The Function of Stock Humor and Grotesque Humor in Faulkner's Major Novels

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THE FUNCTION OF STOCK HUMOR AND GROTESQUE
HUMOR IN FAULKNER'S MAJOR NOVELS

by

Justine M. Manley

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

January
1974

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Justine M. Manley
January 14, 1974
A NOTE ON EDITIONS

Throughout this dissertation, quotations from Faulkner's works are included in parentheses after the statements. Quotations are from the following editions:

Soldier's Pay, Liveright, 1954
Mosquitoes, Dell, 1965
Sartoris, Signet, 1964
The Sound and the Fury, Vintage, 1946
As I Lay Dying, Vintage, 1930
Sanctuary, Vintage, 1967
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CHAPTER I

FAULKNER'S TWO TYPES OF HUMOR

Humor abounds in all of Faulkner's work and has often been remarked in linking Faulkner to the Southwestern humorist tradition including such authors as Mark Twain. Normally, Faulkner's humor is interpreted as functioning as comic relief, to counterpoint and relieve the tension of tragic scenes, or, it is viewed as an intrusion in the work and unintegrated with the major theme or method of the novel. This thesis attempts to discuss Faulkner's humor more completely by separating his humor into two types and showing how each type serves a different function and thereby reflects Faulkner's ambivalent attitude toward the South.

The first chapter posits definitions of stock humor and grotesque humor through discussion of their characteristics including for stock humor: incongruities, exaggeration, reversals, inverted or denied expectations, tall tale format, and stock comic characters. A few particular stock comic character types which recur in Faulkner's work will be defined in some detail. Characteristics of grotesque humor defined include: delicate subject, unnaturalness, tone, tension, and detachment of author and audience. The second chapter shows the purposes these types of humor serve and how they reflect Faulkner's attitude. The following chapters investigate the humor in each of several novels. Throughout, the assumption

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about Faulkner's humor is that these two types, stock humor and grotesque humor, are the only types of humor used and that every line, character, action, situation or theme which is humorous will fit into one of the categories and thereby indicate Faulkner's attitude. The system works throughout Faulkner, but no particular discussion is devoted to its working in the short stories because the application to the stories is obvious and lends little new information and because all the essentials can be seen at work in the major novels. It might be possible to defend the proposition that all humor of whatever author might fit the two categories and therefore reflect different purposes for using humor as the method of communication, but this is not the concern here and might well merit a massive volume of investigation.

The two types of humor in the works of William Faulkner, stock humor and grotesque humor, reflect his ambivalent attitude toward the South. When he treats a character or a situation with stock humor or gentle humor and sympathy, Faulkner is usually championing, or at least accepting or tolerating, the qualities the character exemplifies or the standards of behavior inherent in the situation. But when Faulkner treats a character or describes a situation with grotesque humor, he is usually indicating his disapproval or criticism of the characters or their actions.

There are probably as many definitions of humor or comedy as there are novelists who write in the genre. In the following definitions of humor, no attempt has been made to provide universal definitions acceptable at all times or for all languages or genres; rather, only very specific definitions for discussion and interpretation of Faulkner's work are given.
This does not imply that the definitions are too narrow for general acceptance or inoperative outside Faulkner, but since Faulkner's work is the topic of discussion, these definitions were designed chiefly to elucidate his work. Nonetheless, standard definitions of comedy can provide a starting point from which we can see how Faulkner modified or applied those definitions.

Traditionally, humor is a strictly human response to a situation or method of interpretation; that is, animals do not laugh or show humor or need it, while humans do all those. Therefore, humor apparently appeals to what is above the animal level in man, or his intelligence. This is, at first, a puzzling statement since men have often linked humor and comedy to the bestial or low class, and now we are attempting to show just how that characteristic places men above the animals. The contradiction is resolved when we notice that what we laugh at is often low or bestial, but why we laugh has to do with our sophisticated, intelligent, human needs. Laughter appeals to the intelligence of a man as is obvious in any situation where one person doesn't understand a joke and some rational, intelligent explanation must be tendered for understanding and appreciation. Laughter needs the echo of other intelligences and leads to contemplation or possibly change. We laugh at something or someone which is out of place, thereby possibly causing adaption to the mold and negating the source of the laughter.

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1Henri Bergson in his essay "Laughter" (in Comedy, ed. Wylie Sypher, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1956) claims that "the comic does not exist outside the pale of what is strictly human (p. 62)." In other words, you might laugh at an animal or at an inanimate object but only because the antics or appearance are reminiscent of human behavior.
Humor arises when a situation includes any or any combination of several elements. Repetition, continued echoing of a single statement or tone or antic, becomes comic only after we realize we have heard this before and is therefore often not comic on first hearing. Inversion, turning backwards, upside down or inside out, is comic when unexpected or apparently illogical or impossible. Expectations are important to humor or become humorous when they are negated, disrupted, modified or reversed. For instance, as mentioned, something out of place may be humorous because of our surprise in not seeing what was expected. Cheated expectations are humorous when they result in "the sudden relaxation afforded when something serious proves to be not as grave as was expected." Or, comedy can result from the lack of something which was expected or from the presence of something where nothing was expected.

Laughter, as hinted in its relationship to intelligence, may be ultimately a thoughtful thing. Comedy, therefore, may trigger thought, criticism, and change as well as laughter. Faulkner was hardly the first American to use humor to improve or criticize. Mark Twain is probably the classic example of the use of humor to criticize, especially in things like Letters from the Earth. Augustus Baldwin Longstreet, a favorite of Faulkner's and maybe for this specific reason, asserted that humor "should improve the reader by correcting his errors or leading him to reflect upon them." 


Longstreet's *Georgia Scenes*, like the works of Twain and Faulkner, demonstrates this use of humor to improve. L. C. Knights says "comedy is essentially a serious activity . . . and . . . the breaking-down of undesirable attitudes is normally part of the total response to a comedy."  

Throughout, the importance of intelligence to comedy lies in the necessity for audience response. Naturally, without the laughter of the audience, humor fails, but just as naturally, without further reflection or action, humor fails doubly.

Stock humor for this discussion of Faulkner has all the attributes of traditional comedy which an audience laughs at. The humor treats incongruities arising from striking contrasts of language or situation or the alternation of realism and fantasy with exaggeration or detachment. Exaggeration itself is an important characteristic of stock humor and the degree to which a humorist can prolong the exaggeration without losing his audience is one measure of his success. Also, the fact that genuine successful humor must be carefully planned and systematically executed makes one realize that comedy is not as spontaneous as it first appears. The comic element of misconception and incongruity can be found in Faulkner, especially in the scenes in *Sanctuary* in which the Snopeses mistake a brothel for a hotel and Clarence Snopes thinks Horace Benbow wants a girl instead of information. Exaggeration (and tall tale humor) is apparent in Aunt Jenny's and Will Falls' views in *Sartoris*. Even the slap stick type of physical humor can be seen in Luster's taunting Benjy or the fight between George

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and Jones in the flower bed in the dark from *Soldier's Pay*.

The format of the tall tale is another characteristic of Faulkner's stock humor arising from his relationship with the Southwestern tradition of humor. This tall tale has its own prescribed form as summarized by Blair.

The circumstances of the telling of the tale were set forth. . . . Then the teller of the tale would be described. . . . Then. . . . the tale itself—a reported oral yarn—would be presented. The storyteller would begin slowly. . . . but incidentally introducing his characters. . . . the story itself moved rapidly through its big scene. . . . to its conclusion. At the end, the. . . . scene of the opening paragraphs might again receive attention.5

Because the format of the humor was known and expected, incongruity was a large element of the tall tale and might arise from the difference between the language of the framework and the dialect of the narrator. Or, incongruity might be apparent within the tale itself such as between the time of telling (our reading) and the time or circumstances within the tale. Often, the framework was realistic and the tale itself extremely fantastic providing the incongruity such as the tale of a man gradually turning into a swamp-sheep which Fairchild tells in *Mosquitoes*.

Naturally, exaggeration plays a part in tall tales which "were often like wrestling matches. . . . with one tale pitted against another. . . . and the competitive purpose is plain in the unexpected thrust at the end."6 Often the point was to best the listener, even at the cost of realism or cruelty, as when "many of the tales. . . . verged toward that median between

5Blair, p. 91.

terror and laughter which is the grotesque." Occasionally, what the story
teller expects the audience to accept as reality is so extreme as to become
bizarre and nearly an object for repulsion rather than laughter. (This
point will be especially important in the discussion and definition of
Faulkner's grotesque humor.) Finally, this tall tale tradition gave rise
to a stock character, the "well known and accomplished liars," who were
given scrupulous attention by their audiences.

Stock humor characteristically treats stock characters, such as the
liar or braggard, because "every comic character is a type;" the inversion
of this implies that every type or stereotype character will include elements
of the comic. Therefore, the character who is most comic may be the one
who is shallow, two dimensional, and ignorant of himself, but the audience
must be on to him for the humor to succeed. Certain attributes may make
a character comic, among them gestures, attitudes, words, movements and
even deformities since a particular form or appearance may be comic. "A
deformity that may become comic is a deformity that a normally built person
could successfully imitate." The importance of this comment lies first
in the assumption that comedy is imitation and therefore, somehow not quite
real. The fact that the deformity must not be extreme is important because
the way Faulkner uses extremes in grotesque humor and will be discussed
again in relation to that definition. Gestures, movements, appearance,
and so forth, also become comic when they cause humans to resemble animals,
machines or inhuman automatons. One cannot help but recall Faulkner's

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7 Rourke, p. 50.  
8 Rourke, p. 68.  
9 Bergson, p. 156.  
10 Bergson, p. 75.
description of Popeye, who throughout Sanctuary, looks and acts like a machine.

Constance Rourke, Walter Blair and Richard Dorson\textsuperscript{11} all take pains to define characteristics of stock comic types, including the Yankee who appears often in Faulkner, understandably. A good description of the Yankee comes from a discussion of the term in relationship to one of Faulkner's favorite people, Sut Lovingood.

The Yankee is the earliest American comic type. He soon turned up in Southwestern humor, . . . With the increasing bitterness of sectionalism the Yankee as a comic type was more and more disparaged in the South . . . Sut only overemphasizes and exaggerates certain Yankee characteristics that had been stock motives of comedy for a long time . . . mechanical inventiveness . . . devastating business methods.\textsuperscript{12}

The Yankee stereotype might be a city slicker duped by an apparently "dumb" country man, or on the other hand, he himself may be a crafty fellow. Being a peddler was only one aspect of the comic Yankee stereotype which allowed him to display his craftiness and eventually his contrasting stupidity at the hands of the more clever country man. Blair distinguishes "two distinctly different type characters, the foxy, soft-spoken Yankee peddler and the forthright, tall-talking, ring-tailed roarers from old Kaintuck,"\textsuperscript{13} and often, these two types were played off against each other for additional humor. In Faulkner, the Yankees include elements of the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{11}Richard Dorson, American Folklore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959).
\textsuperscript{13}Blair, p. 56.
\end{flushright}
trickster figure in myth and folklore . . . invariably sly and clever, he is also generally rapacious, cold, and ruthless. If men cannot approve of his morals, they can admire or at least be amused by his cunning and his adroitness, particularly if they themselves do not suffer from his antics.14

Flem Snopes is probably the Faulkner prototype of this character since he begins as an outsider if not specifically a Yankee but evolves, through his cleverness, to the position of sly bank owner. Flem is both aspects of the Yankee as one who gets bested (remember his mule trades with Mrs. Haint in The Town) and the one who cleverly triumphs over the more stupid country folk, as witness his entire career in Jefferson. Any number of other Faulkner characters come to mind as well, such as Anse Bundren, V. K. Ratliff, and Jason Compson.

