeed the very motion of the wagon seems to him to be mirrored in its uselessness by the motion of the circle of vultures in the sky: "An outward semblance of form and purpose, but with no inference of motion, progress or retrograde" (p.216). And yet, for all its absurdity, Darl never thinks of not making the journey with the family. It's a pointless trip, and he tries to end it for all of them by burning the coffin en route, but he never contemplates privately quitting. This fact not only bespeaks the strength of the family ties that operate even in him, but also makes Darl's discarding by the family at the end all the more poignant. Of all of them he most clearly saw the stupidity of travelling, yet he went along. His loyalty to the communal purpose brought on increased insanity, and ultimate rejection by the very community to which he unquestioningly committed himself.

It's worth noting how at least two people notice and react to portions of Darl's attitude to the journey. In the DARL section just quoted, Darl first articulates his full sense of the absurdity of a motion "uninferant of
progress." On a second or third reading, this articulation of absurdity suddenly explains a factor in Anse's perception in the preceding section, which may have mystified or passed us by at first reading. In that previous section, Anse mentions five times in the space of a page that Darl is laughing. The time is the moment of entry into Tull's lane, and a quick check of the DARL section shows that this is also the exact time at which Darl expresses his sense of the absurd. The combined evidence of the two sections thus tells the reader why Darl is laughing. But Anse makes no attempt to discover why Darl is laughing; he simply complains: "How many times I told him it's doing such things as that that makes folks talk about him" (p. 99). Thus the motif of travel here serves most subtly as an indicator of Darl's alienation from his father and from the society ("folks") because of his particular brand of perception.

The same alienation is revealed, too, by the second person's reaction to Darl's attitude to the journey, namely Cash's. But this time the alienation from society is partly (though perhaps ironically) balanced by evidence of a growing unity between himself and Cash. Near the end, Cash reflects in his practical way that Darl's attempt to put an end to the journey was a proper act, and something he himself might well have undertaken. Cash's reasons for wanting
to end the absurd trip are not given, and must be deduced if at all from slight hints such as the judgment "he done right in a way," or Cash's expressed wish to "get shut of her in some clean way" (p.223). Whatever his reasons, Cash at least perceived a similarity of intention between himself and Darl, and in discovering this he discovers a considerable empathy for Darl; this mood of empathy leads him to a (for him) extremely sophisticated definition of insanity:

Sometimes I think it aint none of us pure crazy and aint none of us pure sane until the balance of us talks him that-a-way. It's like it aint so much what a fellow does, but it's the way the majority of folks is looking at him when he does it. (p.223)

Thus Faulkner uses the attitudes of the two eldest brothers to the journey as a means of revealing the relationship between them (a growing tolerance and empathy on Cash's part), and also as a means of re-evoking the theme of relativity carried in the different perspectives of the different videologues. For Cash perceives that being crazy is a relative condition, a social minority status: "He can't see eye to eye with other folks" (p.223).

Jewel's attitude to the journey is extremely revealing, both about himself and about the family. To start with Jewel asserts his half-member status in the family by going along with them, but on his own horse. Thus he preserves his independence and separate identity,
as we might think of a contemporary teenager taking a holiday trip with his family, but insisting that he ride his own motorcycle while the rest of the family travels together in the family camper-truck. Yet the strange thing is that Jewel is the main facilitator of the communal journey. He personally saves the coffin from premature loss on two occasions, and uses and ultimately loses his horse to get the cortege to Jefferson. Why is he so anxious for the journey to proceed? The most convincing answer seems to me to come through certain motifs of stasis. These motifs lead me to perceive that Jewel somehow thinks of the journey as static, a means of keeping his mother.

This attitude is perhaps most clearly visible in the literally brake-like position he takes up as they enter Jefferson and the burial is imminent:

He does not get on even though the wagon has started again. "Get in, Jewel," I say. "Come on. Let's get away from here." But he does not get in. Instead he sets his foot on the turning hub of the rear wheel, one hand grasping the stanchion, and with the hub turning smoothly under his sole he lifts the other foot and squats there, staring straight ahead, motionless . . . . (p.221)

This last adjective recurs frequently in regard to Jewel during the journey. In fact Darl even links Jewel's motionlessness with the motionlessness of the buzzards which imagistically mark the fact of Addie's death:¹⁵
Motionless, the tall buzzards hang in soaring circles, the clouds giving them an illusion of retrograde.

Motionless, wooden-backed, wooden-faced, Jewel shapes the horse in a rigid stoop like a hawk, hook-winged. (p.89)

Jewel's "motionless" and "wooden" appearance, evoked in dozens of motif variations throughout the text, stand in odd contrast to his energy of forwarding the journey. And that expense of energy is also somewhat contradictory to the static posture on the wagon wheel in which he enters the last stage of the journey, in Jefferson. From these contradictions it seems clear that Jewel is ambivalent toward the journey, wanting it to proceed, but reluctant for it to end. That ambivalence renders his attitude to his mother's death—a desire to prolong and still her not-yet-buried state, as though to retain her permanently.

Some corroborative evidence for this interpretation exists in Jewel's own, single monologue, in which he fantasizes himself linked to his mother in death ("me and her on a high hill" [p.15]). Further corroboration comes from the apparent discrepancy between his protective care over the coffin, and his crude and irreverent attitude to Addie's grave: "Who the hell can't dig a damn hole in the ground?" (p.218) (though it might be argued that this latter is simply a blustering expression of deep emotion). To Jewel, the journey is a practical means of postponing the moment
when he has to deal with the emotional problem of his mother's death.

One can see from these examples how pervasive the motif of travel is in the book, and I hope, by the examples that I've analysed, how illuminating a motif of vision it is. One could go into similar detail in examining the attitudes to travel of the characters not yet mentioned. Anse's dual motivation, for instance (to get his teeth and to fulfil Addie's wish) reveals in many different occurrences both his loyalty to the tradition of family unity, and his personal selfishness. Dewey Dell's singleminded, secret concern with her abortion—she exhibits no other interest in the journey whatsoever—renders the selfish nature of her personality. And so on. Each of the separate attitudes to travel, and specifically to the funeral journey, is a way of looking at the "blackbird." The "fourteenth way" that emerges for the reader is a strong perception of the solidarity of a family composed of divergent individuals. By extension this "fourteenth" image becomes a luminous symbol of the condition of human society: a purposive conjunction of selfish mortals, exhibiting unbreakable loyalty to the vehicle of the family en route to the grave.
Having traced the working of three main techniques of vision in this novel, we come to the problematic question of defining the overall effect of these techniques. What is the vision that the novel embodies? What is the reader's "own fourteenth image of that blackbird, which [Faulkner] would like to think is the truth?" The answer I think lies in the term "moral awareness." The book is primarily an exercise involving the reader in a participant activity of seeing through the eyes of each of the characters. The fourteenth image of the blackbird is the composite knowledge of a family from the inside—a knowledge which enables the reader to recognise the separate validity of the motivations of each member. And it's an image finally of the power of family ties, which enable a most varied group of people to cooperate together from extremely different starting points and with extremely different interests, in overcoming impossible odds to complete a rather absurd mission. Whether or not the reader wishes to take this experience and extend it outwards from the Bundren family to larger units of society or even the entire human race, is up to him. Faulkner makes such an extension possible by choosing archetypal elements for his plot: "I took this family: and subjected them to the two greatest catastrophes man can suffer—flood and fire, that's all."
It may be objected that the elements of dynamic interaction between reader and artist which I've discussed so far are only a part of the content of the novel. What about ideas? What about Addie's function? What about mythic overtones of the journey? What about "the sense of an ending" in *As I Lay Dying*? Surely these and others are central components, and criticism which ignores them is distorted? My answer is that the obtrusion of mannered texture and puzzling structure are the strongest-acting forces in the book, the major elements of vision. However, it would be possible to show in a longer treatment how these elements are related to other, more conventional fictive elements. For instance, I have scarcely mentioned the ADDIE section, because it does not contain much of the impact of vision of the novel. It is in fact a rather unmannered, rather conventional cerebral stream of consciousness. However, it is possible to show how this section, through cerebral monologue, serves as a verbal assertion of the validity of non-verbal communication which is practiced by most of the family. Addie's monologue asserts cognitively what the reader experiences affectively: that seeing or otherwise using the senses is a better guide to reality than talking. Words are "just a shape to fill a lack" (p.164), and Addie learned during her teaching years
that hitting her pupils rather than talking to them was the only way to leave her mark on them: "I would think with each blow of the switch: Now you are aware of me" (p.162).

The clearest, cameo examples of the family's preference for sense evidence over words are the two or three instances when Cash requires visual, not merely verbal, reassurance that his tools are safe, e.g.:

"It's his tools," [Dewey Dell] said. "I brought them in," Darl said. I got them."

"He wants to see them," she said. So Darl brought them in where he could see them. (p.1??)

Thus, though surprisingly enough Addie's section is not central in the presentation of vision in the novel, it relates to the rest of the book. Likewise, other elements of critical interest can be shown to relate to the function of the dynamics of vision, though they are not as immediate and powerful as those which I've discussed.
In Chapter Two above, I gave the definition of "the novel of vision" as a novel in which the artist creates a self-contained value scheme which is radically unconventional, and further, as a novel in which the way of seeing is a major part of the artistic gesture, and usually more important than the thing seen. Armed with these definitions, a reader can approach As I Lay Dying, and by paying careful attention to its striking mannerisms, obtain a reading of a spectrum of human types composing a human family and a society. The unusual structure and texture make sense after a while, in their own terms, so much so that this book becomes one which you can re-read frequently with constant growth. The defamiliarization of reality is so extreme in this novel that it takes many readings before its aberrations begin to seem normal. The motif of vision (esp. eyes) becomes a new tool of moral awareness in life—I literally find myself studying people's eyes with strange interest after reading this book. The subjectivity and relativity of the videologues likewise provide one with an extremely affective (as opposed to cognitive) awareness of human variety and the subjectivity of all perception. As I Lay Dying is in fact the most striking example I know, of a novel of vision.
FOOTNOTES

1 Faulkner in the University, p. 274.

2 For an accurate and fairly extensive survey of specific and general Faulkner criticism published to 1960, including some analysis of trends, see William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, eds. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State U. Press, 1960), pp. 1-50. James B. Meriwether, in "Faulkner and the New Criticism," BA, 37 (Summer 1963), 87-95, makes the point that New Critics were very late in bringing to Faulkner's texts the close textual scrutiny which their "carefully wrought complexities" seem to require.


6 Faulkner in the University, p. 274.

7 Faulkner in the University, p. 87.

8 Faulkner in the University, p. 113.

See also the questioner in *Faulkner in the University*, p. 86: "Mr. Faulkner, the book of yours which troubles me the most—puzzles me most, doesn't trouble me at all—is *As I Lay Dying*.

Page references incorporated in the text are to the 1964 Random House (Vintage) edition, which contains the corrections based on the Meriwether collations.

Waggoner, p. 63.

*Macbeth*, II, i, 56-58.

Common use may dull our awareness of the complexity of the concept "sight" in English. Comparison with another language is a useful reminder: Swahili, for example, allows "to hear" (*kusikia*) as a synonym for "to understand" (*kufahamu*), but does not allow "to see" (*kuona*) to carry that meaning, as English does.

Notice Armstid's comment on their significance: "Circling and circling for everybody in the county to see what was in my barn" (p. 177).

*Faulkner in the University*, p. 87.
"Perhaps you are right," Mr. Compson said. "Maybe even the light of day, let alone this—"he indicated the single globe stained and bug-fouled from the long summer and which even then gave off but little light—"would be too much for it, for them. Yes, for them: of that day and time, of a dead time; people too as we are, and victims too as we are, but victims of a different circumstance, simpler and therefore, integer for integer, larger, more heroic and the figures thereof more heroic too, not dwarfed and involved but distinct, uncomplex who had the gift of loving once and dying once instead of being diffused and scattered creatures drawn blindly limb from limb from a grab bag and assembled, author and victim too of a thousand homicides and a thousand copulations and divorcements. Perhaps you are right. Perhaps any more light than this would be too much for it." But he did not give Quentin the letter at once.

He sat again, Quentin sitting again too, and took up the cigar from the verandah rail, the coal glowing again, the wistaria colored smoke drifting again unwinded across Quentin's face as Mr. Compson raised his feet once more to the railing . . . .

(Absalom, Absalom!)
From start to finish, _Absalom, Absalom!_ is a record of people engaged in struggling to understand the facts and motivations of those events which constitute the core plot of the book, namely the events surrounding Thomas Sutpen. The reader's only access to this core plot is the series of conversations, reconstructions and speculations which occur in 1909-10, forty-one years after Sutpen's death. The core plot does not exist independently. Thus the subject of the novel is not Sutpen's life but the minds and words of the people in 1909-10 (together with a very small amount of action in 1910). By creating the narrative in this way, Faulkner has utterly confused many readers, including published critics. The confusion is inevitable and, I think, deliberate. To come to terms with this novel involves first and foremost a plunge into confusion, which I shall begin by describing.

As we begin to read, and because we are already engaged in the cooperative act of fictive response by virtue of having opened the covers of the book and pretending we are in Jefferson, Miss., at 2. p.m. on a hot September day in 1910, we naturally tend to further our cooperation as the first character-narrator (Rosa) begins her tale; and so we slip back to 1865 and earlier, not realizing for a while that the narrative we read is an untrustworthy record.
By the use of the first italics in the text, Faulkner implicitly warns us that the story we are hearing, of 1833, is only what Quentin hears Rosa saying, and therefore perhaps not as objectively true as the two pages of narrative so far in which we have had the security of an omniscient narrator. Any effects of this warning soon wear off, however, as the older story increasingly ousts the present continuum from the narrative. With no other perspective onto the events of 1835-1865, we are inevitably taken into Rosa's tale, and at first think of it as true. But then as the book proceeds, oscillating from one narrator to another, from one time sequence to another, the "truth" recedes from us because discrepancies in the different stories begin to emerge. For most readers, the first main clue to the distorting subjectivity of the account is, I suspect, a recognition of Rosa's insistent use of demonic imagery in her presentation of Sutpen to Quentin, and hence to us. Now, had the different narrative accounts been as clearly marked and distinctly separated as they are, for instance, in the texts of As I Lay Dying or The Sound and the Fury, we should probably have little trouble in knowing, as we read, where the narrative distortions are, and where the objective truth is told accurately. But the fact is that these separations and distinctions are not at all clear.
As we move deeper and deeper into the labyrinth of this large novel, we keep losing track of who is talking, and often, about whom. Only in later stages of reading do we begin to recognize the shape of the narrative, and even after several readings many questions of fact remain to puzzle us. I expect most readers have experienced the frustration with this book of wanting to check on who is narrating at a particular point, and spending anything up to ten minutes riffling through pages trying to find the answer. Likewise I expect most readers have been terribly perplexed by gaps in the detail of the plot, like those students at the University of Virginia who quizzed Faulkner at length about such things as: "Did Judith love Bon?" or "At what point does Bon find out about his Negro blood and how does he find it out?" etc.\(^2\)

Given that this is a reasonably accurate description of what it's like actually to read *Absalom, Absalom!*, the question is, Why should Faulkner do this to the reader? What is the value to this fiction of having such a confusing mesh of not entirely reliable narrators? The answer is so simple that in the confusion of reading we are in danger of missing it. The valuable effect of narrative confusion is precisely to confuse us, and thereby to force us to engage in the very difficult activity of trying to understand, just
as the narrators are doing each in their own way. To re-state my earlier definition: the subject of this novel is the struggle to understand, and its method of taking us into that subject is directly experiential. Faulkner offers us not simply a picture of struggle, but an opportunity to struggle ourselves. Not only do we see the various characters and narrators struggling to understand, but we ourselves are forced to join them if we are to get any sense out of what is on the pages.

The subject of the novel is, then, the struggle to understand. The struggle of the narrators produces a multiple texture of perceptions of the components in the core plot, defined earlier. Around these components is placed, as a thin frame, that small portion of action which takes place in 1910. My purpose is to illuminate both main components of the story: the struggle to understand (which I call "the process of vision") and the kaleidoscope of perceptions which forms the record of the narrators' struggles ("the texture of vision"). Just as Quentin sat peering through the smoke of his father's cigar drifting past his face, while the father tried to recall and make sense of the events of the past for his son, so too the reader must peer through the smokescreen of an opaque narrative texture to discover and make sense of the events that
lie behind it. The process of peering is as much and as valuable a part of the reading experience of the novel as is the discernment of its characters, their motivations, and the events that unfold.

THE PROCESS OF VISION

I shall consider three aspects of the process of vision in Absalom, Absalom!: the struggle to see, the values of vision, the effect of perspective.

a.) The Struggle to See:

Everyone involved in the total experience of Absalom, Absalom!--the primary characters, the narrators, the readers and critics--participates in a struggle to reach understanding or insight. For the characters acting out their drama in Sutpen's lifetime, the struggle mainly involves trying to understand what's going on around them, so that they can choose how to act. For the narrators--one of whom (Rosa) is also one of the primary characters--the struggle involves mainly trying to fathom the reasons and motivations behind the various stages of the action, after first having determined the facts of what happened (but it is important to remember that each of the narrators works within certain preconceptions, so that their struggles to some extent take the form of trying to discover those
things which will support their preconceived visions of the plot). For readers and critics the struggle is mainly to discover facts and to deduce motivations. Because of this focussing on motivation, Absalom is more nearly a novel of manners than it is a tragic drama or a chronicle of history or a Gothic novel. But unlike other novels of manners, Pride and Prejudice, say, or The Golden Bowl, in which there is a unified narrative voice presenting a coherent account of the action, here the fragmentation and disjunction of the narrative creates a condition in which the process of observation is as much the focus and point of reading as the "manners" which are under scrutiny. As with any novel of manners, we leave a reading of Absalom with an increased awareness of the possibilities of human behaviour; but unlike other novels of manners, Absalom directly exercises us in the complex task of arriving at the materials of that awareness, so that we leave the reading with a newly practiced skill in striving for insight. Absalom forces us, in a way quite unusual in fiction, to become participants in invention. Faulkner's jerky definition of the main tool of a writer applies well to the required stance of the reader of this book:
The most important thing is insight, that is, to be--curiosity--to wonder, to mull, and to muse why it is that man does what he does. . . To watch people, to have--to never judge people. To watch people, what they do, without intolerance. Simply to learn why it is they did what they did.

This attempt to gain insight differs slightly, as I said, for the primary characters (participants in the core plot) than for the narrators and readers, and I shall consider the different struggles separately.

For the primary characters the recurrent problem throughout their lives is some form of the two-part question: "What's going on here, and what should I do about it?" Nowhere is this problem more clear than in its first appearance in the chronology of the plot: the moment where the child Sutpen is sent round to the back door of the house to which he brings a message. Until this point in his life, the child has lived without insight into the why's and wherefore's even of things he was aware of. For instance, he was learning about class prejudice, "that there was a difference between white men and white men," but it was an intuitive learning, without insight: "He had begun to discern that without being aware of it yet" (p.226). The absence of insight in the above example is typical of this portion of Sutpen's story (up to the message incident). The pages are filled with phrases like "he had never thought
about" (pp.221-232 passim). The moment of being sent around to the back door marks the turning point in Sutpen's life, and from then on his consciousness is perpetually engulfed by the need to understand what's happening, and what to do about it. Running from the house, he crawls into a cave, and the text tells us why:

Because he couldn't get it straight yet. He couldn't even realize yet that his trouble, his impediment, was innocence because he would not be able to realize that until he got it straight. So he was seeking among what little he had to call experience for something to measure it by, and he couldn't find anything. (p.233)

This troubled process of "seeking" continues for five tormented pages, while the boy's consciousness splits into two confused voices in a dialogue trying to "get it straight."

At last he comes to understand, using the simple analogy of rifles, why he has been turned away from the front door of the house, and what to do about it:

He thought: 'If you were fixing to combat them that had the fine rifles, the first thing you would do would be to get yourself the nearest thing to a fine rifle you could borrow or steal or make, wouldn't it?' and he said Yes. 'But this aint a question of rifles. So to combat them you have got to have what they have that made them do what the man did. You have got to have land and niggers and a fine house to combat them with. You see?' and he said Yes again. He left that night. . . (p.238)

He turned away because the folks in the house felt impelled to exercise their superiority over him; their
possession of "fine rifles" so to speak. With this new insight into the mechanics of human society such as he meets it, Sutpen is able to go on and eventually to attempt to realize his grand design. He sets out to attain social superiority in the form of land, Negroes, a fine house. His capacity of vision is sufficient for his purposes, up to the time when he finds his design in jeopardy from Bon. His response to this crisis is to view it as the product of an error in his understanding: "not calling it retribution, no sins of the father come home to roost; not even calling it bad luck, but just a mistake" (p.267). His insight has failed him somewhere down the line, so now, in old age, Sutpen tries to cure his vision of the "mistake" by making the journey to town to see old General Compson, "to review the facts for an impartial (and Grandfather said he believed, a legally trained) mind to examine and find and point out to him. Not moral retribution you see: just an old mistake in fact which a man of courage and shrewdness . . . could still combat if he could only find out what the mistake had been" (pp.267-8).