The Southerners are an American character type particularly susceptible to humorous treatment and used frequently in Faulkner. The Southerners embody the general American characteristics of vividness, and nationalism, but include their own regional traits of laziness, sloppiness and drink. Blair characterizes Southerners and the resulting type of humor: "Southerners were highspirited, fiery, and impetuous, with difficulty restraining their passions . . . [They were] likely to be 'slingers' (drinkers who needed a sling of whiskey on awakening) or 'eleveners' (those who began their drinking before 11 a.m.)."15 Uncle Maury is such a drinker and it is humorous when Benjy observes his several trips to the sideboard for the bottle or his needing help to get there while the bootlegging gang in Sanctuary charac-


15 Blair, pp. 28-29.
teristically try to show each other up in their drinking prowess and chide Gowan Stevens' youthful ineptitude. The entire Sartoris clan, especially young Bayard, is a good example of the high-spirited, fiery and impetuous Southern comic character. The additional Southern characteristic of neighborliness abounds in humorous ways in Tull's comments in *As I Lay Dying* concerning his helping the Bundrens so long he can't stop at helping them with the coffin despite the situations they all get into.

Faulkner also frequently uses the Negro, a special American comic type, who is "an inferior creature, with innate racial virtues and weaknesses, who must never be treated as a dignified, adult human being worthy of respect." Faulkner has thus been accused of stereotyping the Negro "but the wealth of humor and these symbolic implications . . . save them from being mere caricatures." Constance Rourke particularly discusses the Negro and his humor saying that "to the primitive comic sense, to be black is to be funny . . . burlesque was natural to the Negro;" characteristics of lankiness, awkwardness, slow drawl and facial features are part of this "primitive comic sense."

The crow was a comic symbol for a black man, and it was apparent in the stage dances and antics of Jim Crow Rice, a white who acted Negro song and dance on the stage of the 1830's. "Jim Crow and Sambo, eating watermelons and grinning vacuously, grew into broad and ridiculous caricatures of the darky, . . .
Magnification and exaggeration are native to the humor of the black man possibly because of his need to compensate for his menial position during slavery and the humorous black thus became a type of tall tale liar describing extreme feats of success, usually his own. The favored black slave of the white master who has superior abilities of strength and perception is the source of numerous funny slave tales. The Negro's inherent attributes for comedy result in characteristic black types such as the dandy, the flatboatman, the plantation slave or the minister. A few of these Negro stereotypes with examples of them from Faulkner's works are apparent.

the Contented Slave ••• in the Sartoris servants ... the Wretched Freeman is ... Fonsiba's husband ... ("The Bear"). The Comic Negro is seen in Simon Strother [Sartoris] and Uncle Ned McCaslin [The Reivers] ... The Brute Negro ["Pantaloons in Black"] ... The Local Color Negro is represented by ... old Job in The Sound and the Fury and Old Het in The Town ... The Exotic Primitive ["Red Leaves"] ... The Tragic Mulatto. Faulkner's Joe Christmas (Light in August) and Charles Bon and his son (Absalom, Absalom!)

Negroes as criminals or social undesirables are represented also, but always matched with their white counterparts ... Of upper-class Negroes ... there is only one ... the high school principal in The Mansion.20

The comic black is obvious in the guitar playing singer in jail in Sanctuary who uses the power of his voice as a preacher might, joined with the power of rhythm and instrument natural to the stereotype. The scene in front of the jail can almost be a reflection of the church scene in the final section of The Sound and the Fury, both showing blacks luxuriating in music and preaching and powerful rhetoric and the humor apparent in the incongruity

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between situation and expectation and between language and message. Stock comic Negro traits are also apparent in Roskus' laziness and Luster's desire to wear his new hat to church even in the rain while Dilsey is an especially good comic black who "demonstrates the traditional Negro virtues of patience and love of children plus individual competence, dignity, and deep religious fervor." Her crooning and calm in the midst of chaos is characteristic of the basic feel for rhythm inherent in Negro blood. Although Dilsey criticizes Mrs. Compson's cooking with a terse "En who gwine eat yo messin'" and chides Luster's desire for a quarter for the carnival with "En ef you had wings you could fly to heaven," she is serious in her statements and the other characters respond seriously. Only the audience is detached enough to see the humor of Dilsey's language and her actions as well as the pathos of the characters' involvements. Detachment and incongruity account for much of the Negro humor in Faulkner since "much of the comedy of Negro behavior in Faulkner's novels ... arises out of their literal translation of white modes of behavior into the black world and out of their self-identification with their masters." We see this when Dilsey tells Luster that he is as crazy as the rest of the Compson family when he had said he was glad he was not one of them.

Despite the divergent elements apparent in Faulkner's stock comic types, they do have common characteristics and do have more thematic or dramatic significance than normally attributed to stock characters.

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21 Kerr, p. 131.

Several common elements link the various types of American folk and mass heroes... All exalt physical virtues and perform or boast about prodigious feats of strength, endurance, violence and daring... glorifies brawn and muscle in contrast to mind and intellect... all rise from the rank of common man and exhibit the traits... of unwashed democracy, spitting, bragging, brawling, talking slangily, ridiculing the dandy, and naively trumpeting their own merits.23

We recognize these characteristics as displayed by Faulkner's people while remembering that they also display more depth or importance than a genuine stock character deserves. Faulkner endows even his stock humorous characters with messages of note and importance and never lets a character remain solely a stock comic character. In a sense, Simon, TP, Luster, and Versh have elements of the Negro characters: they are obtuse, lazy, selfish and whiny. Yet, Simon serves as an active force in initiating, developing and adhering to the myth and tradition of the Sartoris family, and, TP is one in the line of important caretakers entrusted with the responsibility of Benjy's care and is, therefore, more significant than an ordinary stock comic character ought to be although he wears "the fine bright cheap intransigent clothes manufactured specifically for him by the owners of Chicago and New York sweat shops," just as a stock would-be dandy might. In a similar way, Ratliff in The Hamlet has elements of the stock clever salesman, or city slicker, since he is a wheeler-dealer who demands payment on a ten year old note and sells sewing machines to people who do not need them while often being taken as the moral center of the novel. While he may be something of a scoundrel (he is never a villain like the Snopeses), his stock characteristics of the clever salesman are partially his pose to cover his genuine feelings of involvement and responsibility, and partially

23Dorson, p. 201.
Faulkner's device to make his norm not so obvious. Dilsey can be viewed as a Negro mammy especially at the times she is seen singing at her chores or when she is bedecked in her purple Easter finery although she symbolizes the theme of endurance which Faulkner makes central to the novel and thereby surpasses her stock elements. If Cora Tull has elements of a stock hypocrite, she also shows a sympathy for Vardaman and a criticism of her husband's complaints which allow her to be more than just a stock character; she displays genuine feelings which stock characters usually do not. Hightower and Dr. Mahon are righteous preachers; but Hightower performs the necessary function as Lena's doctor and Dr. Mahon suffers genuine realizations concerning his son, things simple stock characters would be denied. In a way, Mrs. Compson is the typical hypochondriac, the complaining martyr; but she is also mother of Caddy and Benjy, again a position of importance above that deserved by a stock figure. Many of Faulkner's people can be called stock, comic characters of all types but they will most likely be more than that as well.

Grotesque humor is a kind of putrescent growth from stock humor since it uses many of the same characteristics taken to an extreme degree. For instance,

Comedy delights to deal with those who are victims of bad luck, along with those who are "depraved" or "vicious"—by means of the grotesque. By disfiguring the hated person in caricature, comedy is able to elevate hatred to art . . . So . . . characters tended to become grotesques, and the comedian continued using many of the stock masks.  

The need for caricature and disfiguring grew out of the stock humorous characteristic of exaggeration and added the more hurtful element of pain or criticism. The response of hatred becomes respectable, even an art, in this form of grotesque humor where the grotesque humorous characters often used the same masks as the stock humorous character but became grotesques because of their extremes of deprivation or deformity. Often, early American humor included elements of evil or the sense of impending death and so the tragico­comedy of Harte and others arose. Major characters were often losers, or the manipulations of plot caused pain or loss and the resulting audience reaction might have been horror linked with laughter.

Grotesque humor is the second type of humor Faulkner uses, growing from an extension of the elements of someone's receiving pain and a sufficient distance from such action, characteristics which might also be typical of ordinary comedy. Kenneth Lynn in The Comic Tradition in America especially mentions the element of pain in comedy and says there is a general connection between laughter and cruelty or the need to hurt others in the nature of comedy. For instance, pain can be funny when we hear about it or see it happen to a stranger, but when the same pain occurs to oneself or loved ones, it is no longer funny but possibly tragic. When Jean Stein interviewed Faulkner in 1956, Faulkner spoke about his "favorite characters," and his answer is very interesting in respect to this study since it shows his preference for comic and/or cruel characters.

My favorite characters are Sarah Gamp—a cruel, ruthless woman, a drunkard, opportunist, unreliable, most of her character was bad, but at least it was character; Mrs. Harris, Falstaff, Prince Hal, Don Quixote, and Sancho of course. Lady Macbeth I always admire. And Bottom, Ophelia, and Mercutio—both he and Mrs. Gamp coped with life, didn't ask any favors, never whined. Huck Finn, of course, and Jim. Tom Sawyer I never liked much—an awful prig. And then I like Sut Lovingood, from a book written by George Harris about 1840 or '50 in the Tennessee mountains. He had no illusions about himself, did the best he could; at certain times he was a coward and knew it and wasn't ashamed; he never blamed his misfortunes on anyone and never cursed God for them.26

Faulkner's excuse for Sarah Gamp—that she had character—is his own excuse for many of his stock comic characters; they too have more than just two-dimensional attributes even when they are repulsive or absurd or cowardly. Even the fools such as Don Quixote and Sancho have purpose; Lady Macbeth and Ophelia are both violently possessed. Faulkner's criticism of Tom Sawyer as a prig is one criticism we can never level against any of his characters, no matter how foolish they appear. The Sut Lovingood tales certainly reveal Sut as a cruel, untrustworthy, lying fool, yet, from Faulkner's respect for Sut's character, we must appreciate the reality of his portrait regardless of how hurtful it is. Faulkner's affection for these characters is also apparent in the type of extreme characters he portrays in his work. "I do not think I exaggerate by saying that there is scarcely a major character in Faulkner's novels save Byron Bunch and V. K. Ratliff who does not represent some extreme or exhibit extreme

behavior of some variety." As each novel is investigated, we shall see the truth of this statement.

Campbell and Foster devote much time to a description of what they call surrealistic humor in Faulkner with emphasis on pain and the psychological nature of this type of comedy. Their discussion provides a fruitful beginning for a definition of Faulkner's grotesque humor because in their surrealistic humor, there is "a startling juxtaposition of seemingly incongruous images," which, at first, seems to be the same element of incongruity which is apparent in stock humor. Yet, there is the difference that this laughter of black bile, as they call it, is supposedly "the laughter of the unconscious . . . [where] distortions and the grimaces of extreme pain are funny." The unconscious nature of such laughter leads us to note the need for the audience to be detached from the subject in order for the laughter to be successful because the pain cannot be our own. Campbell and Foster further set up a few minimum standards for a surrealistic humorous situation; namely, the situation must have

some object, belief, or custom, revereenced by convention . . . some incongruity yoked to the above which violates the reverence . . . [and] the psychic state resulting when the subject apprehends and reacts to the above situation.

29Campbell and Foster, p. 95. 30Campbell and Foster, p. 96.
31Campbell and Foster, p. 98.
Each of these elements appears in Faulkner's grotesque humor since the
delicate subject and its violation result in the mixed tone of grotesque
humor further resulting in the audience's tension and therefore their need
for detachment. A further point concerns surrealist humor's "enormous
preoccupation with characters who are in some ways psychologically abnormal."
These requirements provide another explanation for Faulkner's list of favor­
ite characters and reminds us that "the bestialities of some humans, the
coarseness of crude persons, the inhumanity of the insane, and the actions
of the intoxicated, have appeared to be amusing." We can almost go down
the line and find bestial and coarse humans, the insane and drunkards in
any of Faulkner's works.

The major characteristic of grotesque humor is its subject: delicate
topics, such as death, love, sex, politics and religion, handled with gross­
ness within the novel. Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One* is a classic example
of grotesque humor in both the written and visual media as is the gangster's
funeral in *Sanctuary* which treats death with ridicule. At this wake and
funeral, everyone has a great time: they drink, play jazz and dance since
the wake is held in a temporarily converted bar and entertainment house.
When the party really gets swinging, a brawl begins and the coffin and its
flowers are strewn all over the floor causing a wax plug to fall out of the
head of the corpse. The plug cannot be found but a flower wreath becomes
attached to the body's face by a wire which punctures the forehead but all
is made right again when a cap is pulled low over the face covering the
marks of the scrimmage. Addie's burial in *As I Lay Dying* is another example

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32 Feibleman, p. 23.
of grotesque humor on the subject of death and burial. Vardaman's drilling holes through his mother's face, Anse's pious statements about his new teeth and the coffin getting out of control to take on a life of its own on its way to the wagon all make the novel almost a travesty on the burial ritual. Popeye's actions in *Sanctuary* result in more grotesque humor, especially concerning sex. Lynn explains that sexual insecurity drives one to grotesque humor,33 so since Popeye eagerly wants to participate but realizes his inability to do so, he only watches others who participate in natural action. He spies on Temple while she is relieving herself in the woods and later brings her a lover so he can watch them act. The theme of love also results in some grotesque humor especially when Ike Snopes falls in love with a cow and we can sympathize with his feelings but can only laugh at his antics with the cow. Or when Vardaman wants his mother to be able to breathe, one can sympathize with the sentiment but must laugh at the resulting holes in her face. When Anse wants to relieve Cash's pain, the reader commends him; but when Anse must save money and only buys crude cement, the resulting messy leg is funny. Dorothy Tuck in her *Handbook of Faulkner* says that "the comic action is usually an extreme one, a distortion of what is expected. Pushed to a further extreme, and with the addition of a result that is unpleasant or perhaps repulsive, the comic often becomes the grotesque."34

The themes of love and sex when used as subjects for grotesque humor

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33Lynn, p. 48.

demand a related discussion concerning obscenity. Attaining a good definition of obscenity has plagued mankind and the courts for ages. Ancient Greek comedy was slightly obscene: dialogues and scenes from Lysistrata are most memorable because of their humorous obscenity. Perhaps it is the element of humor and gentleness which prevents such comedy from being simply dirty or offensive or pornographic. In a way, obscenity also fits Rourke's assumption of the primitive comic sense: sex, like Negroes, is inherently funny. "If the psychologists are correct, the ultimate denominator of laughter is the dirty joke."35 The fact that mankind can laugh at sex and obscenity makes him special; "laughter at the obscenest jest forever divides man from animal."36 What might make man dignified in his difference from the animals makes him instead, humorous, absurd and grotesque. This paradox concerns the fact that obscenity itself might be offensive but as implied here, it is not pornographic or harmful; rather, it is funny and normally characteristic. Ike Snopes' love for his cow, handled differently, might be quite obscene and offensive; instead, through Faulkner's use of grotesque humor, the audience laughs and contemplates its own human absurdities.

Ordinary sex handled extremely might be obscene just as ordinary humor handled extremely might become grotesque humor. Just so, the use of delicate subjects such as sex leads to the next characteristic of grotesque humor,


36 Sypher, p. 208.
its unnaturalness. If a touchy subject is handled with care, it might be acceptable or sympathetic, but when a touchy subject is taken to an unnatural extreme, only grotesque humor and horror can result. A character or a situation may be extremely bizarre or monstrous and still be funny; in fact, that unnaturalness may be the direct cause of audience laughter. Physical monstrosity will give an immediate impact, and this is important when we remember how deformity might be funny. The unnaturalness or monstrosity of a character must be limited by the actor's power of imitation; otherwise the resulting effect will not be humorous, but rather tragic and sad. Mental deformity rather than physical deformity might also be humorous such as in the Snopes characters like Ike and Mink. Although one might not personally agree with the point that deformity, whether mental or physical, is humorous, it certainly is applicable to Faulkner's characters. Probably the insidiousness of Faulkner's grotesque humor is the fact that the most extreme physical deformity is Benjy's gentle idiocy and related emasculation whereas mental grotesques such as Anse Bundren and Ike Snopes are prevalent. In Faulkner, miscegenation is probably the most physical deformity causing humor. While there are cruel scenes of castration and so forth, humor comes from other elements in the scene rather than the resulting deformity. In comparison, the other Southerner Sherwood Anderson presents the mental grotesques of Winesburg, Ohio, while in contrast, another Southern writer, Carson McCullers presents physical deformity as comic especially in the hunchback of The Ballad of the Sad Cafe. In handling deformity and monstrousness, it is necessary that they be in the proper place unless grotesque humor is intended in which case
deformity is always out of place and thereby causes the laughter. It is tempting to say that this unnaturalness characteristic of grotesque humor is also a characteristic of the South, but that is probably unfair since most of Faulkner's work is placed in the South and not all of it is unnatural. A related assumption might be that the proper place for the grotesque humor is a circus, where the audience may be thrilled and even commend the performer for his perserverance and ingenuity in spite of his deformity. The implication must be that Faulkner's world or the South is a circus, and in many ways that is a defensible position. Probably the best place for the unnaturalness of grotesque humor is Faulkner's medium of modern fictitious literature because it leaves the reading audience the psychological outlet of being able to say that this is not real or could not happen in the real world; grotesque humor happens only in fiction. In a more general sense, the characteristic of unnaturalness of grotesque humor is somewhat softer: "It may be said that the chief idea involved in the various senses of the term grotesque is that of incongruity, of a conflict between some phenomena and an existing conception of what is natural, fitting."37 We recall that incongruity is a necessary element of stock humor and our hesitation to accept the definition of grotesque including its unnaturalness is modified. Also, the use of the words "fitting" and "natural" allow us to make the entire definition of unnaturalness relative to some particular time, situation and place so we have a standard, and as all standards can, this one can be modified or extenuated.

Because a delicate subject is treated somewhat unnaturally or is itself unnatural, the resulting tone of grotesque humor is mixed. It may be a combination of horror and laughter, or one of surprise, especially when faced with something quite ridiculous or unbelievable which the audience is expected to believe or accept. The tone is also the blending of more than one element, for example, the ludicrous and the terrible. In Faulkner, the ludicrousness will most usually come from the character, action or situation, while the terrible comes from the audiences' realizations, which, when extremely terrible, may result in pessimism. Faulkner's sophisticated handling of tone begins with actions, characters, or situations which are basically believable and the audience is caught and accepts. Then as the story or character develops, the audience begins to question the reality of what is going on and the response is then "this can't be true" or "the author is crazy." Finally, and most importantly, the response is a horrified realization of the exactness and truth of the situation. This final step in the shifts of tone emphasizes "the revulsion . . . induced in the reader . . . by the grotesque art." Hence, after a type of release caused by the laughter at the grotesque "our emotional response to

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39 Norris Yates in The American Humorist (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1964) claims that "the pessimistic note predominates in the wildly comic novels of such relatively new writers as J. P. Donleavy, Joseph Heller, John Barth (p. 360)." Possibly, then, this art of grotesque humor is a purely modern development since Clayborough also seems to think that grotesque comedy "emerge[d] in modern art (p. 46.)."

40 Clayborough, p. 71.
grotesque art... is that we are not only repelled by it, we are also fascinated." Therefore the handling of the tone of grotesque humor is a touchy business in order to balance and control all the elements of ludicrousness, repulsion, absurdity, and fascination.

Because the tone of grotesque humor is so mixed and includes so many different elements and responses, a tension arises in the audience. The tension is caused by the juxtaposition of divergent elements such as the monstrosity or deformity of a character juxtaposed with our sympathy for him or the repulsion from a situation juxtaposed with the humor it it. There might be an opposition between tragedy and comedy or the tragedy of what could be an all-encompassing evil is converted into comedy. One standard difference between tragedy and comedy is that tragedy deals with individuals and comedy deals with classes of people. Characteristically, Faulkner's technique results in an inverted combination since none of his people are exactly "classes" although they do partake of characteristics of stereotypes. Hence, his comedy is with individuals, the traditional area for tragedy, and with slightly different treatment each grotesquely humorous situation might have been a tragedy instead. The subject matter, assuming it is delicate enough, has little to do with the fact that the result is comic or tragic since the saddest, darkest, most pessimistic novels have been written on the topics of love, sex, rape, death, and so forth, exactly the same material which, handled with extremity or unnaturalness, results in humor and especially

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41 Clayorough, p. 73.
grotesque humor. *As I Lay Dying* heaps so many extreme misfortunes on its characters that the total effect is comic rather than tragic. Anse's dutiful burial of his wife according to his promise counteracts his borrowing a shovel and acquiring a new wife to give a comic effect and the horrible humor of the novel comes from the tension between the Bundren's conviction that their actions are reasonable and their neighbors' belief that these Bundrens have surpassed all common sense and reason. The tension between hilarity and despair results from the juxtaposition of rational and irrational opinions. The reader is made to laugh at the triumph of stupidity, ugliness, and hate, and hence, there is the tension of the effect of the grotesque humor. Anse's stupidity triumphs with his choice of a new wife, but the reader laughs. Popeye hates Red, kills him and retains control of Temple, but the resulting wake and trial are mockeries of ritual and the reader is amused through the use of tension.