Sutpen never recognizes the reasons for his "mistake," but he does gain the insight to deal with its consequences. Through the visit with General Compson, Sutpen comes to realize that the impending link between Judith and
Bon offers him only two alternative courses of action, both bad: "I am now faced with a second necessity to choose," he tells the General, "the curious factor of which is not, as you pointed out and as first appeared to me, that the necessity for a new choice should have arisen, but that either choice . . . leads to the same result" (p. 274). Although nowhere in the narrative do we observe Sutpen's mind struggling to a resolution of this dilemma, the events reveal that he does in fact attain that insight: he finds a third solution, not thought of before, namely to get Henry to prevent the marriage by killing Bon. This prevents both the social humiliation of acknowledging the Negro blood in his first marriage, and the personal defeat of simply allowing the marriage to take place, which would have constituted to Sutpen "a mockery and a betrayal of that little boy who approached that door fifty years ago" (p. 274).

Sutpen's next (and last) problem is to get a new son born, now that Bon is dead and Henry a fugitive. His first attempt fails, specifically because of a lapse of insight. He proposes to Rosa in such terms as Mr. Compson says he ought to have known would have failed: "The shrewdness failed him again. It broke down, it vanished . . . . . . So he suggested what he suggested to her, and she
did what he should have known she would do, and would have known probably if he had not bogged himself again in his morality . . ." (p.279). Preoccupied with what Mr. Compson calls his "morality," (i.e. his determination to create a male lineage invulnerable to social denigration) and in a hurry because of advancing years, Sutpen fails in the struggle to understand people, consequently badly misjudges Rosa and loses her. Finally of course, it is Sutpen's dismal lack of insight into Wash Jones' feelings that brings about his death. At the end of his life Sutpen appears totally to lack any capacity to understand people's feelings and motivations. Wash Jones kills him for his amazingly crass treatment of Millie ("Too bad you're not a mare too, then I could give you a decent stall in the stable" [p.286]). And Wash's last mutterings ironically point up Sutpen's failure of insight: "But I never expected that, Kernel! You know I never!" (p.290) Unfortunately for Wash, and Millie, and the child, and for Sutpen himself, the old man had by this time given up the struggle to understand what people expected and what they didn't.

What's going on, and what to do about it? This, as I've said, is the form which the struggle to understand takes in the lives of the primary characters. It is clearly this question too that plagues both Bon and Henry throughout
their parts in the drama. Henry trails around New Orleans at the heels of his mentor, Bon, as the latter carefully cultivates the former's understanding, and Henry is mystified by much of what he sees:

'Oh I know. I know. You give me two and two and tell me it makes five and it does make five. But there is still the marriage. Suppose I assume an obligation to a man who cannot speak my language, the obligation stated to him in his own and I agree to it: am I any the less obligated because I did not happen to know the tongue in which he accepted me in good faith?' (p.118)

Law student that he now is, Henry displays some intellectual and emotional energy in wrestling with the terms of the dilemma he finds himself in, but his mind is not clear. He can't "get it straight" as his father once did many years before, and instead ends up waiting "four years, holding the three of them in that abeyance, that durance, waiting, hoping for Bon to renounce the woman and dissolve the marriage which he (Henry) admitted was no marriage, and which he must have known as soon as he saw the woman and the child that Bon would not renounce" (p.119). Yet henry does not give up the struggle. If the war has postponed the outcome of the issue, that outcome must nevertheless be resolved, either by an enemy bullet or by himself. On the very last day he struggles with the terms "brother" and "nigger," trying to resolve them:
---Then do it now, Bon says. Henry looks at the pistol; now he is not only panting, he is trembling; when he speaks now his voice is not even the exhalation, it is the suffused and suffocating inbreath itself:
---You are my brother.
---No I'm not. I'm the nigger that's going to sleep with your sister. Unless you stop me, Henry. (p.358)

When he finally shoots Bon he does so in an enormous tension between what he knows he must do, and his understanding of why he should. In fact he has been in this unresolvable dilemma since his father first told him Bon must not marry Judith; he knew "that he was doomed and destined to kill" (p.91), but his preference was always to procrastinate in the "hope and dream of change in Bon" (p.91) as the way out of the problem. Henry kills Bon at the end in trance-like obedience to his father's command. Had he known what was in Bon's mind, causing the latter to refuse simply to give up and go away, he might have found courage to disobey his father. That is, had Henry realized how deeply wounded Bon was by Sutpen's failure to give him the slightest token of acknowledgment, he might have weighed that immoral cruelty of his father against the social stigma of Bon's mixed blood, and decided on a different course of action—perhaps. At all events, Henry's struggle to understand did not succeed in bringing the truth to light, as Shreve and Quentin bring
it to light in a long night of struggling to understand forty-five years after the event.

Bon slowly discovers himself to be the victim of other people's decision and machinations. His struggle to see what is going on is slow to develop:

He found out that his mother was up to something and he not only didn't care, he didn't care that he didn't know what it was; he got older and found out that she had been shaping and tempering him to be the instrument for whatever it was her hand was implacable for. (p.299)

This early attitude of not caring persists only temporarily. Soon he is mightily curious to understand what exactly his mother and the lawyer are cooking up between them, and begins to think in terms of "beating" (p.310) them at their game. Finally, by the time he's on the boat for Oxford, the desire to get insight into the machinations involving him becomes quite overwhelming:

And now this--school, college--and he twenty-eight years old. And not only that, but this particular college, which he had never heard of, which ten years ago did not even exist; and knowing too that it was the lawyer that had chosen it for him--what sober, what intent, what almost frowning Why? Why? Why? this particular one above all others?--maybe leaning there in that solitude between panting smoke and engines and almost touching the answer, aware of the jigsaw puzzle picture integers of it waiting, almost lurking, just beyond his reach, inextricable, jumbled and unrecognizable yet on the point of falling into pattern which would reveal to him at once, like a flash of
light, the meaning of his whole life past—the Haiti, the childhood, the lawyer, the woman who was his mother. (pp.312-3)

The jigsaw takes shape slowly, till Bon comes to the obsessive realization that Sutpen is his father—obsessive in the sense that he now begins desperately to crave a token of recognition. Even as Sutpen does nothing, Bon repeatedly interprets his failure to act as some form of secret recognition ("he left no message for me here because the others are not to suspect yet" [p.329]), thus revealing enormous energy in the struggle to understand his father's motives.

The second context of Bon's struggle for insight is in his relationship to Henry. Will his brother kill him? For four years Bon and Henry fight together in the war, and this unanswered question lies between them like corrupt ground. Henry's four years of hesitation, during which his brother not only saves him from dying of his wounds (according to Shreve [p.344]) but even suggests to Henry that he could kill him (Bon) in battle and nobody would know—all this is too much finally for Bon's patience, and he hands Henry the pistol. One can attribute Bon's suicidal attempt to get to Judith finally, not so much to love; as to the simple need to know whether Henry, like his father, will reject him utterly; Shreve and Quentin deduce from the
picture of the octoroon on Bon's body, that he really
did not know at the end whether Henry would shoot or
not. (p. 359). In Bon's case, the struggle to understand
is literally a struggle to the death.

Rosa's struggle to understand is undertaken
in such bitter, lonely isolation that it inevitably
produces a grossly distorted personal vision—a gothic
tale, as many critics have pointed out. I shall come to
the matter of distortion in Rosa's tale presently; for the
moment my purpose is simply to draw attention to the enormous
energy of Rosa's struggle for insight—an energy that not
only leads her to urge Quentin finally to publicise the
story, but also prompts her after forty-five years of grim
silence to climb into a carriage and go out once again to
Sutpen's Hundred to hunt out the last surviving element of
the original plot, namely the identity of the secret lodger,
Henry. It is completely in character that she and she alone
sniffed out the secret of Henry's whereabouts (though we may
well wonder how she did it), because throughout her early
life she was the snooper, the pryer, the spy. Her charac-
teristic attitude is standing behind a closed door, figuring
out from hints just exactly what is going on in there:
"... even if I could not have heard through the door at all, I could have repeated the conversation for them . . . ." (p.25)

And her repeated assertions in the fifth chapter that she was not spying ironically point up the fact that actually this is the one activity she spent her whole life at, and was good at. Mr. Compson points out repeatedly to Quentin that Rosa did not even witness many of the things she talks to Quentin about ("So Miss Rosa did not see any of them" (p.74), "She did not see the regiment depart" (p.81), and Rosa herself emphasizes the same point ("You see, I never saw him," [p.150]) all of which emphatically shows the great expense of lonely energy that Rosa put into trying to struggle for insight about what was going on, from the slightest of clues.

Most apparent of all the struggles are those carried on by the narrators. "You see?" (p.99) Mr. Compson asks, as he frames his elaborate deductions for his son; "You see," (p.167) Rosa addresses Quentin, as she struggles to rationalize her participation in the horrid tale. "For Christ's sake wait. You mean that he----," (p.289) Shreve typically interjects as he and Quentin sit up all night wrestling to get the story straight--and later, with a sort of triumph of insight, "Jesus, you can almost see him" (p.297). Perhaps the most interesting (and astonishing) evidence of the energetic struggle of the narrators is Shreve and Quentin's
dual concoction of the entire New Orleans lawyer episode, a lengthy and elaborate deduction based on not a single clue in the narratives they have received from others. This concoction, together with the picture of the "drawing room of baroque and fusty magnificence which Shreve had invented and which," (the omniscient narrator tells us) "was probably true enough" (p.355) and such other things as Shreve's deduction that it was Henry, not Bon, who was wounded at the battle of Shiloh, provide a model of narrative activity for the reader to imitate; like the narrators, the reader too is induced to struggle with the confused and tangled plot, figuring out facts and motives. The last line of the book (the memorable, ambiguous cry, "I dont hate it! I dont hate it!") is typical of that challenge and inducement.

For the primary characters, the struggle for insight at best leads to the ability to choose how to act, as I've shown. For the narrators, and for the reader, the need to do something is reduced proportional to distance from the events of the plot. As Vickery has shown, the narrators are each in their own way trying to find ways of getting the facts to "fit the preconceived." For Rosa, the most involved of the narrators, this need is crucial and compulsive, while for Shreve, at the other end of the
scale, it is primarily an intellectual exercise. What about the reader, what must he do? Why include him along with the narrators in this context? My answer is that the reader experiences a sort of after-effect, a "hunger the author has stirred" in him, Irving Howe calls it, which demands to be satisfied. The story seems not to end with reading, because it's never fully told, and "the continual frustration of our desire to complete the pattern of motivation" pushes us to carry on the tale in our minds, till we are satisfied. The inconclusive ending preserves that "bewildering suspension of elements the book has presented," and such a suspension, as Kermode has argued, is intolerable in the reading of fiction. Hence the reader must do something with the story which will satisfy the craving for an ending, rather than be left inconclusively "in the midst." What precisely each reader will do with the story obviously depends on the kind and depth of his involvement in the fictional world created. For example my personal reaction to the story is somewhat like Shreve's: I consider Sutpen "an example of grotesque human behavior" and with a sense of moral outrage I speculate whether "in time the Jim Bonds are going to conquer the western hemisphere" (p.378); James Guetti, by contrast, suggests an identicality in "Quentin's, and a reader's, position," and dismisses Shreve's perspective by suggesting that "the latter may be
the only unquestionable psychopathological case in the novel—in his capacity for sadism, the emphatic vicariousness of his pleasures, and so on." I take Guetti's and my own different evaluations of Shreve as typical indications of the entirely personal ways in which each reader continues to struggle for insight even after the book has been read and laid aside.

b). The Values of Vision:

The characters, narrators and readers are all engaged, then, in a struggle to see. At this point we may well ask, Why bother? Does the struggle for vision have any payoff? As Slatoff points out, it is pitiful "that Shreve and Quentin seem to have been so little instructed by their immense labor of imagination." The same critic (referring to a range of Faulkner's books) points out that "the agony of his characters almost never leads them or those who outlive them to any wisdom or understanding of their own or the human condition," and this seems to me at least partly an accurate statement. What then is the value of that "agony" and struggle to attain insight?

The answer takes the form of a paradox of knowledge: even though the struggle to see does not produce clear and complete vision as a tool for successful living--
indeed it seems to produce mostly confusion and various de­
grees of despair and bitterness—nevertheless the act of
struggling is itself an ennobling and satisfying human en­
deavour. The reward given to those who struggle might be
summed up in some words of another Quentin, in Arthur Miller's
After The Fall:

To know, and even happily, that we meet un­
blessed; not in some garden of wax fruit
and painted trees, that lie of Eden, but
after, after the fall, after many, many
deaths. Is the knowing all? 15

Yes, perhaps the knowing is all. Like even the simplistic
Ellen, all the main characters and the narrators and the
readers too are motivated to proceed in their individual
searches for insight by the attraction of coming ever closer
to that point where one is able to say, "at least I now know
all of it" (p.29). Even though no-one ever attains that
point of illumination, not even the reader, nevertheless the
attraction of striving towards it is strong enough motiva­
tion to maintain the search. Even though the fragmentary
vision attained is often quite unpleasant, yet the motive
remains strong throughout the book. There is a dramatic
evocation of this strength in the last chapter, which illu­
minates the value I am talking about.

In Chapter IX Quentin re-lives the last journey
out to Sutpen's Hundred with Miss Rosa, and we see how he
gradually becomes obsessed by the same drive for knowledge as Rosa. At first, during the journey and up to the arrival, Quentin is ambivalent about the venture. On the one hand he takes some pleasure in allowing his mind to wander over the events that have taken place in these surroundings, vividly imaging Sutpen's approach to Millie (p. 363), the scenerio of Bon's death (p. 364) and so forth; on the other hand he feels that they really should just turn around and go back home to bed (p. 364). In a little while the poles of his ambivalence intensify:

\[ . . . \text{presently he found himself repeating her words: 'If we can just get to the house, get inside the house,' telling himself, recovering himself in that same breath: 'I am not afraid. I just don't want to be here. I just don't want to know about whatever it is she keeps hidden in it.' (p. 366)} \]

Despite this last assertion, he cannot convince himself that he doesn't want to know. Soon he finds himself "aping without knowing it her own tense fainting haste" (p. 367). Suddenly, excitedly, he intuits that Rosa's exhibition of nervousness is not simply a product of fear, but another kind of reaction, to a mysterious "something" (p. 367) in the house. Before he can being to share her degree of curiosity about the hidden "something," she outstrips him and is ready to take the hatchet from him and break through the door. Still somewhat reluctant ("'So now I shall have to go in,'"
Quentin enters the house. Rosa now completes her mission by beating Clytie out of the way and rushing upstairs to discover Henry. Quentin meets her walking back through the upper hall, and he knows he ought to turn around and follow her and take her home, as he has wanted to do all evening; but the desire to see what is in the room is just too strong to resist, even though he can tell by Rosa's stunned face that it is not going to be a pleasant sight:

... he stood there thinking, 'I should go with her' and then, 'But I must see too now. I will have to. Maybe I shall be sorry tomorrow, but I must see.' (pp. 370-1)

waking or sleeping he walked down that upper hall between the scaling walls and beneath the cracked ceiling, toward the faint light that fell outward from the last door and paused there, saying 'No. No' and then 'Only I must. I have to.' (p. 372)

I emphasize that Quentin's desire to see what is in the room is not mere curiosity. From the moment when he detected the special "something" which was occupying Rosa's attention, Quentin has become increasingly aware that the secret in the room is somehow both important and terrifying. Repeatedly throughout the narration of the incident his language is charged with ominous dramatic heightening (e.g. "he could feel something fierce and implacable and dynamic driving down [Rosa's] thin rigid arms and into his palms and up..."
his own arms;" [p.367] and the effect of the visit on him is practically traumatic. When he gets home he rushes upstairs in a panting haste, strips naked and swabs at his sweaty body with a shirt, as though to cleanse himself from a horror (p.372). Clearly the experience has been for him an encounter with a human symbol of the decay and dissolution of the society that produced him--a shattering blow to his sense of identity; yet he had to go in and look. Thus Faulkner renders in a dramatic incident typical of the entire course of the novel that the struggle to see is a self-fulfilling need, however distressing the object of the vision.

Not all of the characters display the same relentless energy as Quentin, in the struggle for insight. Mr. Compson, for instance, is sometimes content with received information which he does not challenge, such as the theory that it was the existence of Bon's mistress that caused the conflict between Bon and Henry (p.266). Or, another example, Rosa never appears to really try to understand what motivates Sutpen--his grand design--and is content simply to label him a supernatural monster. "Content" is a misleading word however, for despite the limitations of their visions, and perhaps of their energy, it is clear that neither Rosa nor Mr. Compson have ever given up the struggle to see clearly, even though they may have preconceptions about
what they are willing to see. Mr. Compson expresses his frustration with perceptions that "simply don't explain," and concludes fatalistically that perhaps "we are not supposed to know" (p.100). But his fatalism is largely an empty posture; the energetic process of constant reconsideration, constant struggle for insight, which he himself describes, bespeaks a willingness to search which is far from the inertia of fatalism connoted by the words last quoted.

"They are there, yet something is missing; they are like a chemical formula exhumed along with the letters from that forgotten chest; carefully, the paper old and faded and falling to pieces, the writing faded, almost indecipherable, yet meaningful, familiar in shape and sense, the name and presence of volatile and sentient forces; you bring them together in the proportions called for, but nothing happens; you re-read, tedious and intent, poring, making sure that you have forgotten nothing, made no miscalculation; you bring them together again and again nothing happens." (p.101)

In this description we see once again evidence of the main value of the struggle for vision: the energy spent in re-reading, poring over and "bringing them together again" evidently must satisfy his hunger for insight, even though he does not find clear answers. Forty years after the events, Mr. Compson is still willing to engage in the struggle. The insight-seeking seems as important to him as any illumination he may happily find. Thus the struggle to see is partly its own reward for him.
Similarly for Rosa, the desire for vision is so encompassing that it has remained the single focus of her attention throughout her mature years. She is not as open to new discovery as Mr. Compson is, but seeks ever more evidence for the confirmation of her own Gothic version of the story. She, who as we have seen never really witnessed much of the core plot, lives out her life seeking the clear evidence that her vision of Sutpen's devilry is right, and wanting it publicized for others to see it (p.10). When that last evidence is destroyed in the fire, Rosa simply dies because, as Shreve puts it, "it was all finished now, there was nothing left now" (p.376). That is, with Sutpen's house and his last legitimate son both gone, Rosa has lost the last remaining props from her macabre drama involving Sutpen. There is no remaining way for her to confirm her vision of the "demon," so she tells her story to Quentin, for him to write up, and she dies.

Probably the strongest evidence in the book of the value of struggling for vision, is Faulkner's dramatic picture of Shreve and Quentin doing just that. The huge effort to reconstruct the story, which Shreve and Quentin make, fills two-thirds of the text. Against the hardships of a late and freezing night, the two boys throw all the intellectual resources of energetic young law students into an unflagging attempt to get the picture clear, down to the
last possible detail. Once again Faulkner dramatically heightens the language, which creates an atmosphere of utmost importance and seriousness around the activity of imaginative reconstruction:

Quentin and Shreve stared at one another—glared rather—their quiet regular breathing vaporizing faintly and steadily in the now tomblike air. There was something curious in the way they looked at one another, curious and quiet and profoundly intent, not at all as two young men might look at each other but almost as a youth and a very young girl might out of virginity itself—a sort of hushed and naked searching, each look burdened with youth's immemorial obsession not with time's dragging weight which the old live with but with its fluidity. (p.299)

By the virginity metaphor here, Faulkner asserts that searching energetically for insight—"that best of ratiocination" (p.280)—is a way of discovering life equivalent to sexual experience. By placing this college bull session in an atmosphere of "curious and quiet and profoundly intent" looks between the two boys, Faulkner attributes a kind of religious importance to the quest for insight. Earlier, Quentin recognizes the relevance of the kind of thing he and Shreve are doing, when he perceives the interconnectedness of all people, in an image of interconnected pools through which ripples spread with an "old ineradicable rhythm" (p.261); he perceives in effect that the more we understand others, the more we understand ourselves, since we are interconnected.
And if that's a legitimate definition of the value of what Shreve and Quentin are achieving by their efforts, it also describes the value of the vision which a person acquires through the difficult reading of such a book as Absalom, Absalom!

c). The Effect of Perspective:
The four character narrators (Rosa, Mr. Compson, Quentin, Shreve) each have a different perspective on the events of the core plot. As many critics have noted, none of these four narratives is completely reliable, for (to use Faulkner's terms) they each see a "slightly awry phase" of the truth. And although we do have a fifth narrator, the author or omniscient voice who occasionally intrudes, and on whom we can presumably rely fully, yet his narrative is so small and incomplete that it does not provide a corrective to the several subjective accounts. So we can never be certain whose story is closest to truth, and whose the most distorted. The argument sometimes advanced in the past that Mr. Compson's story is the most reliable has been effectively dismissed by Ilse Lind, who shows how his narrative is seriously warped by his "world-weariness, his love of paradox, his fascination with the exotic." Nevertheless, the narratives do become more comprehensive and therefore in a sense more plausible in the order in which
they appear. Since that order is, overall, from Rosa to Mr. Compson to Quentin to Shreve, we can see that the narratives become more complete in proportion to the distance of each narrator from the events of the core plot. (The distance in this case is measured both in time and in personal involvement.) Thus a theme emerges, affirming the value of historical enquiry: that completeness of vision increases with distance. It appears that to understand the full significance of Sutpen's (or, by extension, of anyone's) life is a function not of his closest associates, but of posterity and strangers.

The characteristics of the four narratives have been much studied, notably by Levins, Vickery and others who find in general that the stories fall into certain genre traditions (Gothic mystery, classical tragedy, chivalric romance, tall tale, etc.). These labels do help to point up the fundamental differences in the narratives, which some critics have denied. However the labels also tend to confer a certain false equality of status on the narratives, and thus obscure the growth of intensity and comprehensiveness in the progressive visions. To call Quentin's and Shreve's tales "chivalric romance," and "tall tale," as Lind does, or "the product of their youth and imagination" as Vickery does, may be correct, but at the same time such
pigeon-holing seems to me to put down these narratives in a way that disguises their impact. It is important to remember the progression of the perspectives: first we hear from an old woman who has internalized this story in which she was a marginal but much-damaged participant, and has fed off it emotionally for practically all of her life. Naturally her story is intense, twisted and very incomplete. Next comes an old man who was too young at the time to be involved in the events, but whose father was a major participant; hence he is somewhat involved and somewhat detached from the events. Next, a young man born into the disintegrating culture in which the events have occurred, and for whom they therefore assume some importance, but born long after the events, and therefore clearly detached from them (at least until the final episode of the visit to Sutpen's Hundred). And finally, a young foreigner totally detached from the events by culture, time and geography. The order of the narrative perspectives is, then, an order of diminishing involvement, of increasing detachment. Yet strangely enough, as MacMillan has pointed out, while "physical closeness diminishes between the narrator and his subject in the novel, imaginative proprinquity increases."21 The further the narrators are from the events, the more energy do they display in constructing the story, and the more complete a
story do they achieve. Quentin acknowledges this curious effect of perspective when he thinks (concerning Sutpen's delivery of the tombstones) that "he might even have been there," but immediately catches himself with the realization: "No. If I had been there I could not have seen it this plain" (p. 190). Faulkner too alludes to the same effect, in remarking that "probably his friend [Shreve] McCannon had a much truer picture from what Quentin told him than Quentin himself did."22

Two comments seem worth making about this illuminating effect of distance on those who struggle for vision. First, in its converse statement (i.e. the obscuring effect of closeness), this theme discloses an important aspect of the main theme of the novel, the struggle for vision. The struggle for vision is progressively harder, the closer it is to home. Inasmuch as Absalom, Absalom! induces the reader into the exercise of struggling to see, this new aspect provides a warning that the hardest challenge to insight is to try and see oneself, or that which is closest to oneself.

My second comment concerns irony. Sutpen lived his life acting out the grand design conceived by his limited vision. During his lifetime it is clear that no-one was able to understand the motives and dreams of his life. His closest confidant appears to have been General Compson, but
the General had some serious deficiencies in his vision of Sutpen, as Cleanth Brooks has shown in a helpful tabulation. It took two more generations for the young men to emerge who would energetically piece together the shards of information, and develop a moderately comprehensive picture of at least the major motivations. For a man to live his life in tortuous obedience to the dictates of a strange, warped conscience, as Sutpen did, and only begin to be understood several decades after death, is surely a bitter irony. Yet the novel exposes an ambivalence in this situation; it is not all bitter. For the fact that Shreve and Quentin do struggle to penetrate the obscure surface of events and reach an understanding of the motives seems to me a rather affirmative fact: it affirms the solidarity of the human community, the recognition on the part of the younger men that they are a part of all that has gone before, and that they in turn will constitute a portion of the future human race. Sutpen himself hoped for this affirmation. He told General Compson, who told it to Jason Compson, who told it to his son Quentin, who told it to the foreigner Shreve, that he wanted to live in such a way "that he would be able to look in the face not only the old dead ones but all the living ones that would come after him when he would be one of the dead" (p.220). Consistent with Sutpen's view of
posterity here expressed, Quentin himself develops—whether from Sutpen or not we do not know—a sense of the connectedness of human lives and generations, as expressed in the pool image already quoted. Likewise, the reader, from whatever perspective he has on the events of the novel, struggles to piece out the motivations and manners hidden in the morass of narration, and thus becomes a participating agent in the transmission of human values, good or bad, recorded in fictional form.

II

THE TEXTURE OF VISION

Published criticism has described the genre characteristics of each of the narratives in Absalom, Absalom! It has become commonplace to talk of Rosa's narrative as Gothic mystery, Mr. Compson's as classical tragedy, Quentin's as romance, and Shreve's as mock-epic or ironical romance. The details of this area of analysis can be well studied in the items listed in my bibliography by Scott, Vickery, Justus, Levins and MacMillan, to name only the most cogent. The perceptions contained in these different narratives constitute the "thirteen ways of looking at the blackbird" alluded to in my last chapter; my purpose here is to study the techniques by which the reader is led to arrive at what Faulkner calls the reader's "own fourteenth
image of the blackbird which Faulkner would like to think is the truth."\textsuperscript{24}

I have already pointed out that the different narratives are not kept clearly apart in this novel, as I showed them to be, for instance, in \textit{As I Lay Dying}; on the contrary, they are interwoven so confusingly that it takes a herculean effort on the reader's part to keep them separated in his own mind. At times he does so (e.g. when Rosa starts piling on the demonic imagery) and at other times he does not. The two functions (separating and not separating) have two completely different effects on the reader. Separation (i.e. awareness of the personal idiosyncrasies of a particular narrative) throws some of the reader's attention off the core plot and onto the narrator, and then (incredible complexity!) back again onto the core plot as seen through that narrator's eyes. A small example may help to make this clear. Shreve is talking:

"That this Faustus, this demon, this Beelzebub fled hiding from some momentary flashing glare of his Creditor's outraged face exasperated beyond all endurance, hiding, scuttling into respectability like a jackal into a rockpile, so she thought at first . . . ."

(p.178)

Here the mock-heroic piling up of allusions followed by the deflating image of the jackal makes us aware of Shreve's attitude to the events of this part of the legend, as well
as his attitude to Rosa's attitude to the same (and perhaps
even of his attitude to Mr. Compson's attitude to the same).
In other words, Shreve shows that he finds the Sutpen leg­
end full of ludicrously Faustian events, and that he finds
Rosa's view of Sutpen as a "demon" similarly ridiculous.
So the reader becomes aware of Shreve having fun at the ex­
pense of core characters and narrators; but then I think the
reader uses Shreve's perspective and thinks for a moment
that maybe this is the right way to view the whole story,
so his attention returns once more from Shreve to the plot.
This shuttling of attention happens whenever we become a-
ware of the personal flavour of one of the narratives.
The result in the reader's mind is a perpetually underlined
awareness that the truth is subjective; and that each per­
son struggles to attain his own image of it; that this par­
ticular subjective view may or may not be close to what the
reader can accept for himself as true; that only by contin­
ual struggle is there any possibility of advancement to­
wards certainty.

At those other times when the reader does not
separate off the particular narrative—and I agree with Le­
vins in believing that these times are by far the more com­
mon—the effect is quite different. In these instances
attention is obviously focused more on the events of the
core plot than on the perceiving narrator. Or, to be more precise, the reader in these instances focuses on the narrative rather than the narrator; this distinction is important because there are certain characteristics common to all the narratives, and it is these characteristics that the reader is aware of when he is not separating a particular narrative. These characteristics make up the dominant stylistic texture of the novel, and it is the effect of this texture that I am mainly concerned with.

In a careful study of the prose of Absalom, Absalom!, Zoellner arrives at some conclusions which are relevant to my purpose. After analyzing the effects of certain sentences on a reader, Zoellner concludes that "the prose style of Absalom, Absalom! neutralizes the reader's ingrained tendency to break up experience into convenient, logically divided parcels, hierarchically arranged for painless assimilation," and instead renders "the story of Thomas Sutpen . . . as a fact abstracted from any distinctions of past or present, or any qualitative distinctions of important or unimportant, an organic, monolithic mass which directly reflects Faulkner's concept of life as a cumulative continuum." What Zoellner is talking about is the same thing as I am saying throughout this thesis, that the novelist of vision uses style to offer his readers a unique basis
of realism—the ontology of his personal vision. The two strongest elements of this style function in *Absalom, Absalom!* are sentence structure (which I shall discuss in different terms than Zoellner does, though his study is also directly supportive of my thesis) and the use of motifs.

**a). Sentence Structure:**

The sustained peculiarity of sentence structure throughout the novel is its main factor of unity. Whatever page one turns to, there are the same marathon sentences, the same odd balance of doubly clear and then ambiguous prepositions, the same sentence fragments whose completion is often more puzzling than custom normally allows. All this makes for difficult reading, which is precisely Faulkner's way of engaging us in the struggle. The structure of the sentences is a tool of defamiliarization, forcing the reader away from preconceived notions of what constitutes the reality of any given experience to that "aspect of the experience which is 'real' for Faulkner." Length and complexity draw many elements together in the expression of very complex thought. This is a technical, stylistic equivalent to the theme of the interconnectedness of lives, discussed earlier.
Take, for example, the page-long sentence beginning "He didn't remember whether ..." (pp. 224-5, photocopy in Appendix A, for the sake of showing how difficult it is to read in the text). Quentin is recreating the experience Sutpen had as a child of being cast out of the mountains into a world of "harsh rough faces" which is to become the theatre of his life. The reader has to correlate and hold in suspension so many phrases, to get to the end of the sentence, that he literally loses comprehension of some of the parts along the way. This experience of the sentence replicates the bewildering sequence of social encounters forced upon the Sutpen children during their journey. By the time they get down into their new society, the family members are altered in their outlook on life ("attenuated" from one state to another); and significantly, we are told again and again over several surrounding pages, that Sutpen "didn't remember" what it was exactly that caused the changes in him. The reader, in losing hold of parts of the sentence (not to mention paragraphs, pages, chapters), has an equivalent experience, of not remembering exactly how he got from A to B in the reading. Thus the sentence structure creates a concrete paradigm of its own theme, namely the only-half-comprehensible forces of human interaction on one human being. The
sentences in *Absalom, Absalom!*, like the lives of its characters, exist in confused waves of interacting parts. Faulkner himself made precisely this connection between lives and sentences in answer to the query why he used long sentences in his books:

"... to me no man is himself, he is the sum of his past. There is no such thing really as was because the past is. It is a part of every man, every woman, and every moment. All of his or her ancestry, background, is a part of himself and herself at any moment. And so a man, a character in a story at any moment of action is not just himself as he is then, he is all that made him, and the long sentence is an attempt to get his past and possibly his future into the instant in which he does something."

If one returns to the text with this quotation in mind, it becomes immediately noticeable that some of the longest and most unwieldy of the sentences not only provide a stylistic paradigm of the theme of human interconnectedness, as I asserted above, but they also tend to state that theme in a direct way.

To show what I mean without embarking on tediously long quotation, I need only refer to the quotations already used for other purposes of illustration in earlier portions of this chapter. To begin with, the chapter epigraph contains a very complicated and long sentence concerning the links between the heroic figures of the past and the lesser
figures of the present—different groups of humanity, but both still "people" and both "victims." Then the quotation about Bon on page 207 above contains a twelve-line sentence beginning "And not only that" which concerns the interconnections of motive and influence between Bon and the people of his present and past environments. Again, on page 218 above, there's a long sentence quoted ("they are like . . .") which is crowded with disjunctive phrases, and which concerns the evidence which predecessors leave of their lives, for the living to decipher. On page 220 above, the long, rich sentence beginning "there was something curious" concerns specifically the interconnectedness and interaction of two lives. Finally the same thing happens again in the quotation on page 244 below, which contains only two—or with the semicolon taken as a period, three—sentences, each of them elaborate and tortuous, and each directly expressing the desire human beings have to connect up with one another through lasting and comprehensible communication.

In summary then, the complexity and length of the sentence structure not only force readers to struggle hard for insight into human motivations, but also express both paradigmatically and by cognitive statement, the theme of human interconnectedness. The sentence structure is a strikingly mannered tool of defamiliarization of the
experience retailed also by Faulkner's other fictional tech-
niques. It functions to produce in the reader a vision of
the human community as a mass of interconnected parts whose
impact on one another is complicated and difficult to under-
stand.

b). Motifs

There are obvious motifs in Absalom, Absalom!, and less obvious ones. The first group consists generally
of those motifs which are generic ingredients in one or
other of the four separate narratives, such as the series
of demon images in Rosa's, or the allusions to mythology
which are proper to Mr. Compson's tale of tragedy. The
function of these motifs is self-evident, once one accepts
the generic nature of the narratives, and in that context
it has been adequately studied in the works mentioned a-
bove which focus on genre. In most cases these motifs
function with the simplicity and obviousness normally as-
associated with literary emblems. Their function is part of
the larger function in which the reader "separates" the
narratives; that is, their use tends to illuminate or call
attention to the narrators, rather than the narratives or
the core plot. For example Rosa's demon motif, and Shreve's
abuse of it reveal more about Rosa and Shreve than about
the "demon" himself, Sutpen.
The second and less obvious group of motifs is common to all the narratives, and this fact sometimes creates an apparent weakness in the fictional construct. For instance, when we find both Rosa and Mr. Compson employing butterfly images in describing Ellen, or cat images in relation to Bon, unless we are able to think that one narrator learned the usage from the other, we are left with a slight sense that the fictional division of characters has broken down; it's as though the writer himself has crept into the narrative, allowing his sensibility to invade and therefore jeopardize the separate identities of these two separate narrators. However, this unfortunate effect, where it exists at all, is produced only by those motif usages that are metaphoric and that seem highly original (such as the two mentioned). In the case of less surprising motifs, such as the motifs of horse and teeth (both associated with Sutpen) it does not break the surface of fiction when we find both usages in the accounts of both (or several) narrators; and the reason for this is that these motifs are rooted in common perceptions which make up the legend (viz: anybody could see Sutpen on his horse and remember the sight), rather than being rooted in original metaphoric invention (viz: surely not everyone thought of Ellen as metamorphosing through the stages of a butterfly life). Further,
the sense of fictional breakdown does not arise in the nar-
ratives of Quentin and Shreve, because it's perfectly cred-
ible that whatever motifs appear in their consciousnesses
might well have originated with Rosa or Mr. Compson and
been assimilated by the young men.

In general the motif usage in Absalom, Absalom! is far less elaborate than we find in the five other novels
here studied. There are many motifs used, and they occur
with great frequency, but the variations in which they
appear are not many. The result is that the technique merely
becomes a means of pointing to the importance of certain
subjects which are constants in the novel; it is not used
mainly, as in other novels, as a means of recording change.
One reason for this is that there is little change in the
course of the plot. Consider, by contrast with Absalom,
The Man Who Died, in which the rhythmic changes in a per-
son's life constitute the basic narrative development, and
about which I claimed that one could follow essentially what
was going on simply by observing the manipulation of a sin-
gle element in the narrative texture—the plant motif. Ab-
salom is a very different case: with very few exceptions,
the narrative, unfolding piece by piece, does not follow the
growth of a character. What it does is to open up an un-
chronological kaleidoscope of perspectives onto a static
legend. The motifs recur in mostly unaltering form within those perspectives, insistently placing certain elements in the legend before the reader.

The first of these elements is, of course, the nature of Thomas Sutpen. The main motifs which reveal him to the reader, and which occur in all the narratives, are motifs of house, horse, and body (including especially face, teeth, beard, bones). The Sutpen who comes to Jefferson is practically the same man as the Sutpen who dies there, essentially unchanged even by the tragic rise and fall of his house. Consequently the motifs revealing him are unchanging throughout. Although the narrators and readers must struggle constantly to develop a full picture of the man, he remains basically unchanging within each of these visions of him, even when the visions are in conflict with one another. The visions grow more comprehensive but they don't mutate.

By means of the motifs of house and horse, which are scattered over many pages, Sutpen is associated with the South and his fate becomes symbolic of the South's fate. Surprisingly enough, not even the house appears to go through any powerful reversal. Faulkner presents the grand edifice of Sutpen's design as a "shell of a house" (p. 42) at its beginning, and "a shell marooned and forgotten" (p. 132) at its end. There is never an evocation of its grandeur
except in the context of decay. It is never presented as the scene of fine living which has ultimately "gone with the wind," but consistently as a dead, bleak house, a "rotten mausoleum" (p.350), "a huge quiet house" (p.26), containing "an incontrovertible affirmation for emptiness" (p.85). Thus its degeneration is implicit in its presentation throughout the novel, and in this respect the prose texture undercuts the potential of the novel for developing into the rise-turn-fall pattern of tragedy. The house motif helps to render a constant vision of the South's fate, Sutpen's fate.

Before he has the house, Sutpen has only his horse over which to exercise proud dominion, and in this aspect too he is the representative proud Southern gentleman, retaining even in old age "the fine cold figure of the man who had once galloped on the black thoroughbred about that domain two boundaries of which the eye could not see from any point" (p.184). Man creates God in his own image, as the saying goes, and if that's true, it is interesting that General Compson thought of Sutpen on his horse as the image of God, "if God himself was to come down and ride the natural earth" (p.282). When Wash Jones suddenly realizes his alienation from the whole Southern tradition--that it has somehow let him down--he kills Sutpen, then waits to be arrested by men "who had galloped also in the old days arrogant and proud."
on the fine horses" (p.289). It's easy to see, without further exposition, how the motifs of house and horse keep before us two aspects of Sutpen—pride of property and pride of bearing—which are constants of his character and which make him a typical representative of fundamental Southern values. The interpretation given to those values in Faulkner's vision clearly alienated a reviewer in (of all places) The Boston Transcript:

We doubt the story just as we doubt the conclusion that the Jim Bonds and the descendants of the Jim Bonds will ever control the country. We do not doubt the existence of decadence, but we do doubt that it is the most important or the most interesting feature in American life, or even in Mississippi life.29

This resistance to Faulkner's vision once again evidences the dynamic conflict which the novel of vision creates between writer and reader.

The third set of motifs mentioned, the body motifs, show the reader the quality of the naked man, without horse, without plantation or mansion. Faulkner uses especially the motif of teeth within the face—sometimes concealed, sometimes jutting out in defiance or ironic half-smile—to convey the constant of personal resoluteness in Sutpen's character. When Ellen embarrasses him publically in the stable, he stands in silent humiliation before the crowd of dispersing guests, "with his teeth showing beneath his
beard" (p.30). At another moment of humiliation, when the crowd is pelting the newly-married couple with dirt and rotten vegetables, Sutpen draws his bride to his side and stands "motionless, with an expression almost of smiling where his teeth showed through the beard" (p.57), while the refuse dirties him and knocks his wedding hat off. At times he hides his teeth, as though angrily acknowledging that he is up against forces which he cannot fight (i.e. bite!). One such instance is the moment when he discovers that his last, desperate attempt to sire a new son has failed. The midwife reports that

he stood there for a minute and he didn't move at all, with the riding whip against his leg and the lattices of sunlight from the unchinked wall falling upon him, across his white hair and his beard that hadn't turned at all yet, and she said she saw his eyes and then his teeth inside his beard and that she would have run then only she couldn't. (p.286)

Similarly, in confrontations with Bon, the agent of his nemesis, the latter notices that Sutpen relies on his beard to screen the rest of the face (p.321). The last image of Sutpen's body again contains the teeth motif:

And that night they finally found him and fetched him home in a wagon and carried him, quiet and bloody and with his teeth still showing in his parted beard. (p.185)

From these examples we can see how the motif does not change because it is used to light up a constant of Sutpen's character.
Another body motif, which is used in a rather interesting way, is the contrasting motif of bone-face/flesh-face which imagistically expresses the contrast asserted between Sutpens and Coldfields. The bone-face is associated with Sutpen and his line, the flesh-face with the Coldfields. Rosa emphasizes the contrast between the two types of people in her confrontation with Clytie, whose face she repeatedly labels a "Sutpen face."