Finally, grotesque humor must be sufficiently detached; that is, both the audience and the author must be sufficiently distanced from the events for the effect of the grotesque humor to be successful. First, the audience must be detached from the incidents which may be achieved through use of a mask: "Comedy is a release, a taking off the masks we have put on to deal with others who have put on decent masks to deal with us."42 The amount of indirectness in the dealings is noteworthy since the audience might temporarily remove its masks but the players may not. Sometimes, when we see a character take off his

42Sypher, p. 221.
mask or change his role to show his true personality, the unexpectedness of the action or the true appearance or mentality of the character are such that they counteract our expectations or cause us to react with laughter or grimaces if we are not personally threatened by such action. To Ratliff and the townspeople, Ike and his cow are not funny, only strange and scandalous, but to the reader, Ike is hilarious because there is no threat of any real experience of that nature. In the same way Temple is scared when she sees Popeye spying on her toilet, while the reader is delighted with the grotesque humor. Miss Reba and her fellow mourners are sincerely upset over Red's burial but the reader sees grotesque humor in their sedately drunken tea-party and the drunken little boy whom they scold. The audience has the psychological outlet of saying "this does not apply to me or to my situation and therefore I can laugh at it." While the characters involved in grotesque humor are afraid or scandalized or insulted, the audience is not made to feel that fear or insult and instead, laughs at the grotesque. If the audience truly felt the fear, the effect would be more tragic than comic so there is a contrast between the characters' and the audience's reactions to events. It is up to the individuals concerned in the novel to give meaning and sincerity to the rituals of death and sex and love, but when the ritual is separated from its symbolic function by an author's manipulating of the characters, the comic aspect appears.

The second aspect of this characteristic is the need for the author to be somewhat detached from his works in order to have successful grotesque humor. If an author is too involved in his work, he will be
sympathetic and demand a similar response from his readers. He may be unable to make a judgement about a character or demand a judgement from his readers if he is too involved and any judgement will likely be biased and somehow invalid. For instance, Edgar Allan Poe often used grotesque humor, but sometimes more successfully than others because of his degree of detachment. Poe also attempted a kind of definition of grotesque in his Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque, but the definition is associated with literary style rather than any subject matter or character. Poe's characters are not often physical grotesques but they are most certainly mental grotesques; when Poe is involved with the people because of likenesses to his wife or his own situation, the humor doesn't always work. When the laughter is successful, it is so partially because of the extreme to which Poe took the grotesque. "He showed human traits... in unbelievable distortion, using that grotesquerie which lies midway between the comic and the terrible."\(^{43}\) Poe makes his violence and cruelty a terrible joke and the comedy is "gross and often brutal; Poe also stressed black moods and emotions."\(^{44}\) For instance, when Poe is detached and displays all the other characteristics of grotesque humor, the effect succeeds as in "The Cask of Armantillado." A. B. Longstreet, another grotesque humorist closely related to Faulkner and Poe, felt he must deny or contradict the horror of his grotesque humor probably because he was too involved with the sensibilities of his audience and did not need the grotesque humor for criticism. Longstreet has one story entitled "Georgia Theatrics" in which a gentleman out for a walk

\(^{43}\)Rourke, p. 183. \(^{44}\)Rourke, p. 184.
In the park overhears a fight on the other side of the bushes. One fellow threatens to put out another's eyes and the according screams ensue, but when the horrified gentleman goes to the other side of the bushes to prosecute the culprit, he discovers only one person who is an actor practicing all the parts in his own little drama. In the end, no harm has been done and only an emotion was aroused because Longstreet takes back his horror, his way of being detached from the effects; Longstreet denies the reality of his grotesque jokes.

Faulkner does not need to deny his grotesque humor because he is sufficiently detached from his work to let it stand for its effect and its criticism. Because it is difficult to constructively criticize something one is close to, unbiased and valid criticism can be made only if sufficient detachment is achieved. Faulkner was certainly attached to the South, but it also occasionally affected him adversely. This dual attitude is important in the discussion of his purpose for using these two types of humor. Faulkner's horror is real and irrevocable: when Vardaman drills holes in his mother's face, it is a genuine occurrence exemplified by the family's trying to deal with the happening; Cash plugs the holes in the coffin and Anse looks for a covering for her face. Faulkner pushes the humor to a further disturbing point when the reader sees Addie's face covered, not with a hat veil or her hair, but with mosquito netting which is so incongruous next to her wedding dress that the effect is horrifying and humorous. Rather than modify the grotesque humor, Faulkner points it up, emphasizes it and leaves it stand for its own horror and criticism. Using the same technique of
unabashed realism, Faulkner shows Temple losing her virginity. At the trial, the reader discovers that not only is the occurrence real and emphasized by the stay in the Memphis brothel but also it is made grotesque by the fact that the implement of rape was a corncob. Hence, Faulkner not only shows his characters dealing with the grotesque situations and acting in grotesquely humorous ways, but he also shows them dealing with the physical reverberations of the grotesque and further points up the humor by contrast or understatement. The carnival of stampeding horses at the end of The Hamlet might have been strictly funny by itself, but Faulkner makes it grotesquely funny by allowing Armstid and Tull to be maimed and injured in the process. Then, rather than show Tull and Armstid on the mend or laughing at their own actions, Faulkner emphasized the grotesque humor by having them prosecute for personal damages and lose the suits: they are humiliated as well as made to appear grotesquely funny.

The two types of Faulkner's humor can be summarized. Stock humor is characterized by incongruity, exaggeration, reversals, inverted or denied expectations, tall tale format and stock comic characters. Grotesque humor is recognized by its touchy, possibly controversial subject, the unnaturalness of the circumstances of handling, the mixed tone which leads to the resulting tension in the audience, and the necessity for the audience and the author to be detached from the subject.
CHAPTER II

FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION

Generally the use of different types of humor reflects the different intentions or purposes of an author. Stock humor is mostly used for fun, for a laugh or for comic relief within a scene of tension or import while satire, sarcasm and caricature such as that used in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* usually reflect the intention of the author to criticize, chastise or improve the character, the reader or a society. The result or success of the humor depends on the appropriateness of the type to the intended purpose. For instance, if satire is used for comic relief, it fails to relieve but encourages the awareness of criticism in the audience. Meredith states the process this way:

You may estimate your capacity for comic perception by being able to detect the ridicule of them you love without loving them less; and more by being able to see yourself somewhat ridiculous in dear eyes, and accepting the correction their image of you proposes... If you detect the ridicule, and your kindliness is chilled by it, you are slipping into the grasp of Satire... The comic... differs... from satire in not sharply driving into the quivering sensibilities.45

This aids the separation between stock and grotesque humor because the differences in tone and purpose become more clear. Many interesting implications are also at work here. First, the audience must be able to detect the ridicule of the humor so we are reminded of the appeal to intelligence, of laughter. Also, Meredith seems to imply that the ridicule or criticism must come from someone you love which is at first, a hard concept to accept because I would be tempted to say that the ridicule might come, if not from someone you love, at least from someone you respect. In this way, there is an explanation for readers who enjoy or appreciate Faulkner's humor but do not change because of it or because that humor might not be applicable: a reader may see the validity of Faulkner's criticism, laugh at the humorous method of its depiction and still remain unchanged himself. It is important that the recipient of the ridicule or criticism continue to love or respect the criticizer, Faulkner, because if the humor is so offensive or uncalled for as to totally alienate a reader, the criticism, however humorous, will fail. This is the fine line Faulkner walked between insult and criticism especially in his use of grotesque humor. In the particular sense where criticism is applicable to single persons, that criticism must be accepted, but, in the general sense that criticism is leveled at all of a society, individuals within that society might be blameless. Criticism must be accepted by all individuals as valid for the entire society even if not specifically applicable to each separate member of that society or the purpose of improvement and the humor of the criticism will be unsuccessful. The statement that one's kindliness might
be chilled by ridicule is especially appropriate to the definition of grotesque humor since the extremity of the situation in grotesque humor is usually the cause of the chill it gives the reader. Also, satire may touch "quivering sensibilities" but comedy might not. However, when Faulkner links comedy with these quivering sensibilities through a touchy subject or extreme circumstances, the purpose of satire, criticism, becomes the purpose of his grotesque humor.

The same difference in tone noted in general by Meredith is reflected in a more specific difference of tone within Faulkner's two main types of humor.

In the case of frontier humor, there is a softness, a bearableness or a more diffused focus to a scene which otherwise might well be starkly tragic, melodramatic, or overemotional. Surrealistic humor, on the other hand, tends to create an atmosphere of whim, perversity, caustic irony, or Swiftian bitterness, adding a darker undercurrent to a scene which might be sheer slapstick on the surface. It does this by evoking multiple and contradictory emotions simultaneously, thus cancelling out a portion of the cathexis attaching to separate emotions.46

We can see how the inherent differences between stock humor and grotesque humor are reflected in their tone, their spirit, their effect and therefore, the differing purposes of their use.

Often, laughter has a social significance which reflects the author's purpose to criticize or change, and the validity of that social significance may be for one person, a group of people or an entire

46Campbell and Foster, p. 109.
Therefore, humor ceases to be a material technique and becomes a moral implement so that an author can make a serious point or moral through laughter and comedy. The physical comic situation or character will take on a point and significance over and above what is immediately apparent. Satire, like Faulkner's grotesque humor, works on two simultaneous levels: the apparent comedy and the intended moral. Faulkner's two types of humor use both levels characteristically; that is stock humor is usually superficially funny without including a moral while grotesque humor is funny and has a moral. Stock humor may have a thematic link to the moral significance of the tale but the moral significance of the grotesque humor is funny and has a moral.

The significance of humor in Faulkner is "still ambiguous" according to Longley who says that

an isolated critic may sense that gradual fusing of comedy and tragedy [but] ... most estimates of Faulkner's significance seem to ignore ... the very wide diversity of his comic creation, which extends over the entire spectrum of comic possibility ... [from] existential dirty jokes as Sanctuary and Pylon ... [to] fragile, spun-gloss sophistication of the comedy of manners.47

This study attempts to fill some of the need voiced by Longley and further clarify the purpose for the different humor Faulkner uses. Mary Robb believes that "Faulkner's humor arises naturally from his characters and situations and has little impact apart from them"48 which may

47Longley, p. 102.

true in the case of stock humor, but in grotesque humor, the impact occurs only when the reader separates the characters from himself so the humor comes from the detachment rather than the situation. Robb’s thesis is basically rather simplistic: she says that the humor is in the characters and their situations rather than in Faulkner’s meaning and claims that the resulting laughter is “likely to be kindly and warm.”

Again, this may be valid for Faulkner’s stock humor but is certainly less so for his grotesque humor. Although she does claim that “Faulkner often finds amusement in the sight of someone’s getting what he deserves,” she never admits that what the characters get may be something horrible or perverted.