... we seemed to glare at one another not as two faces but as the two abstract contradictions which we actually were. (p.138)

Mr. Compson perceives the uneasy mixture of the two "abstract contradictions" Rosa mentions here, when he looks into the aging face of Judith (who of course is both a Sutpen and a Coldfield):

"Not thin now but gaunt, the Sutpen skull showing indeed now through the worn, the Coldfield flesh, the face which had long since forgotten how to be young and yet absolutely impenetrable." (p.126)

The meaning of this symbolism of bone and flesh is impossible to fix; obviously the Sutpen bone-face is in some way hard and unyielding, while the Coldfield flesh-face is softer and destructible. It's interesting that Ellen (Coldfield) is seen to have no bones, for her life diminishes "as the butterfly itself enters dissolution by actually dissolving" (p.85), with the shrinkage of flesh leaving not a skeleton,
but "the substanceless shell" (p.126). And in such wishfulfilling fantasies of love as Rosa allows herself, she yearns for God somehow to provide her with a face which "would not even need a skull behind it; almost anonymous, it would only need vague inference of some walking flesh and blood" (p.147). Thus Rosa once again reinforces the association of flesh-face with the Coldfields; and by her relinquishing the need of a skull in her fantasy lover's face, she, as it were, rejects Sutpen. (As I said, I find these usages of the motif by Rosa and in regard to Ellen, interesting; but I am no closer to a definition of the symbolic meaning of the motif, beyond the general distinction suggested above.)

The motifs, then, focus attention on constants in the plot. Sutpen is a face with teeth in it, as well as "the fine proud image of the man on the fine proud image of the stallion" (p.287). Ellen is a butterfly or "unreal and weightless life" (p.106). Bon is a "lazy and catlike man" (p.102) who manipulates Henry "with that cold and catlike inscrutable calculation" (p.110). And so on. The main changes in the novel are changes of perspective to motivation; the motifs record a consistency of appearance and character. Where change does occur in a character, and it rarely does, sometimes a motif is used to render that
change. Thus for instance the Sutpen/bone motif association is used to record the change involved in Sutpen's final decline into squalor:

Something between the shape of him that people knew and the uncompromising skeleton of what he actually was had gone fluid. (p. 81)

Apart from these slight records of change, the motifs provide a means of insisting that the reader keep looking at the enigmas of character and motivation, which are the subjects of the struggle for vision.

I've tried to show that the process of vision in *Absalom, Absalom!* deeply engages the reader in a struggle to see. The texture of the prose is highly unconventional, and prevents us from simply experiencing the story in pre-conceived and familiar terms. I cannot agree with James Guetti who finds in *Absalom* evidence of the inevitable failure of human imagination, the "supposed struggle" of which "could only be revealed metaphorically." On the contrary I find the novel to be a practical exercise in the affirmative use of human imagination to dignify life, by really struggling to understand even its most confusing and tangled fictional constructs. In her own half-articulate way,
Judith Sutpen expresses the nature and significance of the process of vision, when she hands Quentin's grandmother her letter from Bon, and uses concepts she has learned from Bon himself to explain why she is making this gesture of communication:

"You get born and you try this and you don't know why only you keep on trying it and you are born at the same time with a lot of other people, all mixed up with them, like trying to, having to, move your arms and legs with strings only the same strings are hitched to all the other arms and legs and the others all trying and they don't know why either except that the strings are all in one another's way like five or six people all trying to make a rug on the same loom only each one wants to weave his own pattern into the rug; and it can't matter, you know that, or the Ones that set up the loom would have arranged things a little better, and yet it must matter because you keep on trying or having to keep on trying and then all of a sudden it's all over and all you have left is a block of stone with scratches on it provided there was someone to remember to have the marble scratched and set up or had time to, and it rains on it and the sun shines on it and after a while they don't even remember the name and what the scratches were trying to tell, and it doesn't matter. And so maybe if you could go to someone, the stranger the better, and give them something—-a scrap of paper—-something, anything, it not to mean anything in itself and then not even to read it or keep it, not even bother to throw it away or destroy it, at least it would be something just because it would have happened, be remembered even if only from passing from one hand to another, one mind to another, and it would be at least a scratch, something, something that might make a mark on something . . . ." (p.127)
Judith deduces here that to go on living must be worth while, simply "because you keep on trying or having to keep on trying," and she sees the fact that one kept on trying as needing to be recorded in a rememberable (even if not in a comprehensible) way, so that the life that was lived might have some enduring value in the memories of those who survive it. This exactly describes the process of struggling to see which both narrators and reader are engaged in in this novel. Even Mr. Compson, perhaps the least optimistic of all the narrators, affirms the value of such struggle; for in attempting "to reconstruct the causes that led up to the actions of men and women," he finds "with a sort of astonishment," that he is "now and then reduced to the belief, the only possible belief, that they stemmed from some of the old virtues" (p. 121).
FOOTNOTES

1 Page references incorporated in the text are to the 1964, Random House edition.

2 *Faulkner in the University*, pp. 272-273.

3 *Faulkner in the University*, pp. 191-192.

4 Vickery, p. 91.


9 Kermode, p. 164.


12 Guetti, pp. 75-76.

13 Slatoff, p. 201.


16 *Faulkner in the University*, p. 273.

17 Ilse Dusoir Lind, "The Design and Meaning of *Absalom, Absalom!*," *PMLA*, 70 (December 1955), 889. See also Guetti, p. 70.

18 See Levins, 36.
19 E. g. see Levins, 36, quote.

20 Vickery, p. 90.


22 Faulkner in the University, p. 274.


24 Faulkner in the University, p. 274.

25 Levins, 36.


27 Zoellner, 499.

28 Faulkner in the University, p. 84.


30 Guetti, p. 108.
Her breath beat. The walls were bending outward under the pressure of the hateful fire. Then, when the table screamed under her nails, he said quietly, "Ah, Theodora Goodman, you are torn in two."  

In *The Aunt's Story*, Patrick White takes us into the world of a profoundly alienated woman who holds so tenaciously to her vision of reality that she ends up choosing quite calmly to accept that she is insane. This fictional experience of the progress of alienation to its chillingly placid conclusion cannot help but profoundly disturb any rational reader who accepts the vision which the book offers. Not surprisingly, some critics have tried to dismiss the vision, either by faulting White's workmanship (e.g. "a complete lack of artistic restraint") or else by arguing that Theodora is not representative of humanity at large. Other critics have been content merely to describe White's use of Homer and of *Rasselas*, without going much into the effects of techniques used, on the reader. To my mind, the techniques of *The Aunt's Story* are unusually successful in
retailing White's vision to the reader, that is, in forcing the reader to experience what it feels like to be "torn in two," as Theodora is. This experience of an alienating duality is the theme of the novel. I shall try to show how White uses a number of techniques to render that theme as the form of the reader's experience, not just at the level of concept or cognition. These techniques are: The external structure (i.e. the form of the objective narrative); the internal structure (i.e. the form of the subjective narrative made up of Theodora's thoughts); the pattern of recurrence of the Theodora "archetype;" the use of motifs and elliptical syntax.

THE EXTERNAL STRUCTURE

The structure of the objective narrative is that of a quest in three parts, corresponding to the three Part divisions of the book: a phase of tension and conflict leading to the commencement of the quest; a phase of weary seeking, without fulfilment; finally, arrival, discovery, fulfilment.

Part One consists of a recapitulation of Theodora's life up to the point of her mother's death. The strange stick of a girl, always socially inept, grows up to become a lonely, middle-aged spinster. Her father has died,
her sister has married and gone away, the family farm has been sold and most of the possessions auctioned off, and Theodora now leads a constricted suburban life caring for her widowed mother who hates her. Her muted, genteel affair with the aging widower Huntly Clarkson fizzles out for lack of "anything further to give" (p.128). A growing sense of unease finally produces in Theodora the desperate realization that her life lacks something which her immediate environment cannot provide. She wants to scream, "Aaahhhhhhhhhhh!" (p.127) but doesn't. She contemplates murdering her mother, but doesn't. She is ready to begin her quest, but doesn't know how, doesn't even know what she needs to find. And then, when Mrs. Goodman does finally die (in the opening words of the novel), she finds herself for the first time in her life "possessed" by freedom (p.10), which she doesn't know how to use. Nevertheless, she leaves Australia for Europe.

In Part Two, we find her arriving at the appropriately named Hôtel du Midi in the South of France, utterly disillusioned after her travels, but still waiting, and with hope not quite extinguished:

Still there will always be people, Theodora Goodman said, and she continued to wait with something of the superior acceptance of mahogany for fresh acts. (p.141)
She has chosen this hotel because its brochure advertised a \textit{jardin exotique}, and we are given the vague information that she "considered its possibility" (p.141). As she walks hopefully into the \textit{jardin}, the narrator reminds us that all her many goals had been deceptive, especially "the gothic shell of Europe, in which there had never been such a buying and selling, of semi-precious aspirations, bull's blood, and stuffed doves, the stone arches cracked, the aching wilderness, in which the ghosts of Homer and St. Paul and Tolstoy waited for the crash" (p.146).

The garden turns out to be a harsh, destructive place (developed as a wasteland symbolic of the world), and it affords her no profit; neither does the "gothic shell" of the hotel and its ghostlike guests. A fire destroys the hotel, and only the persistent \textit{jardin} remains amid the smoky ruins. Theodora's travels have come to nothing, and she vaguely supposes she will return to Australia, which she calls "Abyssinia" now, since the geographical world has become as unreal to her as her father's tales of the Abyssinian Meroë were when she was a child living on the farm called Meroë.

In Part Three, her quest at last takes its successful turn. Theodora escapes from the "normal" world of duality to the single plane of her private vision.
Somewhere in America she steps off a train into the pre-dawn darkness and begins to strip herself of labels of identity—name, papers and so on. She is given a meal at a lonely farmhouse, but doesn't stay there because the clock on the mantelpiece somehow symbolizes for her that this house is not her proper environment (p.287). She walks to a deserted house, where she feels at home and where she expects "some ultimate moment of clear vision" (p.290). And indeed, this does come to her, in the hallucinatory figure of Holstius. Through her conversations with him, her psychic balance becomes strangely altered, so that she is able to adopt an attitude of complete acceptance and composure in the face of the paradoxes and tensions which have tortured her mind for decades. Completely at peace, her quest somehow fulfilled, she allows the doctor to take her off to the asylum.

(Throughout the three parts of her quest, Theodora has from time to time encountered people with whom she has a limited rapport; this part of the objective narrative I'll discuss in detail later.)

THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE

Interwoven with the objective narrative just outlined, is the subjective account of Theodora's consciousness.
The narrator is omniscient, and shuttles back and forth without warning between the two (i.e. the objective view, and Theodora's subjective view). This shuttling of the perceptual base provides the reader with a textual correlative to Theodora's confusion about illusion and reality -- her perception of an inherent cosmic dualism. And the proportions change through the story: the subjective account becomes preponderant towards the end, as Theodora goes deeper and deeper into the world of isolated vision. Having sketched the "facts" of the story in the summary of the external structure, I now turn to the far more complicated account, the internal structure of the subjective rendering.

It is a structure which creates the effect of a camera lens zooming down onto a subject. The subject in this case is the entire world which Theodora experiences, a world of consistently dual aspect which cannot be fused into a single reality or "landscape" (p.83). Our first sight of the dual subject is (to continue the camera metaphor) a long shot: through Theodora, we perceive the duality dimly and only occasionally, set in a broad context of life experiences (in Part One). Then as we move in closer and closer (especially in Part Two), the image of duality becomes brighter, clearer, and its two facets become more and more difficult to contain within a single focus.
Ultimately, identifying with Theodora, we have to choose one or the other facet: that is, in Part Three Theodora's consciousness has zoomed close up to the subject of duality—so close that she must take one facet or the other as her subject, her reality, but not both. I shall spend the next several pages analyzing the particular details of this complex structure.

At the beginning of her life story, we are shown Theodora's occasional fascination with mysteries:

There was a small pale grub curled in the heart of the rose. She could not look too long at the grub-thing stirring as she opened the petals to the light . . . . Theodora had not yet learnt to dispute the apparently indisputable. But she could not condemn her pale and touching grub. She could not subtract it from the sum total of the garden. So, without arguing, she closed the rose. (p. 21)

This passage has an added significance from the fact that roses are a major motif in the novel, as I shall show. At this point Theodora simply finds inexplicable things—a bug in a rose—and puzzles over them. Unlike Fanny, her younger sister who "would always ask the questions that have answers" (p. 40), she is increasingly attracted to the "great deal that never got explained" (p. 39). When Gertie Stepper, the servant, tells her that certain knowledge "isn't for little girls," Theodora looks forward to when she will be old enough "to know everything . . . to wrap it up and put it
in a box, . . . but until this time things floated out of reach. She put out her hand, they bobbed and were gone" (p.40). But already, in this first chapter of her story (Chapter 2), her curiosity and puzzlement lead her to a startling experience of duality. She is questioning her father's former friend, The Man who was Given his Dinner, about his hobo life. Asked why he looks for gold, he replies that "it is as good a way of passing your life as any other" (p.41), which sparks off in Theodora a sudden inversion of vision, a kind of Joycean epiphany in which the "normal" appearance of reality is momentarily destroyed:

It made the walls dissolve, the stone walls of Meroe*, as flat as water, so that the people sitting inside were now exposed, treadling a sewing machine, baking a loaf, or adding up accounts. (p.41)

This experience quickly passes. In a moment Theodora becomes preoccupied with the practical question of whether or not her parents are going to give this man any food. In the few minutes remaining of her contact with the man, Theodora suspects that he is perhaps mad, loves him for his madness (p.45), and becomes certain that she will not see him again (p.46). These perceptions prefigure the rest of her life: she will go mad, and she will fail to establish any permanent human relationship. And she comes to these conclusions right after he tells her that her capacity for
vision may "break" her:

"You'll see a lot of funny things, Theodora Goodman. You'll see them because you've eyes to see. And they'll break you. But perhaps you'll survive." (p.45)

What started out as mere curiosity about mysteries has now been defined for her as the vision which will ultimately tear her in two.

The remaining four chapters of Part One repeat and expand the elements established in Chapter Two, creating a pattern. In each chapter, Theodora recognizes, more and more, the mysterious nature of existence, and she is troubled by her inability to resolve the mysteries, and bridge the ambivalent poles of her vision. What's more, she senses, with overtones of fear and rejection, that the nature of her consciousness sets her apart from her acquaintances:

She began to feel old and oracular listening to Frank Parrott's voice, as if she didn't belong. There was this on one side, the life of men keeping sheep and making money, and on the other, herself and Meroë. She was as remote as stone from the figures in the first landscape. (p.83)

Even her one intimate friend at school, Violet Adams, has a different view of life, Theodora sadly notes:

Theodora looked, over the heads of Lottie and Grace, and saw she had left Violet Adams behind. It was less melancholy than inevitable. She did not love Violet less. They would still walk linked through the long grass at dusk, and hate the intruder, but Theodora knew she
would also prefer sometimes to risk the
darkness and walk alone. (p.57)

She realizes here that Violet is a sentimentalist who will not face life honestly—a judgment that is confirmed later when Violet paints a picture of a flooding river, "but in gentler mood, before it was in flood" (p.62), and then boasts that "friends have congratulated [her] on the veracity of [her] rendering."

Her sense of alienation caused by her special vision is partly offset by a sense of kinship with certain people—her father, Violet Adams to a degree, Moraitis. They help to confirm in her "the pure abstract pleasure of knowing" (p.114), but they do not ease the loneliness, for they go away. With her father's death she is left unprotected from the inner tension of her dual vision, and soon finds it impossible to accept the social "reality" of the world of her would-be lover, Huntly Clarkson. Like Lieselotte in Part Two, Theodora would like to "hack at the screaming canvases" (p.176) of appearance and discover a world of reliable truth. White renders her commitment to the world of her private vision in a powerful scene of symbolic projection: Theodora shoots the heads off clay ducks at a fair, leaving Huntly and his friends sombrely aware "that she was separated from them forever by something that their smooth minds would not grope towards" (p.125). Through
this act of destruction she asserts her commitment to a vision of life which will alienate her from others, and which will ultimately torment her with its irreconcilable duality. The last sentence of Part One indicates her degree of progress away from the social norm, the condition in which she feels the need to embark on her quest:

I shall go, said Theodora, I have already gone. The simplicity of what ultimately happens hollowed her out. She was part of a surprising world in which hands, for reasons no longer obvious, had put tables and chairs. (p.137)

What began as puzzling over a bug in a rose has now developed into a consuming doubt about reality, right down to the raison d'être of furniture. Simply to go somewhere may bring some clarifying new insight.

Part Two contains the second movement in the development of Theodora's alienation, and the inner, subjective account of consciousness becomes quite elaborate and confusing. On a second reading one realizes that the five chapters fall into two parts: The first three chapters present the morning, afternoon and night of Theodora's first day at the Hôtel du Midi, during which she meets and talks with each of the residents. Almost all of these people are alter ego figures: they are specimens of what she partly is and what she could become--or, in the case of Katina Pavlou, what she was. They are sensitive people who have
been subjected to experiences of enormous frustration, disillusionment, terrible violence, and fear, and, like Theodora, they feel alienated from the world and in need of communication. Thus they all pounce on Theodora as soon as they can, to see what comfort or sympathy they can wring out of her. And from her own experiences of frustration and alienation, Theodora can immediately identify these other "burnt ones" (—a term often used in White to designate the tormented, and the title of his collected short stories):

Theodora sat. Confident her intuition would identify, she waited for Lieselotte to appear. As she had suspected, Lieselotte was a snowdrop, quivering but green veined. Depravity had tortured the original wax. (p.174)

"There is no denying that I am an artist."
"Or an old clown," said Theodora, who knew by revelation the way that Alyosha Sergei could somersault through a house, and how she was tired walking up and down, emptying his full ashtrays, and mopping up the little damp patches where his thought dripped. (p.177)

As is hinted in this last quotation, she is even able to project herself imaginatively into the former lives of these people. Thus she lives out in daydream the inner realities which she perceives behind the outer appearance of their lives. And in each case she discovers the same desperate sadness with which she herself is so familiar:

The landscape was a state of interminable being, hope and despair devouring and
disgorging endlessly, and the faces, whether Katina Pavlou, or Sokolnikov, or Mrs. Rapallo, or Wetherby, only slightly different aspects of the same state. (p.188)

Though Theodora engages sympathetically with these other suspended lives of the Hôtel du Midi, by the end of her first day there she progresses beyond the range of any real companionship with them, because she penetrates the facades behind which they hide away from the challenge of their consciousness and experience. The affair of the nautilus shell marks the end of her hope for companionship. She sees, in the symbolic shell, the fragile quality of their self deceptions ("Her heart turned in her side, because, she knew, the nautilus is made to break" [p.224].) "It is not surprising at all, Alyosha Sergei," she says of the shell he has sent her to steal as though it were the grail. "On the contrary," he finds it "fantastic" (p.223). Holding it in his hands, he is transported back to childhood. Mrs. Rapallo and the General engage in their desperate, childish struggle to possess the object, and when, inevitably, it smashes, they depart in mortification. For Theodora, the shell is just "the slight white rime" in the carpet. She has passed beyond their level of consciousness to a deeper, isolation. The day began with a hope of relationship ("Still there will always be people" [p.141]), and now ends with that hope gone. "Theodora herself felt considerably reduced" (p.225). Her quest is getting her nowhere.
For the last two chapters of Part Two, Theodora falls back on her role as "aunt" and focuses her attention exclusively on Katina Pavlou, who reminds her of her niece Lou, in more than just the similarity of names. At the beginning of Chapter Ten, Katina is still very naive and innocent, and her protection becomes Theodora's last chance for finding a social role which will involve her meaningfully in the human community. Ironically, both the reader and Theodora are aware, if they choose to be conscious of it, that anything she does for Katina is not going to solve her anguish or integrate her into the wasteland world. But her interest in Katina engages the imagination above the level of irony, when we realize that her protectiveness is a gesture of wish-fulfilment. In attempting to protect Katina, Theodora is in fact dramatizing her own agony—her yearning that life's cup be not so bitter. She wishes that she could have remained in the innocence of childhood, instead of becoming, through her lucid consciousness and her honesty, one of the "burnt ones." At times she realizes that the pain is inevitable for Katina, and she feels it as "also necessarily hers" (p.238).

Apart from her brief attendance to the confessions of Sokolnikov and Mrs. Rapallo, Theodora is totally preoccupied with the protection of the innocent throughout these
two chapters. Only in relation to Katina does Theodora's sympathetic imagination now engage in the daydreams. And she sees every event and character exclusively in the light of Katina's vulnerability. Her role as protectress is, of course, a foredoomed failure. Even Sokolnikov knows it will not succeed, and that it will bring no comfort to Theodora herself: "You can also create the illusion of other people," he warns her, "but once created, they choose their own realities" (p.250). Hesitating at first, because Sokolnikov's words "had made her doubt," she nevertheless rushes off to see if she can stop Wetherby from seducing Katina. The seduction breaks Katina's innocence, and when Theodora finds her eventually, the imagined roles of aunt and niece have changed--they have even reversed slightly, for Katina has at least "been inside the tower" (of sexual experience) (p.252), and can report to her spinster virgin friend that inside "there is nothing, nothing, . . . there is a smell of rot and emptiness" (p.253). Katina now exhibits the same willingness "to know" which the child Theodora had shown, and which was the first evidence of her alienating vision:

"You know, Miss Goodman, when one is glad for something that has happened, something nauseating and painful, that one did not suspect. It is better finally to know." (p.253)
Katina has entered "the landscape . . . of interminable being" referred to earlier. She now is on the way to becoming another Theodora. Fire burns the hotel, bringing a convenient end to a relationship of protectiveness which has already been outgrown.

With the shattering of her hopes for Katina, Theodora now has nowhere to turn. Both women announce their intentions to depart, but whereas Katina makes practical plans (train ticket, money, food) to return to her "own country" (p.264), Theodora has "not thought yet" where she will go to. She would like to "return" to the Abyssinian Meroë (p.265), but doesn't know where to find it. Consequently, in Part Three, we find Theodora's vision turning more and more inward. Although she might appear to have some purpose for sitting on a train somewhere in the middle of America, yet "in spite of outer appearances, Theodora Goodman suggested that she had retreated into her own distance and did not intend to come out" (p.269). She cannot bring herself to talk to her garrulous fellow-traveller. Indeed, one of the striking things about Part Three is that Theodora says so little in it. The only conversations in which she engages (beyond the barest minimum requirement of politeness) are with the boy Zack and the hallucinatory figure Holstius—two versions of herself, so to speak. To
Mrs. Johnson, who takes her in and feeds her, she says barely a word, except to mention Holstius and to enquire about Zack.

Her unwillingness to speak is a negative indication of her withdrawal into the world of private reality. But White manages to give a very positive rendering of this withdrawal, without compromising either the solitude or the passivity which he has so carefully built up as aspects of her final state. This positive expression is the existence of the Holstius figure. In developing Holstius, White provides Theodora with a means of exhibiting her state of mind directly and dramatically, yet without emerging from her cocoon of uncommunicative isolation. She accepts Holstius as her mentor; with him she stands as the "we" over against the "they" of the rest of the world. The reader knows better, and realizes that she has no communication outside of her own mind. She is talking to herself, and answering herself through "Holstius." And in her very last state in the novel, she no longer even needs the visible projection of Hostius. "His moral support was assured. Now his presence was superfluous" (p.300). The tone of Theodora's self-assurance here is so calm, and the "lucidity" (p.301) of her consciousness is so appealing, that the reader naturally tends to identify with her, rather than
with the "they" people around her (e.g. the doctor, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, etc.). By interweaving the subjective and objective narratives, and by structuring them so that the subjective becomes dominant as the novel progresses, Patrick White has subtly induced us to accept Theodora's total alienation. Since reading the book necessarily involves identification with Theodora, any rational person who really opens his sensibility to the terms of reality in White's vision must surely finish the reading profoundly disturbed. We put down the book and wait for it to go away.

iii

THE THEODORA "ARCHETYPE"

The pattern of Theodora's life recurs in others, particularly in the three children with whom she feels "the triumph of the rare alliances" (p.283). She has sensed the alliance before, in her father, The Man who was Given his Dinner, Moraïtis and others; but after the beginning of her quest (i.e. after her mother's death) it is an experience specially related to Lou, Katina Pavlou, and Zack. In them she sees images of herself as she was, an innocent, sensitive to the mysteries of life, and desiring to probe those mysteries. The recognition is mutual: Lou says, for
instance, "I wish I was you, Aunt Theo, . . . because you know things" (p.136). And Zack is special among the Johnsons because he is the only one who "had sensed the significance" (p.299) of the black rose on her hat—evidently a symbol of Theodora's bleak, solitary core. In relating warmly to these children, in wishing to protect them from the alienating effects of lucid vision, Theodora engages the reader's sympathy not just for herself, but for a certain type of person of which she and the children are representative. The significance of her life story thus becomes applicable to a group or class of humanity (the "burnt ones") of whom she is the archetypal model. The recurrence of the type throughout the novel helps to universalize (or at least expand) its significance. The recurrence works also by means of variations to reveal Theodora's own progress from naive childhood to the maturing of alienation.

The progress is evident in changes in Theodora's attitude to the recurrent figures. In her last meeting with Lou, Theodora recognizes sadly that "there is no lifeline to other lives" (p.137), but she still has her arm around the child as "a formal gesture of protection." She feels the pressure of Lou's body, and "the breath that was almost her own." At the last she warns Lou against disillusionment, telling her that the mysteries of life do not open up
to the kind of understanding Lou desires to have. This is her last act of protection for her niece, but her protective arm moves from Lou to Katina in her first meeting with the latter (p.151 "In her arms the child's body, still limp with sleep, was like her own nakedness."). But after the incident in the tower, Theodora's attitude to her protegée changes, as I have shown, and she ceases even to make formal gestures of protection. Inasmuch as Theodora identifies with the girl, she realizes that there is no retreat to innocence from the reality of her mature vision, and that is why she relinquishes her. She, herself cannot return to innocence, and Katina cannot stay there—has already begun to emerge to mature torment. Protection is useless.

From the burning hotel, Katina emerges "with her hands outstretched, protecting herself with her hands, not so much from substance, as from some other fire" (p.363 my emphasis). In one sense, Theodora and Katina are now equals, both having been burnt by the fires of life. More precisely, Katina has reached the first stage of maturity—Theodora's stage at the end of Part One. For Katina still has hopes of finding her "own country" (p.264), while Theodora is at a second stage of maturity: she is so bereft of hope, so weary and resigned to the inevitability of "the sequence of events" that she cannot even offer Katina the dubious comfort of
physical contact or verbal sympathy, as she had been able to do for Lou earlier. Finally, when the evolution of the "burnt one" appears to be complete, ironically, the pattern begins again with Zack, the innocent with fires still in store for him. She picks him out from the other children at first sight (p.281), and when he talks with her in the washroom she feels "a pact" is born between them (p.283). Their encounter is like her own childhood encounter with The Man who was Given his Dinner. Just as she knew The Man would not return despite his promise, so now she sees Zack accepting the finality of her departure, "taking it for granted" (p.288). Because he is at an earlier stage of development than Katina at the beginning of Part Two, and even of Lou at the end of Part One, she is able to offer him the comfort of simple physical contact. However, her touch is no longer protective—in fact we are not sure whether her touch is comforting, or whether it is seeking comfort from the memory of childhood and innocence:

He had rubbed his cheek against her cheek. Their blood flowed together. Her desperate words, ordinarily dry, had grown quite suddenly fleshy and ripe. Their locked hands lay in solid silence.

"If I go," she asked, "will you remember me Zack?" (p.288)

The recurrence of these Theodora figures is never obtrusively artificial, yet it falls into a pattern
which can be shown schematically. There are approximately five stages of growth between innocence and total alienation, representing simply different degrees of experience of duality.

**SCHEME:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE I</th>
<th>Zack of Part Three</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theodora in early childhood of early Part One</td>
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<tr>
<td>STAGE II</td>
<td>Lou at end of Part One</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Katina at beginning of Part Two</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Theodora at school, of middle Part One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAGE III</td>
<td>Katina of end of Part Two</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theodora of end of Part One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAGE IV</td>
<td>(Mr. Goodman)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Moraitis)</td>
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<td>(The Man who was Given his Dinner)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Theodora of end of Part Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAGE V</td>
<td>Theodora of Part Three</td>
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One dimension of the plot of *The Aunt's Story* is the interaction of the lives of these various figures. Theodora's progress from one stage to the next is highlighted for the reader when she encounters people who are behind her; also, as the pattern becomes established (even if unconsciously) in the reader's mind, he will tend to make retrospective comparisons. For instance, he will be able to recognize at the end of Part Two, where Theodora is at Stage IV, that The Man who was Given his Dinner was himself at Stage IV when she was at Stage I, back in the second chapter of the book. *The Aunt's Story* tells us only one of the many stories of which we have caught certain moments as they crossed Theodora's story. The perpetuation of the archetype is suggested by the subtle development whereby Stage I (Zack) encounters Stage V (Theodora) at the finale.

iv

**THE USE OF MOTIFS**

The three techniques examined so far work mainly to create the *progress* of Theodora's consciousness from innocent curiosity to total alienation. In order to show that progress, when I was dealing above with the internal structure of Theodora's consciousness, it was necessary for me to rely on conventional vocabulary (e.g. "her
inability to resolve the mysteries;" "unprotected from the inner tension of her dual vision;" etc.) in order to re-
main intelligible to my reader. I was essentially describ-
ing the progressive effects that her vision has on Theo-
dora (and on others, for that matter). I turn now to the 
private, idiomatic texture of her consciousness, by which 
White renders most directly what it feels like to be Theo-
dora--to be seeing life through her eyes. This texture, 
consisting of strange, emphatic syntax and a large net-
work of motifs, is what keeps us constantly in Theodora's 
strange world as she progresses in it. It is, so to speak, 
the raw material of her consciousness, even before that 
consciousness is shaped into story form.

The main motifs forming the texture of Theodora's 
consciousness include bones, roses, hat, clock, mahogany, 
colours (especially black, blue, white and yellow), fire, 
Meroë, Homer's Ithaca, and others. I shall discuss bones, 
roses, hat and mahogany.

A consciousness of bones beneath the outer flesh 
is early established in the novel as a symbol of a person's 
capacity for perceiving "truth" beneath superficial appear-
ances. Theodora is attracted to the black hills of Meroë, 
because,
There are certain landscapes in which you can see the bones of the earth. And this was one. You could touch your own bones, which is to come a little closer to truth. (p.61)

This passage establishes the significance of the motif rather explicitly. Throughout the text it recurs dozens of times, linking together all those "burnt ones" whose vision is intense and penetrating, and contrasting and separating them from those whose awareness stops at surfaces. The contrast appears, for instance, at the Parrott's ball, in the context of music: 'Charlie King is a superficial person, using his skill at the piano to impress Theodora's sister, Fanny. As he plays, "his hands rippled like a pair of kid gloves. They had no bones" (p.77). By contrast, Theodora dances very intensely to the music of the professional players: "Her body bent to the music. Her face was thin with music, down to the bone" (p.78).

On another occasion, Frank Parrott's inability to relate to Theodora is conveyed through the bone motif. Frank is ultimately a superficial person, and he ends up marrying Fanny and finding himself always embarrassed at Theodora's "ugly mug, that was always about to ask something you could not answer" (p.14). But in younger days he is attracted to her, and tells her why: "Because you are all right. Because, I suppose, you are honest" (p.84).
Encouraged, she longs for a deep relationship with him:

He was no longer the nice affectionate dog. If she had touched him, touched his hands, the bones of her fingers would have wrestled with the bones in the palm of his hand.

But she is unable to reach him at this deep, "bone" level.

Minutes later he "must go in and see the others" and promptly proposes marriage to Fanny.

The motif is used extensively to link the "burnt ones." Moraitis declares that he and Theodora are "compatriots in the country of the bones" (p.113). Watching him at the concert she observes that his vision is like hers on the black hills of Meroë (quoted above, p.22):

And he saw with the purity of a primitive vision, whether the bones of the hills or the shape of a cup. (p.116)

Then, towards the end of the concert, she perceives symbolically how he finds in music the strength to survive unconcerned by the anguish of life:

Moraitis rose again above the flesh . . . . He wore the expression of sleep and solitary mirrors. The sun was in his eyes, the sky had passed between his bones. (p.116)

The passage of the sky between the bones suggest that Moraitis achieves a transcendence through playing music, which allows him to feel at one with the universe. His bones are united with the sky, they aren't just the objects of solipsistic anguish in front of a mirror—which they
so often are for Theodora ("in the deal mirror... she
spoke to the face that had now begun to form, its bone"
[p.51]). She had wondered how Moraitis managed to be "pro-
tected by some detachment of unconcern" (p.115), and she
now knows his music is the answer. Unfortunately the same
resource is not open to her, as Miss Spofforth said:

You will see clearly, beyond the bone. . . .
Although you will be torn by all the agonies
of music, you are not creative. You have not
the artist's vanity which is moved finally
to express itself in objects. (p.64)

Despite her lack of "the artist's vanity" however, she is
strengthened by the encounter with her "compatriot" in
the lonely world of "bones."

Similarly, "bone" links exist between Theodora and
Katina Pavlou. After Katina's exposure to the fire of dis-
appointing seduction, her face becomes bloodless, and "since
yesterday, Theodora saw, the bones had come" (p.251).
Interestingly, Katina must have intuited the hollowness or
sham of her relationship with Wetherby even before the seduc-
tion in the tower, for we read that early in the wooing,
"she withdrew her hand" from him, because, "she could not
answer for the behaviour of her bones" (p.234). The touch
of hands involving "bone" touch (i.e. a recognition of sim-
ilar outlook or vision), is reserved for Theodora:

"I shall go away," Katina Pavlou said, touching
the bones in Theodora's hand. (p.264)
Katina has become another "compatriot." And like Moraitis, for whom music provided transcendence, Katina did once, briefly, experience a sense of fullness, similarly rendered:

Katina Pavlou did not hear. There was no reason why she should. Sun had undone her bones. (p.236)

Her romantic flush over Wetherby produced this temporary dissolution of "bone" consciousness, but the next day, as we just saw, the bones come to her face.

Roses are as prevalent in the texture as bones. We have already seen that Theodora's first encounter with a mystery is her discovery of a bug in a rose. Roses in fact symbolize her life. Her first recorded memory is of lying in bed where she "could sense the roses" (p.20). Her childhood is "an epoch of roselight" (p.20). To her mother, she and Fanny are "my roses, my roses" (p.26), but whereas Fanny is "as pink and white as roses in the new dress," Theodora's colour "doesn't suit" (p.27). Thus her sense of alienation begins, in early life. Soon she perceives she has changed into a stick, and wishes she were a rose:

[Pearl Brawne] is fine as a big white rose, and I am a stick. If it is good to be a stick, said Theodora, it is better to be a big white rose. (p.38)

From this time on, until her mother dies and she engages in her quest, Theodora ceases to think of herself in the
rose image, except to remember that her childhood was a "passage of roselight" (p.127). But during her quest the image returns, indicating her desire to find herself in the lost content of childhood. At the Hôtel du Midi,

Maroon roses, the symbols of roses, shouted through megaphones at the brass bed. Remembering the flesh of roses, the roselight snoozing in the veins, she regretted the age of symbols. (p.144)

These maroon roses are the artificial flowers in the Hôtel, and their artificiality symbolizes the painful distance she feels between the innocence of her childhood ("roselight snoozing in the veins") and the anguish of her mature alienation. In another painful scene, Theodora records in the rose motif of her consciousness, that sexual fulfilment might have brought her, perhaps, to the content she knew in childhood. She is very depressed, feeling her identity to be "uncertain" (p.206) and is staring at the roses on the wallpaper of her room, when she hears Wetherby and Lieselotte making love next door:

She looked with sadness at the little hitherto safe microcosm of the darning egg and waited for the rose wall to fall. It began to palpitate, the paper mouths of roses wetting their lips, either voice or wall putting on flesh. She was almost indecently close to what was happening, but sometimes one is. Sometimes the paper rose has arms and thighs. (p.206)

The "putting on flesh" here seems to indicate a fantasy association of the lovers' activity with her own life. But the fantasy
is killed by the depressing conversation of the lovers, and Theodora feels it die: "Hot hands twisted paper roses."

With the death of fantasy, with no hope of returning somehow to her childhood of "roselight snoozing in the veins," Theodora now chooses for her personal symbol a black rose. She sews this gloomy object on her hat, and our last image of her in the book is an image of this symbol:

The hat sat straight, but the doubtful rose trembled and glittered, leading a life of its own. (p.303)

This conjunction of rose and hat signifies the survival of her divided self. The rose, as I've tried to show, is the symbol of her private self, and the hat, as I shall now show, symbolizes her social self.

I have noted at least ten recurrences of the hat motif, which surprises me, because it does not stand out much in the text. On re-reading, one discovers that the hat always appears in a social context, that is, it always becomes a focus for people's awareness and judgments of Theodora. By her hat, people notice that Theodora is an oddball. "You haven't even taken off your hat" (p.49), says Una Russell, when she first sees her at the school. Una hates "what was unexplained" (p.63), and Theodora certainly appears unusual in her hat: "Because Theodora sat on the quilt in her big straw hat, and her face was half a brown
shadow, the way the brim cut across. The impression was rather strange" (p.49).

In the distress of Katina's seduction, Theodora rushes to the tower hatless, and people immediately notice this as a sign of strange emotion in her. "How funny you look," Katina says, "and without a hat" (p.252). Her hat, at this point in time, is "large and unfashionable" (p.146), but whether it is the black hat of Part Three we don't know. Certainly that hat aroused comment. Both Zack and Mrs. Johnson remind her on two separate occasions that she has left the hat behind. One of these times, Theodora admits enigmatically that "It was not very polite" (p.295) to do so. Ultimately Theodora treats the hat as the symbol of her public self, for when Holstius tells her to submit to society and keep her "better" awareness to herself ("we must keep it under our hats" [p.299]), she immediately treats his metaphor literally; she decides that what she will do is simply pin the black rose on her hat, and go along with whatever she is told to do. In other words, she thinks to herself, using the symbols of rose (private self) and hat (public self), that she will simply accept the irreconcilable duality between her vision and the world's vision instead of trying to destroy one or the other. And she will accept the consequences (the asylum). She puts the
hat on at the end, "as it was suggested she should do" (p. 303), thus expressing her submission; her ironical triumph is that the symbol of her submission (agreeing to wear the hat) contains also the symbol of her uncompromised private vision, the black rose.

Lastly, the motif of mahogany identifies those things in the world that Theodora really hates, and it helps to explain why her affair with Huntly Clarkson fails. Mahogany symbolizes basically the materialistic ethic of living life by possessing things. Mrs. Goodman brings back mahogany furniture from her trips to Europe and India (p. 26), and locks it up when she is not present in the house to exercise her possessiveness. In old age, she reads "from mahogany lips" (p. 127), and her reading brings back the faces of Theodora's childhood. "You see all these faces that I command," says Mrs. Goodman, "it is they who give me my significance" (p. 127). When Theodora perceives that Huntly Clarkson also surrounds himself with mahogany furniture, she grows suspicious of his ability to survive without such "padding" (p. 106). When Moraitis tells her that he cannot abide rooms full of furniture, she develops the strength to reject Huntly finally, and perceives her rejection in terms of the mahogany motif.
She closed doors, and he was left standing in his handsome mahogany interior, which was external, fatally external, outside Theodora Goodman's closed door: (p.113).

By contrast with the mahogany interior of Huntly's house, the house Theodora finds for herself on the hillside in America in Part Three, is a "blank house," containing only "objects that people had not valued" (p.299).

THE ELLIPTICAL SYNTAX

White's syntax in this and other novels, is perhaps the most striking of all his different techniques of vision. He is often elliptical, leaving sentences incomplete or understated, or setting off in a separate paragraph a small group of words which is often only a fragment of a sentence. In the course of reading, we get used to the strangeness of the technique, but its principal effect continues. That effect is that we are forced to participate in completing the verbal texture. For example, the first paragraph of the book which consists of eight words ("But old Mrs. Goodman did die at last") forces us to try to supply some balancing statement before the "but." Since we obviously can't do that yet, the effect of the paragraph is to alert us to the subsequent pages in an effort to find out why it is important (or unlikely) that Mrs. Goodman should have died.
Similarly, the four-word paragraph on page 83 ("She smoothed her skirt . . .") which occurs in the middle of a conversation between Theodora and Frank Parrott forces us by its sheer brevity to try to complete the story by saying what is in Theodora's mind when she makes this gesture (is she waiting for Frank to make love to her? is she about to cut him down?). By this means White captures our most careful attention to the development of the story, and engages our imagination rewardingly, in filling in the blanks.