Faulkner’s stock humor is used usually for a type of fun or comic relief; hence, there is humor scattered throughout most of Faulkner’s serious novels. If Soldier’s Pay concerns the relationship between life and death, the means of pursuing life shown by George and Jones are humorous and not separate from the theme or tacked on to it, but somehow related although not always given major importance. Jones and his excessive obesity are quite funny; yet Jones also is a major symbol of life as it opposes the death force of Mahon. Better to be obese, funny and alive than anything dead. The theme of Sartoris may be the process of myth making where the humor comes from the fact that the process began with something so absurd as a tin of anchovies and is recounted by a

49 Robb, p. 32. 50 Robb, p. 30.
33 year old who "isn't as young as he used to be." In *Light in August*, Lena is a force for positive order so Byron receives an ordering to his life, a goal through ministering to Lena. Yet, it is just these ministerations which result in the humor of Byron as a bungling, expectant "father." *The Sound and the Fury* has the theme of the decay of a family, certainly a serious matter worth sympathy. Dilsey is one of the forces which has impeded that decay but despite her ability to endure, Dilsey says funny things. Stock humor may be related to or emphasize the moral or give a contrast to it, but it always gives some sort of fun. So, Faulkner's comedy exists on two levels, giving superficial fun or relief and "an immediate thematic relevance." 51 Both in stock humor and grotesque humor, there is the underlying moral or thematic need for the humor not always apparent on the surface related to the fact that Faulkner's humorous characters are not strictly stock characters. The humorous part of the stock characters results from their stock comic attributes, but the parts of their character which elevate them above pure stock types tie them to the theme. Hence, Dilsey's funny words and her hair in a rag and her purple dress are what make her a stock character and provide for the humor of her character, but it is her serious function as a standard of order which elevates her above a stock Negro mammy and relates her to the theme. Stock comic characters are usually two dimensional but Faulkner's stock characters are real.

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Comedy may provide more than simple comic release; it may be sacri-
lege! How much more this is possible and probable for grotesque humor
since the element of desecration is another link to grotesque humor.
We noted that often the subject of grotesque humor is a touchy one and
that the tone and treatment result in some extreme reaction or situation
which results in the element of desecration or sacrilege. Another link
between the purposes of stock humor and grotesque humor is the fact that
grotesque humor exists on two levels at once which stock humor may be
only relief although Faulkner always endows that comic relief with
thematic significance as well. That is, grotesque humor exists on the
level of fun and relief just as stock humor does, but it also exists
on the level of satire where one purpose is to criticize. Grotesque
humor utilizes "the trick of putting together ideas which do not belong
together because they are not on the same level of analysis,"52 and
hence, the events are capable of interpretation on two levels at once:
fun and criticism. This may be one explanation for why Faulkner's
grotesque humor has been generally neglected because it exists on two
levels at once; critics realize the first level of interpretation and
might go no further. The audience may respond to the laughter but
remain oblivious of the criticism of the grotesque humor which is a demon-
stration for the need for detachment when the criticism is too hurtful.
The freshness of some of Faulkner's views results from his use of the

52Feibleman, p. 239.
grotesque: he gives us the usual, a funeral, death, wedding, in an
usual or bizarre way. The effect of his criticism, the shock, the
realization, the change, is also linked to his use of the grotesque humor
so that the humor never falsifies or negates the validity of the criti-
cism but allows it to be communicated through entertainment.

When Faulkner uses grotesque humor, that humor is often the moral
of the novel. Stock humor might be linked to the moral of the novel or
contrast or emphasize the moral, but grotesque humor IS the moral. That
is, the criticism implicit in grotesque humor is one theme or moral of
the novel. Initially, "Mr. Faulkner's . . . preoccupation--namely,
that with a world of perversion and pain--seems at first sight to be a
deliberate exploitation of what shocks and of what is abnormal;"53 C. J.
McCole continues to say that this interest in the abnormal is quite
deep seated and we get the impression that he feels the interest itself
is somewhat abnormal. This is not the case and actually there are
reasons, not apparent at first, for this use of perversion and so forth:
"Although Faulkner's horrors are horrible indeed, they have a moral value
as well as that other value of dramatic demonstration."54 For instance,
the grotesque humor of As I Lay Dying lies in the extremism of the
Bundren family so one possible theme or moral of the novel may therefore
be a caution against extremes. Or, if the novel is a statement about

53 C. J. McCole, "William Faulkner: Cretins, Coffin-worms,
54 Robb, p. 25.
one woman's effect on her family, the humor points up the selfishness and inconsideration of those family members and thereby of all similar people. Anse is concerned only for his teeth even in the face of his wife's death; Dewey Dell sees her mother's burial only as a way to rid herself of her pregnancy and thereby ends up in more humorous situations in a city drugstore. Further, if the novel is seen as a statement concerning the separation of word and deed, Anse and Jewel and Vardaman are exquisite examples of just that separation; they usually do not act as they announce or intend. In the same way, the grotesque humor of *Sanctuary* is its moral. If the moral is a statement about law, Popey evades the law and makes it a grotesquely humorous travesty; his perverted crimes go unpunished until he is finally executed for something he did not do. Faulkner might be saying that the law does succeed in giving bad men their due even if not always for the right circumstantial reason. If the novel is stating a moral about the rituals of sex and death, the grotesque humor is the moral: the exaggerated circumstances of Temple's violation point up the fact that morality is hollow and hypocritical. Benbow's desire to dredge up the horrid realities of a crime only result in his proving that virginity and marriage are hollow institutions. Or finally, if one views Popeye as a symbol of modern society (his eyes are machine buttons; his face is bloodless as if seen through electric lights; he has a "depthless quality of stamped tin"), the moral of the story is a criticism of that society. Popeye and the grotesque humor he arouses point up the impotency of a modern,
machine society, especially concerning the traditional strongholds of
eright.

These two separate types of humor not only serve these two separate
purposes, stock humor for fun and relief tied to theme, grotesque humor
for moral or the theme itself but also reflect Faulkner's ambivalent
attitude toward the South. "Like Swift, Faulkner, seems both to hate
and pity the whole human race." In a way, Faulkner's two types of
humor arise from the "two dominant trends in American literature from
the beginning: that of the psychological horror story as developed by
Hawthorne, Poe and Stephen Crane, among others; and that of realistic
frontier humor with Mark Twain as its best example." We can see how
Faulkner merged these two trends to fit his own needs. "Here are the
two sides of Faulkner's feeling for the South:" Cowley continues. "On
the one side is an admiring and possessive love; on the other, a compul-
sive fear lest what he loves should be destroyed by the ignorance of its
native serfs and the greed of traders and absentee landlords." Even
Faulkner himself admitted the South had faults. "It [the South] has
its faults and I will try to correct them, but I will not try to correct
them when I am writing a story, because I'm talking about people then."57

55 Campbell and Foster, pp. 177-178.


57 Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner, eds., Faulkner in
While this statement apparently contradicts the thesis under discussion, I wonder how Faulkner can separate the faults of the South from the people of the South since it is usually the people who cause the faults in any institution or society. Also, Faulkner's people are so real as to be the South and again, the South's faults are reflected in Faulkner's work. A character treated with gentle stock humor therefore arouses sympathy, tolerance and acceptance from the audience and results from such an attitude in the author; hence, Simon and Dilsey and the other stock comic blacks reflect Faulkner's acceptance of the Southern Negro character and its importance to the stability of the whole society. But when Faulkner treats a character with grotesque humor, the effect is dual criticism: the reader criticizes the character or the society which spawned him while Faulkner criticizes the character, his society, the reader, and the society which spawned them. Faulkner sees Anse and Popeye as objects of resistance or criticism since they are crazy and perverted and funny in quite the same way the South was crazy, perverted and funny to Faulkner.

Campbell and Foster enunciate a rather complex relationship between stock humor and what they call surrealist humor. If we remember that their surrealist humor is the beginning of Faulkner's grotesque humor, and make appropriate adaptations, the passage makes an excellent point.

Such surrealist humor is obviously quite important, and its general effect upon the total character of his writing may be summarized briefly as this: First, scenes like those quoted from Sanctuary, [Red's funeral and so forth] by their discreteness and discontinuity and difference from the texture of the rest of the novel, tend to give a rather dissembled, illogical, dream quality to sections of a particular novel. Secondly,
unless the surrealistic humor is relieved by the more natural, pleasant, Southern frontier humor, the story suffers; "Miss Zilphia Gant" is an example here. On the other hand, the effect of surrealistic humor becomes greater if emphasized by a contrasting, opposite kind of humor, as in Sanctuary, in which the Snopeses provide broad, comic relief. Lastly, this type of humor very definitely imparts a distinct grotesquerie to parts of Faulkner's work. 58

Campbell and Foster seem to imply that when grotesque humor stands alone, it is not as successful as when it stands with stock humor. By such analysis, The Hamlet might be Faulkner's best novel since it merges both types of humor quite appropriately and effectively. The grotesque humor may result from the circumstance of the novel, but the label can be applied to both the triggering circumstance and the audience's resulting laugh.

If we briefly recall some of Faulkner's humorous characters, we can see how the type of humor reflects a differing purpose and Faulkner's ambivalent attitude toward the South. For instance, Dilsey is a good example of a character treated with humor but given commendable qualities and functions. Everyone sympathizes with Dilsey although her hard work is little appreciated. She is wrongly abused by Jason, taunted by Mrs. Compson and bothered by naughty children. Still, she is the only one who comes near to understanding Benjy after Caddy has left, and she is the only one to appreciate and desire the comfort of religion. In the midst of chaos, Dilsey endures and even brings about a certain calm and order. To interpret The Sound and the Fury historically, she symbolizes

58 Campbell and Foster, pp. 101-102.
a restoration of order to the South after the Civil War. Psychologically, she is stable and sensible while all around her are perverted and neurotic. A sociological interpretation shows Dilsey as the only effective link between the black and white communities; she is successful within each community and mediates between them. Therefore, regardless of interpretation, it would seem that Faulkner is showing Dilsey as some type of model character or at least as an acceptable and preferable alternative to the other characters in the novel. In a similar way, Byron Bunch in Light in August is an exemplary character. His life had been vacant and without a goal, but after his falling in love with Lena, he becomes the force which orders her life as well as his own. He makes all the arrangements for her impending childbirth and helps her to find a goal in the child, yet his actions are so solicitous and considerate that he becomes a shy and bungling man typical of the humorous innocent lover or bridegroom. Despite Faulkner's humorous treatment of Byron, Byron is a force for good, for order and sensibility. It is possible that Faulkner is saying that it is because of people like Dilsey and Byron that the South has any merit or any community spirit. People like Dilsey are likeable and commendable and perhaps Faulkner means his reader to see the South as likeable and commendable. Or perhaps Faulkner is only saying that his attitude and therefore the attitude of the reader toward the South should be a positive one when the values and standards of gently humorous people like Dilsey and Byron are displayed.
In contrast, when Faulkner treats a character cruelly and with grotesque humor he seems to be displaying his own opposition, dislike and criticism of the South and he may also be attempting to elicit a negative response on the part of the readers. Popeye is a man deserving of criticism: his physical description is such that he is more than simply likened to a machine, he becomes a machine with button eyes and his actions are totally impotent. If Popeye is any symbol of modern progress or industrialization, the resulting society must be abhorrent to us and to Faulkner. Physically, Popeye is impotent; intellectually he is stupid; socially he is retarded. Given Popeye as a symbol of modern society at work, one can only criticize that society. Popeye's actions are less than atrocious only because he is a character in a novel and few people could be convinced that his evil reigns in their society. The reader enjoys Popeye's humorous actions because the resulting criticism does not infringe on the reader's prejudices; the reader accepts the criticism of society but is allowed to say that he individually is not like Popeye. If Popeye is supposed to be a criticism of modernity or mechanization, the reader's romantic notion of a good, lawful, respectful society is flattered because Popeye gets what he deserves. It is only fitting that Popeye is crazy and perverted since Faulkner believed, at least some of the time, that his native South was the same. In a similar way, the Bundren family are the butt of the grotesque humor and therefore deserve criticism. If the Bundren's are selfish, stupid, amoral, insane and petty, and if they at all exemplify Southern country people, they
Dare to be criticized by the reader and put up for that purpose by Faulkner.