Again, consider the italicised sentence fragment in this quotation:

"I hope you will come often," Huntly Clarkson said. "I would like you to meet my friends."
It brushed cold along her skin. To sit alone in the drawing room surrounded by the bare diamond women. (p.107 my emphasis)

Omitted from the fragment is a clause which might read "She could not imagine what it would be like," or "She did not want." Leaving the sentence in fragment form, White forces us to be particularly attentive to Theodora's situation. Huntly has already told Theodora that he likes to have women around him with bare shoulders and diamonds. We are not told that she doesn't want to do this, though we are told that his suggestion that she meet his friends
"brushed cold along her skin." With this indication of Theodora's negativity, we are then simply placed in the drawing room "surrounded by the bare diamond women." Our engagement with the narrative is much more intimate and imaginative this way than if the narrator had spelled out fully how Theodora felt about his suggestion. We are simply placed, along with her, in the situation Huntly has proposed, and must develop her feelings, by identification with her.

The elliptical syntax is an extremely obtrusive device, and probably accounts for some of the derision White's style has received over the years. Australian (23 January, 1971, 22) recently published the winning entry in a "Parody Competition" in which ellipsis is soundly mocked. This hostility to White's elliptical syntax evidences yet again the dynamic tension which the novel of vision creates between writer and reader. For readers willing to submit to the texture of the vision, and to open their sensibilities to its mannered techniques, the defamiliarizing texture becomes imaginatively involving, as I have tried to show.
The theme of *The Aunt's Story* is implicit in the major techniques which I have examined. It is the development of individual consciousness in the world of White's vision. Theodora progresses to a fuller and fuller awareness of the conditions of duality and isolation, which produces alienation. The reader is forced through the same kind of experience by means of the shuttling back and forth of the narrative base, which creates duality; and this duality is further bodied out in the motif patterns which stand apart from the more normal language of narration. The part-structure is itself a movement into subjective isolation, involving a narrowing of focus and progressive egocentricity of perceptions. The form of the novel is the form of Theodora's consciousness, which is the theme.
FOOTNOTES


2 Colin Roderick, An Introduction to Australian Fiction (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1950), p. 146.

3 John B. Beston, "Love and Sex in a Staid Spinster: The Aunt's Story," Quadrant, 15, 5 (Sept/Oct. 1971), 22-27, treats Theodora as an object lesson in distorted sexual attitudes resulting from the destructive influences of her parents. The article is helpful, but doesn't finally succeed in explaining away Theodora's problem. After all, her sister Fanny doesn't suffer the same way Theodora does, so why did her parents have this distorting effect on Theo and not also (or instead) on Fanny? Beston shows how Theodora was affected by her parents, but not why. It remains a moot point between Beston's view and mine whether Theodora's vision is a result of conditioning, or whether it is not also a cause of that conditioning.


5 Herring and Morley both discuss the quest structure.

6 Beston thinks that the residents at the Hotel are "all creations of Theodora's fantasy," rather than actual people around whom she builds her daydreams. His view seems to overlook the evidence (The Aunt's Story, p. 142) of the hotelier's introduction of their names to Theodora. On the other hand, the hotelier might also be a fantasy figure, if one accepts Beston's view. J. F. Burrows, "'Jardin Exotique': The Central Phase of The Aunt's Story," Southerly, 26 (1966), 152-173, shares my view that Theodora builds daydreams, which he calls "fugues," round actual people.

7 Marjorie Barnard, "Theodora Again," Southerly, 20 (1959), 51-55, points to some of the motifs, notably the colours, in a useful review.
CHAPTER EIGHT

LIVING BY VISION: THE VISION AND ROLE OF THE ARTIST
IN PATRICK WHITE'S THE VIVISECTOR

The Aunt's Story and The Vivisector both immerse the reader in the internal world of a person possessed of a deeply alienating vision. Poor Theodora Goodman could do nothing with her vision but carry it to the asylum; she had no satisfactory way of communicating, for, as her school principal saw, she did not have "the artist's vanity, which is moved finally to express itself in objects" (AS p.64). Hurtle Duffield is what Theodora might have become if she indeed had had that "vanity." Hurtle is possessed, like Theodora, of an alienated (and alienating) vision, but his skill as a painter saves him from the asylum, and allows him instead an active social role. Playing the role of artist, Hurtle is able to express his vision, and by so doing he engages in perpetual battle with the world from which Theodora was locked away, and finds the soul-kinship which Theodora ultimately gave up hope of achieving. My purpose in this chapter is to define both Hurtle's vision and his role as artist, in the terms in which they are created in the text.

Published in 1970, The Vivisector has already been studied in four articles, a book chapter and many reviews
at this writing (July, 1973). Each of the five larger studies mentioned brings to bear on the novel criteria derived externally, and which help to place it in larger contexts of literature and art, thus tending to undercut whatever "defamiliarization" of vision White has achieved. Docker, for instance, argues for the placement of White "in an Australian post-Romantic tradition of thought." Terry Smith proposes to examine "certain aspects of the novel as novel," but proceeds instead to show that Hurtle Duffield is not "plausible" because he is not a recognizable member of the actual world of Australian artists. Beston, Herring and Morley all pay a good deal of attention to the actual text of the novel, but their critical purposes are not so much to illuminate the innate qualities of that text, as to relate it to the artist's life or his other works. All of these critical essays are interesting and valuable in their own right, but their tendency to view the novel in relation to something else is evidence yet again of the reluctance of critics to confront a novel of vision on its own terms. (I should add, in fairness to Thelma Herring, that her article might be said to use other White novels as mere sources of critical concepts relevant to The Vivisector; but the question remains, Why bother? Why not just confront The Vivisector directly, on its own terms? Herring's practice
leads her eventually into making value judgments about *The Vivisector* vis-a-vis *Voss* and *The Solid Mandala*, both of which she prefers.)

HURTTLE DUFFIELD'S VISION

From early childhood on, Hurtle's inquisitiveness about life sets him off from all those around him. Again and again he asks difficult questions of his parents, until it becomes rather frighteningly obvious to them that "there was so much of him that didn't belong to his family. He could see them watching him, wanting to ask him questions. Sometimes they did, and he answered, but the answers weren't the ones they wanted. They looked puzzled, even hurt" (p.13). His mother advises him to spend less time reading, and to run along and play with the others in the fresh air (p.14). Likewise his father advises: "Learn a trade. It's all very well to read and write. But you can go too far" (p.17). Hurtle silently rejects their advice, knowing that he can't love a trade, and that even the books he reads are not that important to him. What then is he interested in? With the narrator's help, he answers this question for himself in the novel's first presentation of his artist's vision:
You loved—what? You wouldn't have known, not to be asked.

He loved the feel of a smooth stone, or to take a flower to pieces, to see what there was inside. He loved the pepper tree breaking into light, and the white hens rustling by moonlight in the black branches, and the sleepy sound of the hen shit dropping. He could do nothing about it, though. Not yet. He could only carry all of it in his head. Not talk about it. (p.17)

The feel of the stone's texture, the vivisection of the flower, the visual qualities of the pepper tree, and the sounds of hens moving and shitting constitute the valuable elements in Hutle's world at this point in his life, and at this opening stage of the novel. For the next six hundred and some pages till the novel ends, the narrative progressively extends the presentation of these things that Hutle finds important, till the reader has been steeped for many hours of reading in the idiosyncracies of his perception—his vision. Patrick White achieves this "steeping" process partly through the use of motifs recording Hutle's perceptions, and partly through the particular manner in which he engages the reader in creating Hutle's paintings, and I shall examine both fictional devices in detail.

The texture of motifs and the focusing of the reader's imagination on the composition of the paintings creates an awareness of Hutle's vision, and against that texture and focus lies a background of more ordinary
perceptions and mundane interests. The visionary elements and the foil or ordinariness are constantly juxtaposed, reminding us throughout the narrative of the uniqueness and idiosyncracy of Hurtle's vision. For instance Hurtle's highly idiosyncratic awareness of his own painting ("... whirligigs of memory, aureoles and chandeliers, dandelions and tadpoles ... trying to coerce the crimson arteries, or life-bearing rivers, across the vast steppes ...") is immediately followed by Don Lethbridge's simpler and more objective awareness of the same object ("'Going for the colour again, aren't you?'" [p.629]). Or, again, Hurtle's thoughts about Maurice Caldicott ("blue-white limbs, like those of plucked and drawn chicken, shot with the tones of invisible giblets" [p.251]) are immediately followed by the down-to-earth words of Nance's letter ("Hurtle Duffield you selfish male bastard do you think I am nothing more than a prostitute?" [p.251]) The foil sets off the vision, and acts at times as comic relief from the imaginative intensity of Hurtle's internal world. Similarly, Hurtle's actions throughout any given day alternate between elaborate mental and imaginative processes, and the simple bodily functions: from, on the one hand, "aesthetic orgasm" (p.462) to, on the other, "Shall I fry you some eggs?" (p.463).
a). Motifs of Hurtle's Vision

During the course of his life, Hurtle develops certain terms in which he views reality. A complete list of these motifs occurring in the narrative would be very long, and would include, among others: people as chickens; eating as a form of relationship (including cannibalism); chandelier; noise (as an emotion); vivisection as a form of relationship; art as sex; araucaria (as an emotional state induced by the plant so named); crossing the desert; the world of moonlight; stroke (a pun connoting both paint-brush strokes and paralytic seizures) as a basis of similarity between God and artists; the words "gelatinous," "slomacky," and others; snake and rose as aspects of Rhoda; eyes; shitting; and masturbation. I shall discuss what seem to me the most prominent of these motifs.

In early life, Hurtle's vision is dominated by chickens. He perceives his transfer from the world of his first parents to that of the Courtneys as a move from a "chicken" life to a "chandelier" life, and these symbolic perceptions mark important stages of his growing self-awareness as an artist. Hurtle asks his father why the chickens peck at the white, crook-neck pullet in the yard, and learns that it's "because it's different" (p.?). His own difference from the rest of his family is soon evoked, thus allowing
him to seize on the image of the crook-neck bird as a symbol of his own alienation. We find he likes to roost like the chickens, in the pepper tree, amid "the sleepy sound of the hen shit dropping" (p.17). The simplicity and earthiness of his origins is associated in his mind with the symbol of chickens, and throughout his life when he encounters sordid, unimaginative or uncultured people, he perceives them in terms of the symbol. For instance, as he grows a little older he sees his father as "a scrawny cock" (p.71); and the prosaic Mr. Tyndall, his drawing teacher at the Courtney home, has hands "as blue as the legs of skinned chickens" (p.96). He describes the Courtneys' copulation to Rhoda as being "like fowls" (p.123), and he feels the banality of his own first copulation with the prostitute Nance when she tells him that men are like plucked chickens when they've satisfied their sexual lust:

"Silly, bloody-lookun men! Silly-lookun plucked men! You all look plucked once you've had what you come for." (p.193)

Likewise, Hurtle sees through appearance to the sordid homosexual intentions of his agent, Caldicott ("his intellect inviting a rape which discretion would not have allowed his body" [p.250]), and this insight into Caldicott's motives crystallizes into a chicken image (quoted above, p.289). When Hurtle goes to the Greek island of
Perialos with his mistress Hero, the sordidness of her romantic delusions appears plain to him when he sees the monks she has exalted in memory and expectation behaving like chickens to a church official: "Like hens expecting to be trodden, they hunched over the hand they kissed" (p.396). Hero had expected illumination from the monks, and got none; by contrast, Hurtle sees nothing in the monks, but he does see something glorious in the physical landscape of the island, which Hero cannot see. This difference in their vision is rendered through a variation of the chicken motif:

All this time a little golden hen had been stalking and clucking round the iron base of the cafe table, pecking at the crumbs which had fallen from their mouths. The warm scallops of her golden feathers were of that same inspiration as the scales of the silver-blue sea creature they—or he, at least—had watched from John of the Apocalypse, ritually coiling and uncoiling, before dissolving in the last light. (pp.408-9)

He tries to express to her what he sees in the cock, but she cannot share his vision, and concerns herself with the steamship tickets. To her, the cock is just a humble chicken pecking at crumbs; to him the cock is a golden bird which wonderfully inspires her imagination.

In three or four other instances, the chicken motif conveys Hurtle's perception of sordidness in his sister Rhoda, in his mistress Kathy, and in himself in old age.
When he first meets Rhoda, her physical deformities "re­minded him of the crook-neck pullet at home" (p.30), and later in life, when he is working on the Rhoda paintings, he relates her weak bone structure to "the sickening pliability" (p.301) of the breast bones of dead chickens. At Kathy's concert, Hurtle feels jealous and pained by the public exposure of her art, and records this by saying that her "golden" piano playing has turned into "chicken-notes, in danger of scattering too far" (p.551). Later on, Hurtle receives a message from Kathy via the sycophantic music critic, Shuard:

"She said," the man insisted, "'Tell my dear old mate, my darling old rooster . . .'
"No! I don't believe. I don't want to—know. Never!" His pure soul, his spiritual child. (p.614)

This reaction to the word "rooster" shows Hurtle's unwillingness to accept a sordid interpretation of his relationship with the girl: surely his "pure soul, his spiritual child" thought of him as something other than a "rooster"?

In contrast to the sordid world of "chicken," which is where his life began, Hurtle discovers the brilliant and exciting world of imagination, which he first perceives as the world of the "chandelier." The separation between the two worlds is symbolized by a door in the
Courtney home, covered with green felt, which "puffs" shut, marking a total separation. On one side of the door is the "chicken" world of the kitchen, and "the damp stone laundry smelling of Lysol and yellow soap" (p.31), which he compares to a prison; on the other side is the fancy interior of the house filled with art works and exciting ornaments:

The felted door went pff as he passed through.
And at once he was received by his other world of silence and beauty. He touched the tiny porcelain shells. He stood looking up through the chandelier, holding his face almost flat, for the light to trickle and collect on it. The glass fruit tinkled slightly, the whole forest swaying, because of a draught from an open window.
He was himself again. (p.31)

The last sentence of this quotation is significant, for it suggests that the chandelier is not just an object to be possessed or looked at, but a mechanism by which Hurtle is able to become aware of his own personality as an embryonic artist. Indeed, even earlier, when he first saw the chandelier, we read that "he knew all about a chandelier, from perhaps dreaming of it, and only now recognizing his dream" (p.24). In other words, the chandelier with its "flickering of broken rainbow" (p.24) is a prismatic device which provides him with an affirming metaphor by which to recognize his own brilliant imagination: "He had
inside him his own chandelier" (p.53). Later, when he gives priority to the expression of the imagination, by becoming an accomplished artist, he continues to think of it (his imagination) as a "chandelier:" his desire to begin painting the work "Marriage of Light" is expressed as wanting "to shoot at an enormous naked canvas a whole radiant chandelier waiting in his mind and balls" (p.215). By this point in his life Hurtle has, as it were, internalized the "chandelier:" that is to say, whereas the chandelier was a necessary object in his childhood, by which he was able to believe in the reality of his own imaginative vision, in later life the object itself ceases to be an important thing because he has grown to maturity as an artist, and now believes in the "chandelier" of his own mind. This growth process is evident at the point where Hurtle returns from the stimulating trip to Europe and finds "most noticeably," that "the chandelier had dwindled and dulled above the hall" (p.143).

Many years later, Hurtle forsees a similar experience of artistic maturing in little Kathy Volkov. Kathy, at the time, is at the beginning of her career as an artist, and is inspired by Tchaikowsky, Rachmaninoff, and particularly Liszt, and her teacher has instructed her to study Liszt's First Concerto for however long it takes to
master it. Hurtle perceives as she's telling him this, that "at the end of the unspecified period, the chandeliers would crash about her shoulders, and her shining head rise untouched" (pp. 448-9). The reader, educated by earlier usages of the chandelier motif, can understand that Hurtle means that Kathy, like himself, will outgrow the need for external models ("chandeliers") as the artistic self in her matures.

The growth of Hurtle's personality is, then, a progress out of the world of "chicken," through the world of "chandelier," to a world of artistic self-expression. White uses the complex and intricate motif of art-as-sex, to render Hurtle's awareness of his life as an artist. The motif is intricate, in that it involves many different aspects of sexual experience, such as orgasm, masturbation, wet dreams, rape, procreation and so on. The association between the two forms of activity begins with masturbation. In Europe, Hurtle is frustrated by his inability to draw and paint on a level equal to that of the museum and art gallery paintings "which showed him a reality more intense than the life he had so far experienced" (p. 129). He destroys his attempts, and "the inadequacy and necessity of his efforts," we read, "drained him as despairingly as an orgasm in the bath." In a London restaurant, when his
emotions are disturbed by a number of events, he begins
"drawing in the margin of the menu, as he always did when
a situation became unbearable, practically as though play­
ing with himself" (p.140). Later, as he struggles unsuc­cessfully to paint his vision of Nance, he finds what he
is painting is only "one aspect of him in her," and the
experience is described as "fiddling, rubbing, masturbating
in nervous paint on a narrow board" (p.197). Near the end
of his life, in a temporary loss of artistic drive, Hurtle
again uses the masturbation metaphor in wondering whether
his art has been communicative or too self-enclosed:

He wondered whom he had been addressing all
these years. No artist can endure devoted
misinterpretation indefinitely, any more
than he can survive in a vacuum of public
contempt; or was he the self-centred monster
Rhoda accused him of being? God knew, he
had multiplied, if not through his loins;
he was no frivolous masturbator tossing his
seed on to wasteland. (p.528)

This contrast between multiplying and wasting seed is em­bedded in Hurtle's consciousness by the sight of the grocer
Cutbush actually masturbating one night, at the park where
lovers are copulating in the lantana bushes. In his paint­
ing "Lantana Lovers Under Moonfire" Hurtle elevates the
lovers, and derides "the gunner-grocer aiming at them out
of frustration and envy" (p.349). By a strange irony, this
derisive picture of a masturbator becomes a communicative
and fulfilling quasi-sexual object, for the grocer later reveals to Hurtle that he himself felt "consummated, so to speak" (p.582) by the realization that his masturbation had given birth to a painting.

Further variations of the art-as-sex motif reveal other unsatisfactory aspects in Hurtle's awareness of his life as a painter. For a while he is preoccupied putting delicate razor nicks on a self-portrait, but pleasant though the exercise of this technique is, it is not important to his development as an artist, and amounts simply to "weightless wet dreams of art" (p.245). Nance tells him the painting reveals only self-love (p.258), so he smears it with shit and eventually hurls it into the gorge. At another time, Gil Honeysett, Director of the State Gallery invades Hurtle's studio, and the disturbance is so violent to Hurtle that he feels raped (p.591), and it takes time before he can paint again, and watch "the few last drops of fulfilment spurt and trickle."

The pleasant and fulfilling aspects of his life as an artist also appear to Hurtle in sexual images. The period during which he is painting "Electric City" is a "drawn-out orgasm" (p.211) and in this period his sleep at night has post-coital aspects. Having slept alone, he wakes "working out of his mouth the rather rubbery texture of
nipples" (p. 212). Boo Holingrake's appreciation of his painting of Rhoda is also orgasmic, reminding him "of Nance on the occasions when she had reached a true orgasm" (p. 303). The same painting produces in Hurtle an "aesthetic orgasm" (p. 462), when he sees it later in Rhoda's company. (Likewise, he notices that Kathy experiences an aesthetic orgasm [p. 524] at her concert, brought about through her art, not her lovers.) Hurtle is aware of himself "panting" as he "thrust against a virgin board" (p. 490), doing a painting of Kathy. Most important of all, he looks back on his career as an artist, at the time of the Duffield Retrospective, and sees it as "half a lifetime begetting, and giving birth" (p. 622).

From some of the motifs which reveal Hurtle's awareness of his life as an artist, I turn now to two major motifs which render his experience of relationship with people, eating and vivisection. The motif of eating as a form of relationship is one of the most noticeable motifs in the book, not only because of its constant recurrence, but also because of the bizarre forms in which it sometimes appears. The motif first enters Hurtle's consciousness quite naturally in relation to his baby brother Sep. Mumma Duffield is concerned about leaving Sep in his basket in the Courtney's garden, because "Miss Rhoda's cat
might jump out and eat him" (p.46). This fear makes Sep interesting to Hurtle, and he now watches the baby breast feeding:

Certainly Sep knew what he was up to, his red fingers working on the veined tittybottle, like some sort of caterpillars trying for a hold on a pale fruit. (p.47)

The comic tone of this picture persists when, later, Sep grows bigger, "too heavy, too greedy: the way he would grab hold of her by now she might have been a pudding he meant to guzzle whole" (p.67). But soon the comedy acquires ironically grim undertones, when Mrs. Courtney declares to Hurtle, "I could eat you up!" (p.49). Unfamiliar with the turn of speech, Hurtle imagines that she "seemed to be going to try," as she bends down and embraces him. Shortly afterwards, he sees Mrs. Courtney "looking at him as though he were something to eat" (p.50). From this point on, Hurtle is increasingly obsessed by images of himself being devoured by his adoptive mother and sister. When Mrs. Courtney pushes his face into her wardrobe full of dresses, to teach him like a puppy to recognize her scent, he feels his face being "swallowed" (p.90). On another occasion, Rhoda lures him to her bedside with a promise to show him something, only to throw her arms around him in a strong embrace and kiss, and then, we read, she "took a deep breath and lay back on the pillows as though she had
eaten a satisfying meal" (p.122). Earlier, he sees Rhoda as a white ant, having just dreamed that white ants devoured the harness-room wall where he did his first paintings (p.93).

Mrs. Courtney's devouring attitude becomes overtly sexual, which is what finally drives Hurtle away from the home:

"Give me--" she said, "let me hold your head."

She didn't wait for a reply, but took it in her hands as though it were a fruit, or goblet. She began gulping at his mouth; they were devouring with their two mouths a swelling, over-ripened, suddenly sickening--pulp.

He spat her out. (p.172)

Because of his participation in this sexual kiss, Hurtle is filled with guilt and disgust, and he enlists in the army at once, goes to war, and never sees Mrs. Courtney again.

When next the eating motif recurs, however, it is again in a sexual context. Nance, the prostitute begins "peeling, paring" him of his clothes, as though "he might have been something else: some exotic fruit" (p.191). His sexual lust for her appears to him in similar terms: "His own fingers began itching out after homelier pears, bruised in parts; the gash in a dripping water-melon; the marbled, sometimes scented, sometimes acrid flesh of all fruit ever" (p.191).
From the time of Mrs. Courtney's sickening kiss onwards, all Hurtle's sexual relationships appear to him in terms of eating and being eaten. After Nance's death, Boo Holingrake introduces him to his next mistress, Hero, with the ironical line, "I'm giving you Hurtle, Hero, for dinner" (p.326), and soon enough the new lovers start eating one another. Hero arrives at his house and begins "ravenously, propelling him with her greed" (p.363); then he becomes "infected with her appetite" and progresses, "from nibbling to biting to attempting to swallow her burning earlobes" (p.363). An impassioned kiss between them is "their tender meal" in which he hears "the clash of teeth on teeth as they bit into the same fruit" (p.383). Even with Kathy Volkov, he finds himself at first wanting to hold her head, "yes to drink it down—swallow it whole—its beauty" (p.451), and she responds by "devouring" him in "mouthfuls" (pp.484-5). In time the eating motif disappears from Hurtle and Kathy's relationship, as it ceases to involve sexual intercourse.

From these usages of the motif we can see clearly that Hurtle is afraid of sexual experience, at the same time that he seeks it and enjoys it. It's not simply a matter of sexual contact and artistic production being mutually exclusive, for Hurtle uses his sexual experiences
as the subjects of many of his paintings, and goes to his lover of the moment whenever he becomes too self-enclosed to paint well. It appears however that Hurtle always fears the danger of sexuality getting out of control and causing him to lose his balance in devouring, and being devoured. In other words, it is the possessiveness of sex that threatens him, as we see clearly in this exchange with Kathy:

"Don't you like me?" she asked between mouthfuls.
From amongst the wreckage of what he had aspired to, he didn't. He had hoped to love, not possess her.
"Don't you?" she gasped.
"No, Kathy, I love you." That seemed to satisfy her; now she could accept the dry science of his approach. (p.484)

This statement of Hurtle's preference for a non-possessive sexual relationship with Kathy shows how far he has progressed in facing up to the problem of relationship, since the time he fled from Mrs. Courtney's devouring mouth. The motif of eating charts his struggle, through the relationships with Mrs. Courtney, with Nance, with Hero—all of whom were possessive or devouring lovers—to the relationship with Kathy which, by its non-possessive nature becomes the closest thing to a fully satisfactory sexual relationship that Hurtle experiences in his lifetime. Yet the nebulosity and impermanence and non-exclusiveness of this
last love affair make it a good deal less than perfect. The failure to achieve that perfect sexual relationship is one of the enduring ironies of White's vision in this novel, though, as I shall show later, this loss is somewhat compensated for by the kinship Hurtle feels with certain people (including Kathy) whom he considers to be "artists."

Like the motif of eating, the motif of vivisection conveys Hurtle's vision of the destructiveness inherent in certain human relationships. The essential difference is that "vivisection" is a mental process, whereas "eating" is physical. "Vivisection" is an abstracting and analytic function, a way of seeing or interpreting a person's life; "eating" is a fusing function, a way of swallowing up a person's individuality. "Eating" is the destructive possibility inherent in sexual relationship; "vivisection" is the destructive possibility inherent in being given self awareness. God is a "vivisector," because he gives man consciousness which can turn into anguished self-awareness. The artist is also a "vivisector," because his work can interpret a person's life in a way that is disturbing to that person's self image. I shall try to show how I arrive at these definitions through examining occurrences of the motif.
We first encounter the term "vivisection" in Mrs. Courtney's normal usage of it, in the second chapter. Her "particular interest is the prevention of vivisection" (p.104), she informs Hurtle, in the ironic context where she has just forced her husband to slash and cut him with a riding crop for having done a disturbingly interpretative painting of his tutor's suicide. This usage in the context of the hurt she has done to him, and the hurt his painting caused in her, provides Hurtle with a metaphoric term to connote acts of cruelty.

Years later he himself begins to use the term. He tells Cutbush that he believes in God, "the Divine Vivisector" (p.269), and explains that he believes in God as such because "otherwise, how would men come by their cruelty--and their brilliance?" (p.269). Though Cutbush doesn't understand what he's talking about, the reader does. Hurtle is grieving over the death of Nance, and wondering how far he bears the responsibility for her death. "I've been accused of loving myself" (p.268), he explains which the reader knows was Nance's accusation of him (p.258). "With an artist," Nance complained, "you're never free he's makun use of yer in the name of the Holy Mother of Truth . . . when the only brand of truth 'e recognizes is 'is own it is inside 'im 'e reckons and as 'e
digs inter poor fucker you 'e hopes you' ll help 'im let it out . . . by turnun yer into a shambles . . . [and] out of the shambles 'e paints what 'e calls 'is bloody work of art!'" (p.258). "Lovun 'imself" (p.258) instead of her, and using her, "not her actual body so much as its formal vessel, from which to pour his visions of life" (p.210), Hurtle destroyed Nance, or at least contributed to her destruction, in the service of his art. As a brilliant artist, he is also a cruel "vivisector;" by exercising his artistic vision and skills on Nance, he produced both masterpieces of art, and her death. His attribution of the brilliance and the cruelty in him to God, in the conversation with Cutbush, is a religious rationalization culminating from a long period of awareness of what he was doing to Nance. Quite early on in their relationship, he saw that he would "vivisect" her, for he realized that in exposing herself to him, "like all human vegetables she was offering herself to the knife she only half sus­ pected":(p.207).

Having brought "God the Divine Vivisector" into his personal philosophy, Hurtle has found a way of accepting the destructive effects of his art, and is able to go on painting, or "perving on people" (p.233) as Nance calls it, for the rest of his life. If God is a "vivisector,"
then man is too. The process of creation—be it the breathing of life into dust, or the aesthetic process of "distorting truth to get an effect" (p.489)—also hurts those upon whom it is practiced. Rhoda and Mrs. Volkov both confirm Hurtle's belief that art "vivisects" its subjects. Rhoda tells him she is reluctant to move into his house because she "might be vivisected afresh, in the name of truth—or art" (p.462). And Mrs. Volkov, whose experience of "marriage" has been painful, would still prefer a husband to a painter, Kathy informs him:

"My mother says she would never let a painter paint her, because then you are at their mercy, worse than the mercy of a husband. A husband goes away. But the painter has painted the painting." (p.440)

To be "at the mercy" of a painter in this sense is to be subject to the painful truth of his vision about oneself, for, as Mrs. Volkov later admits, the artist "can see farther" (p.638) than anyone else.

It isn't only the subject who is "vivisected" by art; the artist too feels the pain of the knife. Even during his time with Nance, Hurtle found that "he the ruthless operator was in the end operated on" (p.230). Hearing of Mrs. Volkov's stroke which blurred her speech, Hurtle has "the sudden thought of a blighted hand" (p.510), which would stop him from painting if it should happen. He wonders if
"God the Merciful" will bring him this relief from the pain of painting. It doesn't happen, though in the end God does "stroke" him to death as he, in his lifetime has hurt some people by brush strokes (p.637).

In this discussion of the vivisection motif, I have had to wrestle with a difficult critical argument, trying to describe a most elusive symbol. It's worth noting that part of this difficulty results from the religious sense in which Hurtle understands "vivisection." Clearly the motif signifies Hurtle's awareness of the destructive effects of his work as an artist. By attributing a similarly destructive effect to the creator of man, Hurtle rationalizes and exculpates the function of the artist by asserting that that function is simply an extension of the mystery of life which is both brilliant and cruel. On the wall of his "dunny" he has the inscription:

God the Vivisector
God the Artist
God

(p.319)

The inscription is never completed, suggesting that although he has learned to live with his vivisector/artist role, by attributing it to divine heredity, he cannot explain why things should be that way. Why must God the Artist also be God the Vivisector, and isn't there perhaps
a third line to be written, which will resolve the painful clash between the brilliance of the artist and the cruelty of the vivisector? Just before his death, Hurtle recalls, during a visit to the dunny, that he still hasn't finished the inscription: "Most likely it would finish him" (p.635). We are left then, with Hurtle's vision of creation as a process involving the pain of "vivisection," but he does not manage to find out why life is like that.

b). The Composition of Hurtle's Paintings

In the course of the novel we witness the creation of about twenty-five paintings and drawings, some of which are single works, while some pass through multiple versions. Our knowledge of these works is restricted almost exclusively to their social significance—that is, their significance to Hurtle, and to others who view them. Nowhere is there a full, objective description of any of the paintings, though we learn a good deal more about some of them than about others. The result of this restricted awareness that we have of the paintings is that, to a considerable degree, we are forced to invent our own versions of their appearance, if we want to know what they look like. And because they play major roles in the unfolding of the plot at certain points, it seems to me that we do want to know
what at least some of them look like. By not providing clear pictures of the paintings, White engages the reader actively in imagining the products of Hurtle's vision. To perform this imaginative task, the reader must, of course, try to put himself in Hurtle's place. Thus the technique of restricted description of the paintings is a technique used to immerse the reader that much more deeply in the world of Hurtle's vision. Some examples should clarify my point.

Two of the first paintings Hurtle does, during his relationship with Nance, are called "Electric City," and "Marriage of Light." Our information about these paintings is as follows: "Electric City:" Painted while Nance is "out of his mind" (p.211); sold to an unknown buyer, and Nance does not care about its sale (p.219). "Marriage of Light:" Sold to the same buyer, and Nance regrets the sale—she says it was her painting, and that she "practically painted it with her own bloody tail" (p.220); inspired by sexual intercourse with Nance (p.216); Nance, on seeing it, remarks that she "muster been pinko" (p.218) to suggest that on some future occasion she would sit for him, because she would "probably come out wearun a prick and balls for luck" (p.218), and she actually kicks the painting.
Because this information is so scanty, the reader does not know, for instance, why Nance likes the one painting enough to regret its sale, but doesn't care about the other one. Therefore our tendency is, I think, to extrapolate from the information given, and by doing so we get deeper into the motives of Hurtle's life at this time. I for one imagine that "Electric City" projects Hurtle's sense of alienation in the city, that it is a cold painting ("electric" blue or green, perhaps), suggestive of trams and angular city buildings, and harsh city faces—some of the things he may have been trying to escape from at this time, by moving to his isolated shack in the bush. As for "Marriage of Light," my fancy creates a radiant flux of yellows, oranges, reds, expressing both the orgasmic release and the fear of engulfment, of Hurtle's sexual encounters with Nance. Other readers will undoubtedly have different versions of the paintings. The point I'm making is simply that Patrick White allows us, as it were, a blank page on which to draw our own interpretations of Hurtle's pictures, thereby involving us in a participatory role in the creation of the fiction.

One further example: The Painting "Pythoness at Tripod" is mentioned more than any other work except "Lantana Lovers," and we feel by the end of the book, that we
know this particular work quite well. We know, for instance, that both Hero and Boo found it cruel (pp. 304, 328), and that Kathy thought he had painted it because of the difficulty of the subject (p. 448). We know the painting depicts Rhoda standing naked by the bidet, and that it has gone through several versions, the latest of which is infused with the hysteria which Muriel Devereux displayed at Boo's party (p. 315). The title is a classical allusion offering a stratum of meaning to those who recognize it. But more directly, "pythoness" suggest a figure of snake-like curves, and Hero is probably talking about these curves when she remarks on the octopus image in the painting (p. 327). Finally, we know that Rhoda's pubic hair appears pink, with drops of moisture (p. 280), in the painting. My list of information here is exhaustive. Apart from a late statement (p. 639) that Hurtle felt his painting expressed pity for Rhoda, there are no other references to this work in the text. Yet I would suggest that this list doesn't give all we know of the painting. Surely each reader has a sense of what colours are in the painting? Surely we have at least some notion of the size of the canvas? My point is that for me, and I suspect for most readers, the painting takes on an existence larger than that given it by White's text. The reader, I suggest, has painted in the
blanks to some extent, and inasmuch as he has done so, he has entered that much deeper into the world of Hurtle's vision.7

ii

HURTLE DUFFIELD'S ROLE AS ARTIST

Simply speaking, Hurtle's role is to make paintings of things as he sees them. However, throughout the novel, Hurtle is aware of his role not in terms of production of paintings, but in terms of maintaining the unique vision from which the paintings arise. In other words, Hurtle sees himself as different from others, and he sees his role as an artist to be that of preserving his alienation from society. He resists any gestures of friendship or recognition which might interfere with his sense of himself in isolation, and he dwells perpetually on images of himself as a social misfit. By corollary, the only people with whom he seeks (or from who he accepts) companionship are those who, like himself, are clearly recognizable as alienated. I shall discuss both aspects of his role: the maintenance of his alienation through his stress on alienated self-images; and the seeking of community with those whom he recognizes as fellow aliens.
a). Maintaining the Image of Alienation

I have noted some fifty places in the text where Hurtle perceives himself in an image of alienation. For the sake of discussion, I separate these images into three categories: animal emblems in some of which he sees his own alienation mirrored; definitions or impressions of himself arising in his own consciousness; and similar images arising in the thoughts, speech or actions of others, and remembered by him.

The emblems are most noticeable in the early part of the novel. On the first page White presents the crook-neck pullet as the first object of Hurtle's inquisitiveness:

"Why're the others pecking at it, Pa?"
"Because they don't like the look of it. Because it's different. (p.7)

Though he never explicitly associates himself with the pullet, I think it's obvious that he does so implicitly. The crook-neck pullet is apparently Hurtle's first image of the process of ostracism, and soon we find that he himself seeks to alienate himself from his family, by going and roosting alone, among hens, in the pepper tree (p.41). When he first sees Rhoda, he instantly associates her deformity with the crook-neck of the pullet (p.30), thus making the first of many associations between himself and Rhoda.
Next, the bell-possum provides Hurtle with a most vivid emblem of his own alienation. Sid Cupples tells him the innocuous story of how he and his fellow workers got rid of an infestation of possums in the roof by tying a bell on one of the animals, which "put the wind up the 'sane' buggers" (p.111). Hurtle is immediately "struck cold" by a vision of himself, the last possum on earth, tinkling feebly into a darkness lit by a single milky eye." Other animal emblems include "Old Hurtle the Turtle" (p.275), a "cut snake" (p.413), a "freak" (p.495)—associated with Rhoda, the hunchback—, a coot (p.594), and this wierd image: "half a vulture half an old buckled umbrella rustily clawing a trembling paintbrush" (p.592).

I mention these animal emblems in a category of their own, not because of any heraldry functioning in the prose, but simply because they suggest in brief how vivid Hurtle's vision of his own alienation is. In particular, the immediate and spontaneous way in which he siezes on Sid Cupples' image of the bell-possum and applies it to himself shows that Hurtle is willing to maintain his image of himself in alienation from the rest of the world—and indeed, God, possessor of the "single milky eye." In many places he conceptualizes the idea, as, for instance, when he tells Rhoda, "I don't want to be like anybody else"
(p.87). This leads me to the second set of images of alienation, those arising in Hurtle's own consciousness. It's worth noting that Hurtle does create these self images spontaneously, rather than receiving them from others or simply finding them ready-made as emblems of himself.

An early situation in which Hurtle clearly sees his alienation from others, and in which he finds words to define this alienation, is the visit he makes with Mr. Courtney to Mumbelong. There, he perceives that his relationship to the sheep and the sheep station is quite different than anyone else's. Sid Cupples suggests that they should "make a wool classer of 'im!" (p.107), but he knows, as soon as he learns what wool classing involves, that he does not want that life. His interest in sheep is of a different order, and he doesn't try to explain it to the men, because "he knew they wouldn't believe" (p.107). In fact he wants to increase his sensual and imaginative awareness of the sheep:

Not that he could have explained what he knew: because he saw rather than thought. He often wished he could think like people think in books, but he could only see or feel his way. Again he saw in his mind the rough-looking sheep. He itched to get his fingers in their wool, for the feel of it. (p.108)

While he is dominated by this interest in the tactile qualities of the sheep, Hurtle notices that the other men fall
into two groups, whose preoccupation is with human manners, not the sheep. On the one hand, the workmen feel superior to the owner "because he was rich and a gentleman" (p. 108), while on the other hand, the jackeroo Col Foster feels servile and anxious to please, "for the same reason." None of them seem to care at all about the sheep or the landscape. Hurtle ignores their company. He walks out on their bunkhouse conversations about work and weather, because he has found that "somehow the light and colour were more important than what you were doing; that was the real importance of this dream-visit" (p. 108). Having come to this awareness of the difference between the two groups and his separation from both of them, Hurtle now begins to lead his own inquisitive life at Mumbelong, hiding away from his father, and avoiding the men. When the sick manager, Spargo, discovers him wandering around on his own, and asks him what he's doing, Hurtle makes no reply, "because it was too complicated to tell, and wouldn't have sounded convincing" (p. 110). In fact he perceives that "Mr. Spargo was one of those people to whom he would never have anything to say. You were happier with furniture" (p. 110). By the end of the visit, Hurtle has developed a solitary existence for himself, based on his interest in imaginative perception, which separates him off from all the others. On his
last morning, he gets up early because "he wanted to look at things he might never see again, not in the present shape: the moon, for instance; and the sun rising" (p.113).

This experience of the sheep station at Mumbelong thus develops in Hurtle a sense of belonging in a third world: not the world of the idle rich, nor the world of the labouring poor, but a solitary world, independent of considerations of class, and dominated by the imagination. Shortly thereafter, he has an experience which reinforces his awareness of his alienation from the two class worlds. It is his habit to lie on a branch of a tree in the Courtneys' garden, overlooking the street, and occasionally spitting on passers by. Provoked to come down by a bunch of "larrikins," Hurtle jumps down and fights them, and sees himself in the metaphor of the bell possum as they run off. Then he suddenly realizes that he belongs neither to the Courtney world nor to the world of the larries:

He stood in the street, the two languages that he knew fighting for possession of him. At the worst, though brief moment, when it seemed unlikely he would ever succeed in communicating through either tongue, he heard himself blubbering. (p.128)

This lapse into tears is only temporary. As time goes by, Hurtle finds it easier to accept his isolation from other
people. Having lost the possibility of communicating through "either tongue" of the social world, he develops his paintings as his way of communicating; but he never expects anyone to understand the paintings. On hearing that Boo considers him responsible for Hero Pavloussi's death, Hurtle is at first outraged, because of his attempts to save her; but then he reflects acquiescently that he will never be understood, that nobody shares his vision of reality:

He was not yet destroyed, or not the artist in him; the flat monochrome of a world beneath the crimson sky-mark was his to recreate in its true form, visible, it seemed, only to himself. (p. 436)

A similar realization of the fact that his paintings are not a successful medium of communication comes about when Hero calls his painting of the two of them "pornographic":

In the painting they each existed on another level, neither pathetic nor tragic, neither moral nor, as she continued erupting in his eardrums, "pornographic." They were, rather, an expression of truth, on that borderline where the hideous and depraved can become aesthetically acceptable. (p. 376)

Hero could not see this "expression of truth," and rather than "accept" it, has rushed out and attempted suicide. Later, as their affair drags out to its sordid end at the Greek island of Perialos, Hurtle once more realizes the futility of trying to communicate with Hero through his art:
Perhaps if he could have done a drawing; but Hero only understood the visions of her own inferno. (p.406)

By the end of his life, Hurtle is so utterly familiar with his state of alienation that he seems to take a strange pleasure in constructing brutally harsh self-images of that state. For instance, on one occasion just when his assistant has particularly complimented him on his latest work-in-progress, Hurtle sees himself as "so much scrabbled garbage waiting to be tossed into the pit" (p.589). His predilection for feeling alienated is confirmed for the reader, when Gil Honeysett, his admirer and benefactor, takes care not to seem too friendly in inviting Hurtle to attend the preview of the Duffield Retrospective Exhibition, lest such amicability "be construed as considerateness, or even sensitivity on his part" (p.592). Hurtle makes an excessive demonstration of his sense of alienation, when he walks out of the Exhibition at the climatic moment of public acceptance for his art. He perversely interprets the applause for him as people "jumping on the lid of his coffin for luck before nailing it down, so that nothing of what was inside would escape them--ever" (p.622); then he goes outside and urinates on a tree ornamenting the grounds of the State Gallery, and
takes a taxi home, leaving an empty seat on the dais where the Prime Minister, the TV crews, and the cream of society (p.600) are waiting to do him honour.