To keep a promise is a commendable action, but to carry that action to the insane extremes Anse does leaves no room for commendation but only criticism. A poor Southern farmer may be the object of pity, but when Faulkner paints him with a hunchback, no teeth, lazy, selfish, cheating, and hypocritical, he is now to be criticized.

Humor, then is necessary in both forms in Faulkner to make tragedy an entertainment, the subject of a novel; without humor, Anse and Popeye would be a tragic and frightening. Also, at the heart of most humor is a didactic purpose. Both these points combine in Faulkner's use of humor since his stock humor points up a positive theme or moral while his grotesque humor criticizes a negative point. Ultimately, both uses of humor show up Faulkner's ambivalent attitude toward his mythical county and its mirror the South and exemplify his versatility as an author.

Robert Coughlan has attempted to find a source for Faulkner's grotesque humor claiming he drew some of this humor from true native material. Especially, there is a story concerning Colonel Faulkner and his friend Henry. It seems Henry was in love with the wife of a jeweler, so the jeweler announces to the Colonel that he will have to kill Henry. In fear, Henry departs but loses all his money and returns to the love of the jeweler's wife. So, the jeweler goes to the Colonel and said

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"I hate to have to tell you, but I had to kill Henry," "That's all right. I guess I'd had to kill him myself sooner or later," the Colonel was reputed to have replied and his reply makes the story. His humor and unconcern in the face of death and supposed grief cause the shock in the reader and the resultant grotesque laugh. The inversion within the story works several ways. First, the jeweler's announcement is made in such a tone that we at first do not realize the content of the remark. With the realization, the listener expects a roar of protest from the Colonel. Instead, our expectations are again inverted since the Colonel acquiesces to the jeweler. As if this is not enough, the situation is taken to the final extreme where the Colonel adds his further comment. The incongruity characteristic of grotesque humor lies in the fact that the players in the story do not treat the circumstances as serious. Because the reader treats the circumstances as real and serious and the players do not, the result is the grotesque laugh. Instead of feeling sorry for Henry or the jeweler, the Colonel is resigned and humorous and causes the reader not to be sorry for the characters either. Incongruously we laugh as we do at much of Faulkner's work.

The best way to cement these definitions and demonstrate their functions is to investigate their workings in two short stories. "Shingles for the Lord" is a good example of predominantly stock humor, especially of the tall tale type, while "A Rose for Emily" is a good demonstration of grotesque humor at work. Through brief discussions of these two stories, the reader can see the definitions and their purposes at work
and then go on to the more important enunciation of these concepts at work in the major novels.

"Shingles for the Lord" is a short story which partakes of all the elements of Faulkner's stock humor. Incongruity, exaggeration, stock characters, dialect, unfulfilled or inverted expectations, and the tall tale all contribute to the humor of the story. An investigation of each of these elements will show how these characteristics of stock humor reflect Faulkner's positive attitude toward his native South.

Initially, "Shingles for the Lord" appears to have all the necessary characteristics of a tall tale. On closer investigation, one can see how Faulkner has slightly modified those characteristics to give us something more than just a tall tale. As one would expect in a tall tale, the circumstances of the story are presented first. We learn that pap got up and departed in order to borrow some tools and that he should have been back long ago. Immediately, there is a conflict in the situation because of pap's being late, a clever preparation for the story itself since the central conflicts and resolutions are directly linked to the fact that pap was late this particular morning. Additional tension is aroused in the opening paragraph when we find out that the mule was not only in a lather "but right on the edge of the thumps too." Naturally, the reader and the boy narrator want to know the reason, which we get immediately from pap--"fox hunting." Since this is not entirely enlightening, we expect some further explanations. "A seventy-year-old man, with both feet and one knee, too, already in the grave, squatting all night on a hill and
calling himself listening to a fox race that he couldn't even hear unless they had come right up onto the same log he was setting on and bayed into his ear trumpet." Here we have Faulkner playing with our expectations and inverting them. When we need and want an explanation for the opening conflict, we get it, but it is kind of a trick whereby we have it but do not know exactly what we have. The dialect and exaggeration of the line add to its humor as well as fulfilling those further elements of a tall tale. Only later does a more reasonable direct explanation come while in the mean time we are further plunged into the conflict and circumstances of the story.

The second scene of the story introduces a few new elements. Now we get the information that pap was off borrowing tools to help split shingles to replace the roof on the church. The opening tension is basically resolved but now we get new and increased tension in the reverberations of pap's being late. We are introduced to Whitfield, a stock comic preacher in many ways to be investigated later. The interview between pap and Whitfield presents further conflict and allows the reader to get to know pap through the things he says as well as the way he says them. There is the exaggerated description of Whitfield's gold watch which glinted in the morning sunlight and "looked big as a full-growned squash." Such a line plays in many ways: our expectations say a gold watch should be compared to other grand things in order to emphasize its magnificence. Instead, the watch is incongruously compared to a squash, not at all a grand object. This comparison also tells us quite a bit about the
narrator's values and attitudes; he is a farm boy and the goldest thing he can think of for the comparison is a natural, organic object. Pap's remark that God "ain't interested in time, nohow. He's interested in salvation" is a humorous inverted summary of the theme of the story. If God isn't interested in time, man certainly is and the story portrays how completely this is true. In another way, the story also shows man a way to salvation through the apprently bungled example of pap.

The third scene introduces Homer and Solon and increases the conflict still more. Again, our expectations are played with because pap's command to get started might normally be followed by the men doing just that. Instead, pap is given further guff. "Me and Homor ain't [late] ... We was here" is Solon's challenge. After a little dickering, the men decide that pap was two hours late "for the sake of argument." Not only is this little foray for the sake of argument but the entire action of the story comes about for the sake of argument. Pap agrees "two hours then. What about it?" The answer to the question is the rest of the story so we do not actually expect a direct answer any more. We might expect a fight or a deal or a reconciliation but instead we are given a type of further dickering about the hours. It seems the two hours are really six man hour work units since none of the men had worked for these two hours, the catch in the argument which prepares us for the rest of the action. "These modern ideas about work" allow pap the characteristic aphorism "I didn't know there was but one idea about work--until it is done, it ain't done, and when it is done, it is." Such country proverbs
are a characteristic of stock humorous characters as well as of tall tale stories.

Now, the conflicts and complications come more swiftly. Pap originally concedes the six hours by cleverly claiming all three of them must return the next day to make up the time. Homer and Solon refuse and argue it is all pap's fault that they did not work so it should be only pap that should make up the time. Here again, the reader is treated to inverted expectations. Most people would never have gotten this far in the argument without admitting it was entirely absurd but instead we are expected to accept the business. Also, one might expect Homer and Solon to be upset or antagonistic to pap but on the surface, they are not; they even pay pap a compliment. "Maybe you can work twice as fast as me and Homer put together and finish them in four hours, but I don't believe you can work three times as fast and finish in two." Instead of being flattered, pap is further incensed, resorting to insulting "durn freemoney owners." The incongruity of calling someone who owns a tool a millionaire adds to the stock humor.

The men begin work and the story progresses but the tension builds with a taunt from Solon. "What you ought to do is to hire somebody to work out them extra overtime units." For the first time pap responds as expected claiming he is too poor, that he has nothing to pay with. This sets pap up for the proposition from Solon that pap trade his dog for the work, the pivot on which the rest of the story revolves, since the emphasis has been away from work and toward the dog trade. We have the
standard elements of a tall tale in the swap between these two slick dealers which primes the reader for certain developments since we expect someone to get bested in the trade. That does occur but not exactly the way one might expect either.

Following Solon's proposition, there is a divergent small tale concerning the dog, his history and circumstances. To complicate the deal, the dog belongs to pap and Tull together so any deal made will involve Tull. Finally, only after this divergence, does the actual deal come to light. "You sell me your half of that trick overgrown fyce and I'll finish these shingles for you," proposed Solon. Being the clever bargainer he is, pap must clarify the deal to include receiving two dollars for the dog and Solon's providing a receipt for Tull's half of the dog. When we expect the deal to be concluded, it is only postponed temporarily. At the lunch break, pap goes off and only much later, at the end of the working day, are we given an explanation of his mysterious actions.

In the meantime, the story builds. When pap finally agrees to the deal, it is apparently grudgingly. "I don't mind admitting here in private that I been outfigured, but I be dog if I'm going to set here by myself tomorrow morning admitting it in public." So the trade is on because pap fears public humiliation. Now, Solon is not sure he wants to trade, suspicious he might get cheated and hesitant to consummate the deal. The reader is in exactly the same position of wondering who get cheated and exactly how. The propositions are agreed to and the men continue
working through the afternoon. The reader questions the speed and energy with which pap works, as does the boy narrator. We begin to wonder the reason for such energy and finally after the labor for the day is completed, pap gives us an explanation.

As the reader might now expect, there is a further catch or complication to the deal. Pap has concluded his own swap with Tull: Tull's half day of work removing the old church shingles the next morning for Tull's half of the dog. Hence, pap puts himself in for more work and places himself at the scene of the morning's action. He also now owns all of the dog. The reader therefore expects the resolution to include Solon's difficulty in collecting the dog in the morning. Again, Faulkner further complicates the deal and plays with the reader's expectations. We learn that pap intends to remove all the shingles to the church that night so as to have completed all his part of the deal and to show Solon that Solon was much too late to even bargain. The reader is given this resolution and expects it as the climax of the story.

The pace of the story increases fiercely from now on. A new situation is provided when pap and his son return to the church at night in order to fulfill their part of the bargain. Something new should happen and it certainly does. From now on, too, the humor is more directly slapstick. The characters act more like the stock types they are; there is no dialogue in the story until the concluding interview between pap and Whitfield to counterpoint the opening interview. The first climax is reached when pap succeeds so well at his task that he removes an entire
section of roof decking at one time. Ironically, the section removed includes the board into which their lantern is nailed. The lantern explodes and sets the church afire. Naturally, the efforts to put out the fire provide the resolution to the story but again they do not turn out as expected. Pap picks up the water barrel in a mighty feat of energy and runs to pour it on the fire. "I believe we still would have put it out" the narrator claims. But, pap trips with the barrel and it breaks on top of him, "knocking him cold out as a wedge." So we have the resolution that pap is bested in the deal and we begin to wonder what occurs in the last four pages yet to go.

Those last four pages of the story invert this first resolution and give us the moral of the story. Whitfield accuses pap of being an arsonist. "If there is any pursuit in which you can engage without carrying flood and fire and destruction and death behind you, do it. But not one hand shall you lay to this new house until you have proved to us that you are to be trusted again with the powers and capacities of a man." The rhetoric of this passage adds to Whitfield's stock humorous characteristics. Tull, Snopes, Armstid, Solon and Homer all eagerly volunteer their time and efforts to reconstruct the church and to annoy pap. Here is a partial resolution in that we feel pap is defeated and none of the other men has really won either because they are all out more work time. But such a partial resolution is not enough for Faulkner; pap must still win out. Again, the way he does win is not quite as we expected. Maw ministers to pap's hurt body but does not attempt to minister to his hurt
pride. Pap's attitude is the inversion of the previous resolution; he seems challenged by the preacher's accusation. Instead of apologizing or being contrite, pap is fiestier than ever. "If him and all of them put together think they can keep me from working on my own church like any other man, he better be a good man to try it." The last line of the story is humorously understated. "Work units, dog units. And now arsonist. I Godfrey, what a day!" In a way, pap's statement is a summary of the entire story, and we have the stock humorous tall tale characteristic of returning to the situation of the opening of the story.

Exaggeration, inverted expectations and incongruity have been apparent throughout this discussion of conflict and resolution. The dialect of the speakers adds to their own characters and is itself an element of a tall tale. Pap's country aphorisms reflect Faulkner's application of this element of stock humor as well as give us one element of pap's stock character. Whitfield's rhetoric is characteristic of a preacher and also places him as another stock character. The contortions of logic the boy goes through in narrating his story reflect his own involvement in the action and show him as an apparently unbiased narrator. The boy does not fulfill the characteristic of being a well known liar simply because in this case, the story is stronger and funnier than fiction and needs no falsehood to embellish it.

Pap is a combination of several stock humorous characters. He is a country bumpkin in the slowness with which he responds to the proposed deals. The fact that Solon can tell that pap did not go home at lunch
shows how easily Solon and the reader should be able to analyze pap's character. The reason for Solon's analysis is that "if it's something he needs that he can't use his natural hands and feet for, he going somewhere else than jest his own house" because "he don't own anything there that even . . . [he] would borrow." Pap has elements of a miser in his borrowing his tools as well as the fact that those borrowings place him further as a country bumpkin. In contrast, pap is quite clever in his bargaining and therefore fulfills the characteristics of the slick trader, another stock character of tall tales. In many ways, pap is the fool because he is apparently bested in the proceedings and because he seems to fall into traps set for him. Pap falls into Solon's trap of the dog trade and he later falls into Whitfield's trap of aiding with the rebuilding of the church. At first, pap is hedging on helping with the church claiming he has his own work to do. Cleverly, Whitfield and the other men announce the volunteers, and pap does not want to be bested so he will volunteer also. Instead of accepting, Whitfield forbids pap's working on the church only to have the opposite effect; pap claims no one can stop him from working on that church. The story and pap's character is fittingly concluded with pap's exaggeration that all of the men cannot stop him from working and with the understatement "what a day!"

Whitfield is a stock humorous preacher. The first picture we have of him is holding his gold watch and announcing that pap is late much the way one would expect a preacher to chastise someone for being tardy to
church services. Pap's response about time triggers Whitfield's "thundering down at pap like a cloudburst." Whitfield calls pap a mizzling soul, vocabulary befitting a preacher. This same somewhat elaborate vocabulary appears in Whitfield's charge of arson against pap. His manner is also characteristic of a preacher in his thundering. Yet, Whitfield displays a vein of humor uncharacteristic of preachers until one realizes that humor is biting and sarcastic and therefore more befitting of one who judges mankind's frailties. "Maybe He just said to Himself: 'I made them. I don't know why. But since I did, I Godrey, I'll roll My sleeves up and drag them into glory whether they will or no!'" Superficially, the reader laughs at the understatement of the terms in which Whitfield thinks of God. Later, we realize the humor is also a criticism of pap. Finally, the humor is practically a scandalous criticism of God himself for making these silly creatures men. Whitfield's dress, "his boiled shirt and black hat and pants and necktie" all add to his appearance as a stock humorous preacher.

All the stock humorous elements are in this story. Now we must see how this humor reflects Faulkner's purpose and attitude. On one level, the theme of the story concerns work. First, there is a caution against overwork; it was pap's zealousness which results in his downfall and humiliation. Second, there is pap's proverb that work is not done until it is. At first glance, this is senseless, but when we think about it, it is unquestionably true. We only question the need to voice the statement at all. This is why Faulkner gives us the story, to make the voicing
of the truism exciting, humorous and worthwhile. The action of the story demonstrates this theme of work. In another way, the theme of the story comes from making a shrewd bargain into a moral victory. Pap must demonstrate his superiority, not only physically but also morally. It is as if pap can buy his way to heaven through his working on the church. Because pap fails, the story becomes a caution to the reader against attempting such bargains with God or the devils of earth.

Pap is the main source of humor in the story. He is a typical Southern niggardly farmer who must be cajoled into any charitable actions. Pap's actions are laughable and in an attempt not to be laughable, the reader should attempt not to be like pap. In another way, pap is a representative of the Souther mentality, lazy, sloppy but full of zest and vigor when he acts. Pap is so lazy that he must wait until the last possible minute before borrowing the tools for his job despite the fact that he knew a month ahead of time he would need them. He is so full of exuberance when he thinks he can outdo Solon that it is just that exuberance which causes pap's demise. Pap and all the men portray the Southern characteristic of neighborliness, but carried to the extreme of using that characteristic for somewhat unneighborly reasons. What redeems their neighborliness is the fact that although they volunteer to work for the church in order to annoy pap, the end result is that pap also volunteers, but characteristically with a vengeance. We can see how Faulkner admires that characteristic of neighborliness through the story. No real harm has been done since the church is as good as rebuilt but some good has
come from the offers of work and their generosity. Faulkner believed Southerners could be particularly generous and helpful when they were not being difficult cusses. In "Shingles for the Lord" we see Faulkner portraying some Southerners at their worst best. These are real living characters and always more than just their stock stereotypes. These people are generous and helpful; they simply must be handled carefully in order to achieve the desired end. So Faulkner handles the story carefully.

Then, Whitfield handles all the people carefully through his apparently unconcerned attitude since he knew the church would be rebuilt. In turn, Solon and the men handle pap carefully in order to bring out his generosity and temper some of his exuberance. It does not matter that the men do the right thing for the wrong reason; rather, this attests to the craft with which Faulkner handles the entire story world. This right action for the wrong reason is another way to summarize both the action and one moral of the story. It is also a major source of the humor of the story. Because these people are treated with gentle humor and a certain amount of justice, the resultant feeling of the story is a positive one. No permanent harm has been done; some good was achieved and there was humor along the way. The picture of these people and their part of the South is also positive and at least somewhat pleasant. Faulkner seems to be commending the actions of the people even if he is laughing at their motives.
"A Rose for Emily" is one of Faulkner's most anthologized short stories for its grotesqueness probably more than for its humor. But the story is a good example of Faulkner's use of grotesque humor to make a point. The story has all the elements of a Gothic ghost story: the decaying mansion, the mysterious seclusion of its main character, and the final grotesque revelation in the upstairs bedroom. All the elements of the grotesque humor are here although some of them are not apparent until a second reading. The humor of the story comes from many things. It is in Emily's character, the misinterpretation of the townsfolk, the rhetoric of the narrator, the tone and subject of the story, and the resulting tension and theme.

"Emily is . . . a psychotic--and madness is likely to be funny as well as grim,"60 says Charles Allen. Thus, a main part of the humor of the story comes from Emily's character. To begin with, there is a rumor of madness in her family which is later affirmed: "Old lady Wyatt, the crazy woman" is one of Emily's ancestors and the madness seems to rub off on Emily. Even the narrator describes Emily as inescapable, impervious and perverse. The extent of her perversity is unknown until the final revelation but her previous attitude should be a preparation for the reader. Although we do not get the story in chronological order, one of the earliest perverse, unnatural things Emily does is to refuse to

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admit that her father has died. When the townspeople come to "offer con-
dolence and aid, as is our custom" the day after her father's death, Emily greets them with "no trace of grief on her face." She tells them that her father is not dead and continues in this unnatural attitude for three days. "We did not say she was crazy then" the narrator comments. Yet, the implication is strong that she was believed crazy later. Later developments in the story leave little doubt about how funny and grim Emily's madness can be.

There is double humor in the incident concerning Emily and the remis-
sion of her taxes. Out of a perverted sort of charity, Colonel Sartoris remits Emily's taxes from the date of her father's death. The explana-
tion Sartoris gives was an "involved tale" and the more modern narrator comments: "Only a man of Colonel Sartoris' generation and thought could have invented it, and only a woman could have believed it." Here, there is humor in the tone of the narrator. There is also humor in the dif-
ference between Colonel Sartoris' generation and that of the narrator and probably another difference between the attitude of the narrator and that of the reader. The statement that "only a woman would have believed it" lets us know some of what the narrator thinks about women in general and also what kind of woman Emily was. Emily herself acts humorously when she replies to the town's notice with a letter saying that "she no longer went out at all." Her weirdness and seclusion are reiterated ironically, but then the humor is taken a step further. "The tax notice
was also enclosed, without comment." The technique of understatement of
the narrator is part of the humor as is the understated way in which
Emily deals with the situation. The entire matter culminates when the
town dignitaries visit Emily to try to explain the situation to her.
She receives them standing and replies almost illogically to their state-
ments. They ask if she got a notice from the sheriff and she replies that
she received a "paper" and adds that "perhaps he considers himself the
sheriff." She refuses to admit the reality of the situation just as she
did in the case of her father's death. Finally, Emily retorts that the
men should see Colonel Satoris. This statement is final evidence of
Emily's "insanity" since Colonel Satoris has been dead almost ten years.
Emily certainly acts strangely and unnaturally in the circumstances.

This interview with the town representatives also gives us the first
physical description we have of Emily which supports her unnaturalness
and shows us how humorous she appears. First, she is described as a
"skeleton," a word choice which is ludicrous in light of the final revela-
tion. Further, she is described "like a body long submerged in motion-
less water, and of pallid hue." She is already apparently dead; at least,
she is drowning in the mire of the town and her own perversity, and her
physical description reflects that situation. Further, her eyes "looked
like two small pieces of coal pressed into a lump of dough." The consis-
tency and color of dough when thought of in relationship to human living
flesh is grotesque, and makes one think of the fairy tale of the ginger-
bread man come alive. The extreme exaggeration of the color contrast
between her face and her eyes plays up the divergence between the lifelessness which is Emily and the organic realism of dough and coal. Even Emily's voice is "dry and cold" as is her aspect.