The third category of images of alienation are those which Hurtle perceives and remembers in the thoughts, speech or actions of other people. Whether his perception is accurate, we never know for sure. Considering his predilection for seeing himself as alienated which I've just discussed, we may well conclude that Hurtle often misinterprets the attitude of other people towards him. The fact that he dwells excessively—almost exclusively—on these images of himself as an oddball provides strong evidence of his desire to maintain an alienated self-image. As a matter of fact, Hurtle is sometimes aware of his desire to appear alienated. For instance, when Mothersole, the printer, asks him if he served in the second war, he answers with deliberate sarcasm, as a means of cutting off a potential friendship with the man:

He realized the effect his irreverence was having on his new friend Mothersole. As for himself, he was hurt because his words were not his own: they were forced out of him by some devilish ventriloquist, to help destroy what he should, in any case never aspire to. (p.417)

Later in the same chapter, Hurtle reflects that Mothersole probably regrets their meeting, and wishes to have his card
back (p.421), both of which conjectures are strictly without evidence.

Another occasion where he appears as an oddball to others, but only by his own conjecture, is at Mrs. Mortimer's party. Hurtle is not at ease in the company, and finds himself constantly drifting up beside a bowl of roses. He thinks:

At least nobody else would want to intrude on his peculiar, immoral, not to say frightening, colloquy with a bowl of roses, unless it were somebody equally peculiar and out according to the code of Mrs. Mortimer's set. (p.431)

Does the reader really think it is "peculiar" or "immoral" to stand alone at a party? That other people think Hurtle to be peculiar, is, then, at least an ambivalent assumption in many cases. Likewise, their actions may not be quite so hostile as Hurtle imagines. He sees people on the street "frown a warning" (p.247) at him, and imputes this to their "misinterpreting his expression." Again, on the flying boat, his eyes give people "gooseflesh" (p.391), we are told. "True or false?" the reader wonders. "Is Hurtle inventing this stuff, or do they really treat him like a pariah?" The doubt alone is sufficient to convey to us that Hurtle accepts the image of himself as alienated, that he chose, long ago, not "to be like anybody else" (p.87), and expects to remain alienated.
Much less ambivalent are the words and, in many cases, the actions, by which people provide Hurtle with images of his alienation. An early review calls his paintings the fruits of a "pretentious predilection for sensuous exercises in egotism . . . sloppy, self-indulgent, anthropomorphic forms executed in bestial colour" (p.243). As much as it exposes the jingoism of the reviewer, this attack nevertheless leaves no doubt about Hurtle's rejection by the pundits of the Sydney art world. Equally clear is the comic image of rejection by the lady who disliked the painting "Old Fool Having Bladder Trouble": "She walloped the canvas with her umbrella, and was taken to court" (p.504)! More poignant is the scene where Hurtle waits with precarious emotions to see if the children who have lost a ball in his garden will have the courage to come and retrieve it "Not in there!"Angela protests, "I'm not gunner go in there. He's funny" (p.437). Finally, even those closest to him, tell him directly that he is an alienated person: Nance calls him a pervert (p.233); Rhoda says his art, like her hump, is an incurable affliction, like a disease (p.181); and Mrs. Volkov tells him that as an artist he is "the worst afflicted" in comparison with others who, like herself, are "mere human diseased" (p.638). Interestingly enough, Hurtle never denies these labels.
The many different images of alienation, of which I have commented on only a few samples, make up probably the largest single strand of Hurtle's vision in the novel. As I've tried to show, his role as an artist consists primarily in maintaining that image of himself, rather than in producing paintings. This primacy of the alienated self-image is nowhere clearer than in Hurtle's dramatic rejection of public honour. I have already referred to his walking out of the climax of the Retrospective ceremonials. Earlier, he conceptualizes his need to remain alienated in his own mind, when he calls his "friends, critics, lovers and admirers" (p.592), an "Egyptian army" that is "threatening him." And a significant fact that easily escapes notice on first reading is that Hurtle rejected an offer of knighthood, on the grounds that "he wasn't the man they believed they were honouring" (p.537).

b). The Community of the Alienated

In the course of maintaining his image of alienation, Hurtle rejects friendships, as I've shown. However, towards a small group of individuals he is more friendly, and even initiates gestures of friendship. The group includes Rhoda, Kathy, May Noble, Don Lethbridge, Mothersole, and even, momentarily, Cutbush. Nance and Hero are
difficult to place in this context, because obviously his interest in them is primarily as sexual partners. However, if we consider what causes his affairs with Nance and Hero to end, I think we shall be able to see, by contrast, why the other friendships survive (in as much as they do).

Nance and Hero share with all the others in the group I've named a vulnerability which they expose to Hurtle. In both women there is a consuming need to be loved, which is partly palliated by gorging their sexual appetites. However, their one failing in Hurtle's mind is their inability to allow him privacy. It is true that Nance struggles desperately to do so, as we see, for instance in her letter:

Dear love Hurtle,
   I am no good to you I know, dragging you into the gutter where you don't belong. I won't love you any less if you tell me it is over and I must get, but know that without you inside of me I am not whole, I am not your

NANCY LIGHTFOOT (p.218)

Later, when he is living alone in his shack, Nance departs after a brief visit, bravely announcing that now he'll be able to get back to his painting "because I know that's what you want" (p.236). But in the end, Nance cannot contain her need for him, so she comes once more to the shack and proceeds during a drunken evening to attack him violently for being too self-enclosed (in terms quoted earlier, p.305,
above). This attack on his self-containment signals the end of their affair, even if she hadn't died that night. In fact her death may be taken as in part a suicidal recognition of the end of her emotional dependence on Hurtle. Exactly the same pattern recurs with Hero. She is at first violently passionate in her love-making, then becomes increasingly demanding of his attention, and finally attacks him for his self-enclosure:

"I do not understand the mind of an artist. He is too egoist--too enclosed." (p. 408)

So their affair ends, and soon after, Hero dies in misery.

Hero and Nance are unable to contain their need for Hurtle. Their emotional dependence on him is a weakness beyond their control. This lack of control is what distinguishes the two women from all the rest of the people in the group I have named. Rhoda has her deformity, but she learns to live with it and not to need anything from anybody. Consequently, even when she proposes leaving Hurtle in peace and going back to live with Mrs. Volkov, he takes the initiative of persuading her to stay with him (p. 536). Likewise Kathy remains dear to him precisely because she does not need him. And Kathy's mother, as though she well understands the ethic of non-dependence, at last plucks up the courage to write to him:
Dear Mr. Hurtle Duffield,

I will tell you at the start that I am making no demands of you in this letter I was driven to write. I do not expect you to more than glance through it . . . . (p.636)

Because Mrs. Volkov is sincere in this attitude, Hurtle pays attention to her letter—unlike the letters of Caldicott, incidentally, which he tore up sometimes without reading them, because he knew that Caldicott was "inviting a rape" (p.250), while appearing to offer a "creative" relationship (p.249).

So far I have stressed Hurtle's criterion for the acceptability of relationships--emotional self-containment. However, my argument here is really about Hurtle's role in seeking the fellowship or community of those who, like him, are alienated. From the reasoning so far, it's obvious that Hurtle does not seek (or does not find) such community with people who cannot contain their weaknesses. Amongst those who can, Hurtle finds a deeply supportive friendship, especially with Rhoda, Kathy, and to a lesser extent Don Lethbridge--and also temporarily with Cutbush and Mothersole. We might also include Mrs. Volkov, whose letter stimulates him to do his last painting. All these people are, in a broad sense of the term, artists. Rhoda, at the tender age of eighteen, spoke of her realization that since being "some kind of an artist" (p.181)
would not permit her to escape from herself, she must simply try to make herself "a truthful work" (p.181). This definition of an artist (i.e. somebody who tries to live truthfully) is obviously close to Hurtle's own understanding of the concept, as I have implicitly shown in arguing that Hurtle's primary goal is to maintain the integrity of his alienated self-image: an artist is somebody who maintains his self-image honestly. Whatever we call such people, the important point is that Hurtle is strengthened by his relationships with them.

Don Lethbridge is a good example. We might be surprised, after seeing Hurtle so many times kick people out of his studio, that he allows Don to help him there. Yet he does so, and in time comes to think of him as "the archangel-servitor" (p.578). It soon becomes clear just why Hurtle can tolerate Don, and indeed, why he finds him very supportive. Don has an artist's vision of his own, and is proudly independent in his image of himself, in fact he is Hurtle's "twin:"

"What are you aiming, Cuppaige"— . . . .
"to achieve-in paint? Your peculiar goal."
The lily was spinning on her moorings she was so embarrassed.
At last Don Lethbridge grew reckless.
"Well I suppose I'm trying to realize a feeling or a thought or emotion in pictorial terms sort of."
"You? Balls!" He couldn't make them round enough. "Don't tell me!" So shaken the vibrations must have burst through. "You! The first and only!"

Laughter and visible needles weren't going to scuppagie the don. He was shining with his own vision. Which you recognized as the twin. (p.578)

Here Hurtle's patronising attitude changes to respect when he sees the strength of Don's commitment to his vision. He increasingly grows to depend on the young student for physical assistance, but also for spiritual support— which is why he calls him the "archangel." When Don wants to leave because he "needs the time" (p.585) to get on with his own work, Hurtle begs him to stay, observing that this is the first time in his octogenarian life he has asked anyone for pity (p.585). Don remains with him to the end, not just as a physical assistance, but "as the most brutal critic" (p.588) on whose judgment Hurtle grows to depend, for "vindication" (p.589), though of course, true to his ethic of self-containment, Hurtle doesn't intimate this dependency to the boy by the slightest hint— in fact his last words to the boy are that it is not Rhoda who will send for him when he's needed, but Hurtle: "Who's my master I'd like to know? My sister's no connection" (p.632).

Because of the ethic of self-containment that Hurtle lives by, he is extremely shy about revealing the strength he derives from the community of the alienated.
But after Mrs. Volkov (Christiana McBeath) writes her letter acknowledging the kinship of the "afflicted" (p. 637), he does give direct expression to the sense of solidarity existing between the alienated, the "burnt ones:" he knows he will have with him "to share the inevitable agonies [of his last painting], the limping army into which Christiana McBeath had conscripted him" (p. 638).

The Vivisector is a most illuminating novel on which to end the analyses in this dissertation, for it does in fact portray an artist of vision precisely analogous to the novelists of vision whom I'm studying. Duffield, like Lawrence, Faulkner and White, offers the public a radically new way of seeing reality; the world is his "to recreate in its true form" (p. 436). Just as the novelists "defamiliarize" reality, as I described in my introductory chapter, so Duffield the painter works at "distorting truth to get an effect" (p. 489). Just as the novelists employ unusual motifs to render their vision, so Duffield paints such outlandish pictures as "Lantana Lovers under Moonfire," "Old Fool Having Bladder Trouble," or his elusive "Animal Rock Forms," in which unusual perceptions "deform everything"
Like the novelists, Duffield maintains a dynamic interaction between himself and the public, feeding off hostility and keeping himself isolated and alienated to preserve the integrity of his vision. The critic who wrote of Duffield's "pretentious predilection for sensuous exercises in egotism" (p. 243) corresponds directly with the many hostile literary critics to whom I've referred in the beginnings of each analytical chapter. The phrase echoes Hope's "pretentious and illiterate verbal sludge," quoted earlier (Ch. 2). Despite these critical attacks, Duffield's work, like that of the novelists, is eventually recognized publically as being great art. Kathy Volkov tells Hurtle, near the end of his life, "It was you who taught me how to see" (p. 561). I and many others have the same message to convey to the novelists of vision.

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FOOTNOTES


2 Docker, 61.

3 Smith, 167, 176.


5 The Jungian distinction between "eros" and "logos" is obviously applicable, though I see no real point in applying it, since the difference between "vivisection" and "eating" appears quite plain without bringing in Jung. No doubt other critics might find the Jungian approach useful with this book, however, as they appear to have done with The Solid Mandala. See, e. g., Morley, p. 187.

6 Dr. Lee M. Whitehead, my supervisor, is one such reader. For him the painting therefore takes on a whole new level of interest and meaning, as suggested in his informal note to me: "The Pythoness is not a python--she is the priestess of Apollo. How much meaning does the reader paint in when he knows that a painting of Rhoda by the bidet is entitled 'Pythoness at Tripod'? Rhoda never had need of a bidet--it is beyond her, just as the god is beyond the Pythoness whose oracle she is. Anyway, it seems to me to be a symbol of the failure of intercourse, of noncommunication, reinforcing his inscription on the privy wall and his second to last painting. Perhaps the meaning of the novel lies in Hurtle's success at rendering the impossibility of ultimate intercourse, a mystic vision of some sort, perhaps." Such an extrapolation of the allusive title of the painting is yet another example of the way in which White allows the reader to participate in creating the fiction.
Again, for what it's worth, I offer my own invention of the painting, as an example of the kind of participation in the fiction which I imagine is fairly typical of readers of *The Vivisector*: Rhoda appears as a large, deformed white shape, her lump greatly exaggerated. Her arms (suggested by many curved lines all focusing on the genital area) give her body the appearance of being terribly constricted—as by a python. The pinkish-orange pubic tuft is the brightest spot on the canvas, all the rest being drab white or grey. The painting is almost lifesize, and the figure appears to be about half a room's width distant from the viewer, filling two thirds of the surface area. The picture evokes in me a great sadness for Rhoda's unfulfilled sexuality which appears as a painful secret, discovered publically in the painting.
CONCLUSION

I have attempted to show that "the novel of vision" exists, as a rather elusive sub-genre of the twentieth-century novel, and that by recognizing such novels for what they are—novels in which the writer presents the reader with a highly mannered texture embodying a radically new basis of realism—it is possible to develop a set of critical strategies which will illuminate these texts more directly and perhaps more fully than the majority of conventional critical approaches do. The validity of my approach remains far from absolute, even in my own mind, and I do not at this point propose removing my quote marks from the term "novel of vision" and asserting flatly that Novel of Vision is the proper and definitive label for the six works studied, together with an indeterminate number of others.

What I do conclude positively is that the concept of a dynamic of vision, as discussed and developed in Chapter Two, provides an entirely coherent way of understanding the literary phenomenon which I have called "the novel of vision." In the first place, the concept of this dynamic explains why "the novelist of vision" doesn't tell his story most simply, but chooses rather to impose a very mannered set of techniques upon his
reader: such a novelist is presenting his reader with a totally new way of experiencing, or seeing, reality. Secondly, the concept of the dynamic explains why readers (including even critics and reviewers) tend at first to reject and find fault with such novels: we naturally prefer (because it's easier and less disturbing) to stick to our existing ontologies and metaphysics and frameworks of understanding, than to abandon them and allow the artist to "defamiliarize" our vision of the known world. Thirdly, the concept of the dynamic provides a guiding clue to the most useful service a critic can perform with a "novel of vision:" accepting the strange text on "its own terms," he can try to clarify those "terms" for the reader, and thus illuminate the vision of the artist. If the theory and the practical criticism in this dissertation have made these three points clear—especially the third one—then I have achieved my purpose.

Of the many questions arising directly out of these limited conclusions, the most immediate are probably those relating to wider application of the approach here demonstrated. I have studied six specific novels; what about other novels? How, for instance, does a reader arrive at the judgment that the book he has in his hands is "a novel of vision"? And, supposing that he decides
that it is such a novel, which of the many strategies here exemplified (or any others) will best serve his purpose of illuminating the new text? My answers to these and several similar questions are scattered through the foregoing pages. It may help my reader therefore if I finally restate in this context two key points of my work—the definition of "a novel of vision," and the principal guideline to critical strategy.

A reader can recognize the novel in his hands as "a novel of vision," when he finds that the prose texture, and perhaps also the overall structure, are so mannered that the novel is at first largely unintelligible and astonishing; when he finds words used with deeply subjective meanings which are not at first apparent, but which begin to clarify by sheer insistence and repetition; when it begins to appear that the author is presenting a view of reality which radically "defamiliarizes" the known world; and when the very process of envisioning reality begins to obtrude and vie with such things as plot or characterization as a central subject of the reader's attention.

Having recognized that what he is reading may be "a novel of vision," the critic's best basic strategy (according to my thesis) is to begin by simply opening his sensibility as fully as he can to the "terms" of the
book. Probably he will find a series of motif strands woven into the narrative texture, in a meaningful pattern. Other than that probability, there is no telling what he will find. Following my approach, the critic will relinquish as far as possible his preconceptions and frameworks of knowledge, in favour of whatever he finds to be the active forces in the strange texture of vision which he is encountering, and he will begin to study them and follow wherever they lead. Feeling free to invent or borrow terms to describe what he finds, he will attempt to illuminate the text as freshly as he can, for those who look to him for help in reading the novel.
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body wrapped up the baby and somebody else threw water on the fire and they walked down the mountain to where roads existed. They had a lopsided two wheeled cart and two spavined oxen now. He told Grandfather he did not remember just where nor when nor how his father had got it. He was ten then; the two older boys had left home some time before and had not been heard of since. He drove the oxen, since almost as soon as they got the cart his father began the practice of accomplishing that part of the translation devoted to motion flat on his back in the cart, oblivious among the quilts and lanterns and well buckets and bundles of clothing and children, snoring with alcohol. That was how he told it. He didn't remember if it was weeks or months or a year they traveled, except that one of the older girls who had left the cabin unmarried was still unmarried when they finally stopped, though she had become a mother before they lost the last blue mountain range. He didn't remember whether it was that winter and then spring and then summer that overtook and passed them on the road, or whether they overtook and passed in slow succession the seasons as they descended, or whether it was the descent itself that did it, and they not progressing parallel in time but descending perpendicularly through temperature and climate—a (you couldn't call it a period because as he remembered it or as he told Grandfather he did, it didn’t have either a definite beginning or a definite ending. Maybe attenuation is better)—an attenuation from a kind of furious inertness and patient immobility, while they sat in the cart outside the doors of doggeries and taverns and waited for the father to drink himself insensible, to a sort of dreamy and destinationless locomotion after they had got the old man out of whatever shed or outhouse or barn or ditch and loaded him into the cart again, and during which they did not seem to progress at all but just to hang suspended while the earth itself altered, flattened and broadened out of the mountain cove where they had all been born, mounting, rising about them like a tide in which the strange harsh rough faces about the doggery doors into which the old man was just entering or was just being carried or thrown out (and this one time by a huge bull of a nigger, the first black man, slave, they had ever seen, who emerged with the old man over his shoulder like a sack of meal and his—the nigger's—mouth loud with laughing and full of teeth like tombstones) swam up and vanished and were replaced; the earth, the world, rising about them and flowing past as if the cart moved on a treadmill. And it was now spring and now summer and they still were moving on toward a place they had never seen and had no conception of, let alone wanted to go to; and from a place, a little lost spot on the side of a hill back to which probably not one of them could have led the way—excepting possibly the usually insensible father who made one stage of the journey accompanied by the raspberry-colored elephants and snakes which he seems to have been hunting—bringing into and then removing from their sober static country astonishment the strange faces and places, both faces and places—doggeries and taverns now become hamlets, hamlets now become villages, villages now towns, and the country flattened out now with good roads and fields and niggers working in the fields while white men sat fine horses and watched them, and more fine horses and men in fine clothes, with a different look in the face from mountain men about the taverns where the old man was not even allowed to come in by the front door and from which his mountain drinking manners got him ejected before he would have time to get drunk good (so that now they began to make really pretty good time) and no laughter and jeers