Later, Emily is again humorously perverse in her attitude and appearance when obtaining the poison. Surprisingly, Emily herself arrives at the drugstore for the poison rather than sending her black servant. The fact that she herself is up and about town should alert the town and the reader to possible bizarre developments. Because of Faulkner's handling of the story, we do not know the real results of the poison purchase until the final lines of the story. The misconception of the town and the deliberate avoidance of the druggist result in some of the humor of the story. Emily blatantly announces her desires: "I want some poison." At first the druggist takes the same tack with her which he probably takes with all of his customers. He is pleasant and cordial and helpful. He says he has all kinds of poison and begins to recommend one, assuming it is to be used for rats. Emily claims she wants the best he has. The humor is strictly grotesque. The incongruity of the implied standards for judging poison are totally absurd. In addition, the druggist lists many types and claims that "they'll kill anything up to an elephant." Again, the incongruity of attempting to kill an elephant with poison is absurdly humorous. Emily finally determines that she wants arsenic and the druggist becomes slightly troubled since "the law requires you tell what you are going to use it for." Emily is characteristically impervious to all the druggist's implied requests. She "just stared at him ... until
he looked away." Emily is triumphant in her unnatural, perverse way. She has succeeded in cowing the druggist just as she previously cowed the town representatives. The druggist cannot face her to present her with the package of arsenic so he sends the Negro delivery boy. Ironically, on the package is marked "For rats." Again, the truth of the statement is not apparent until the final revelation.

Emily's character in conflict with the town adds to the grotesque humor of the story. Continually in the story there is a contrast between the gross world and the high and mighty Griersons. When Emily has been seen riding with her Yankee, she has apparently come down in the eyes of the town. This "touch of earthiness" reaffirms her imperviousness from the town and her strangeness. The word choice here, "touch of earthiness," is grotesquely humorous since the final revelation is exactly that touch. When at first the town thinks it is a positive thing for Emily to have an escort, they later think it is slightly scandalous. The fact that Homer is a stereotyped Yankee dandy adds to the humor. The Baptist minister calls upon Miss Emily with no results so the minister's wife writes to Emily's relatives in Alabama. Then the town sits back to watch the developments. Since they have practically forced Emily into marriage, the final development is deserved and they should not be scandalized. Also, incongruously, the town becomes Emily's allies against the cousins after the town has been the cause of the cousins' arrival. Ultimately, the town declares that Emily is married without the slightest bit of evidence; there is no ceremony or preparation. There is only Emily's
grotesque purchases of men’s apparel and shaving equipment on which they base their conclusions.

Misinterpretation in the story abounds and results in incongruous circumstances and developments. First, it is the town which places the Griersons, and Emily especially, on such a pedestal. When Emily seems to fall from the pedestal and the town is ironically made to be guilty rather than vindicated. The misconceptions begin with the description of Emily’s house and furnishings which are apparently genteel but are not actually so. Emily’s house is situated on “what had once been our most select street.” But now Emily’s house is an “eyesore among eyesores,” the garages and cotton gins and gasoline pumps. The incongruity of Emily’s old genteel house with the modernity of service stations is a humorous commentary from Faulkner on the developments of society. There is gross misinterpretation concerning the affair of Emily’s taxes already discussed. There is also the misconception with the druggist concerning the purpose for the poison. Finally, there is the humorous misconception of the town over the smell around Emily’s house. Initially, some of the town ladies attempt to call on Miss Emily but were not received. The narrator states that “the only sign of life about the place was the Negro man.” This statement is grotesquely incongruous since there is much more life and spirit than is apparent. Emily has an immense amount of guts in order to hide her activities, all of which are aimed at preserving her own character. There is life, too, of a type in the body of the decaying lover which the town has absolutely no awareness of except
for its resulting temporary smell. People begin to complain to the mayor about that smell. The mayor treats the situation with such extreme tact that the resulting foray in the dead of night is grotesquely humorous. First, the mayor believes Emily will take care of everything herself and that there will be no need to speak to her about it. When the complaints continue, there is a meeting of the Board of Aldermen. Of the four, one is a "younger man, a member of the rising generation." The incongruity of the label of the rising generation with the final results of the story somehow humorously vindicate Emily for their treatment of her. This younger man has little feeling or respect for Emily and suggests they give her a time to get rid of the smell and if she does not they will do something further. We never get to hear what the man would propose because Judge Stevens breaks in and says "will you accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad?" We laugh first at the line and then also at the young man's attitude. Finally, we laugh at the misconception of the town over the source of the smell. The result of the conference is a humorous scene.

So the next night, after midnight, four men crossed Miss Emily's lawn and slunk about the house like burglars, sniffing along the base of the brickwork and at the cellar openings while one of them performed a regular sowing motion with his hand out of a sack slung from his shoulder.

This midnight pantomime is another source of the grotesque humor in the story. The cause of the smell and the subject of the incident is death, one notorious subject for grotesque humor. The attitude of the men is also grotesque: they are compared to burglars. Also, they sniff
around the house as animals might and are thereby further reduced to an absurd level. The one man is described as performing regular sowing motions. This first places him as an actor on a stage performing a part rather than as a real human being performing an act of charity. The incongruity is dehumanizing. Also, he is compared to a farmer sowing seed in the hopes of life growing. Grotesquely, the seed is not seed but lime, deadly to life in many senses. Also, the resulting growths of this sowing are the final grotesque events of the story. The conclusion of the incident is that "after a week or two the smell went away." The grotesque midnight behavior of the town dignitaries has no immediate fruitful result. The smell remains and disappears only of its own accord, as if it had a will of its own and remained after the lime sowing only to taunt the town for their infringement on Emily's dignity. The incident is concluded with the narrator's statement "that was when the people had begun to feel really sorry for her." Only after all of this can Emily be the recipient of true sorrow. Previously the town felt pity or frustration or not quite serious sorrow or something. Now, apparently, the town can feel righteous in its pity of Emily knowing she deserves it. The incongruity with the resulting shift at the end of the story is noteworthy. The town will finally be the ones to be pitied while Emily will become the object of true sorrow and compassion.

The tone of the story most often results from the rhetoric of the narrator. This narrator is somewhat sympathetic but he is so involved in the story that he does not notice the real meaning of things he says.
For instance, the very first paragraph of the story likens Miss Emily to a "fallen monument." The extent of Emily's fall and the degree to which she is an unfeeling stone monument to whatever ideal will not be known fully until the final lines of the story. The narrator makes another humorous statement a little later. "Alive, Miss Emily has been a tradition, a duty, and a care." The humor is in the fact that in some ways, Miss Emily is more alive than the town likes to admit. Her imperviousness and stubbornness are troubling to them. In addition, Emily is also more dead than is apparent. She does mechanical things so that she does not have to admit reality. Thus, she does not admit her father is dead and she sleeps with a forty-year-old corpse. The tradition which is Miss Emily will live on through the story of her actions which the narrator tells. When the smell begins to pervade the town's awareness, they complain and attempt to explain it by saying it is the Negro's fault. "Just as if a man--any man--could keep a kitchen properly." The fact that the smell had nothing to do with the kitchen or with the housekeeper or with the Negro adds to the grotesque laugh of the reader and increasingly so on each rereading. The rhetoric of the narrator in describing the men's attempt to rid the town of the smell is quite exaggerated. The men and their mission are given much more dignity and stature than they deserve. This is almost as if to make up for the fact that they must perform this mission at all. Because the narrator treats the men seriously, the reader thinks of them that way until later when the realization occurs. Also, if the words of the passage are separated from their effect, incongruity
further results. "Slunk about the house like burglars," "sniffing," "crept quietly," and so forth, make the men appear as animals. Later, the narrator describes Miss Emily and her father as a "tableau," causing the reader to recall the final tableau in the bedroom. When the narrator tells about Emily's china painting lessons, he likens the spirit with which the children are sent to her with the spirit with which they are sent to church. The description of Emily--"like the carven torso of an idol in a niche, looking or not looking at us, we could never tell which"--makes her appear quite austere and lofty. It also dehumanizes her and makes her appear like wood, "carven," and like a primitive idol. A final piece of direct humor is the Negro who lets the town to view Emily's bier. He lets the people into the house and then "walked right through the house and out the back and was not seen again," like a cardboard character on the stage pulled off by the stagehand. In this case, the character is real and the stage hand is Faulkner but the effect is humorous in the detachment from the events the Negro servant can muster.

The structure of the story is masterfully controlled so that the true nature of the humor only appears with the final lines. Throughout, the tension builds to this revelation. There are five sections to the story, each predominantly concerned with a new incident to portray Emily and to build the tension. The opening paragraph is a frame device telling the reader that Miss Emily has died. The rest of the first section gives us description of her and her house and a basic outline of the conflict
she has with the town. The central incident is with the tax collectors where we see Emily impervious and only slightly batty since she believes the Colonel is still alive. The second section increases the feelings we have that Emily is mad and adds more humor. This section is slightly more grotesque since its subject is the smell of death and the resulting antics of the town's men. We know something is definitely strange about Emily but the tension is aroused because we do not know exactly what it is and mystery is the result. In the third section we see Emily buying the poison. The mystery of her action is further compounded and the tension increased in this scene. It is a tribute to Faulkner's craft that the second and third sections give actions which are chronologically reversed but result in increased tension and interest on the part of the audience. The fourth section begins "So the next day we all said, 'She will kill herself'; and we said it would be the best thing." Such a comment gives us further clues to the use of the poison but they are false leads so our interest is increased. The comment also shows us more of the true character of the town in their criticism of Miss Emily. The central incident in this section is the "marriage" of Miss Emily. This is grotesquely humorous because we find that there never was an official marriage and we are partially prepared for the conclusion. We know from the frame that Emily is dead and we expect that she dies from heartbreak or arsenic. Instead, the narrator tells us about how "daily, monthly, yearly" they watch the proceedings at Emily's house. Much time is summarized in a few words so we know something new must happen and we expect
It to be finally Emily's death. We want to know how she died so that some of the mystery and tension of the story will be resolved. In the final section, the mystery and tension are resolved but certainly not as we expected. "They held the funeral on the second day, with the town coming to look at Miss Emily beneath a mass of bought flowers, . . . and the ladies sibilant and macabre." What should be explanation is only further tension. What should be a solemn event is one filled with curiosity seekers. The narrator says "already we know that there was one room . . . which no one had seen in forty years, . . . [but] they waited until Miss Emily was decently in the ground before they opened it." Nothing about the proceedings is decently done, showing the reader more of the attitude of the town. The apparent charity of waiting until Emily is buried before opening the room serves to increase the curiosity of the townspeople as well as increase the tension of the story for the reader.

The revelation in the bedroom does not let us down. When the room is opened, there is the "thin acrid pall as of the tomb" and the warning is there. The room is "decked and furnished as for a bride" and all of Henry's things are there. Rather than plunge directly into the revelation of the corpse on the bed, we are given a complete description of the room and its contents which serves to increase the tension. When the revelation comes, it is masterfully understated. "The man himself lay in the bed." At first, we are not sure we have read rightly. We believe for a slight instant that the man might still be alive. But then the description leaves no doubt. The "fleshless grin," the "attitude of an
embrace," the eumphamistic "long sleep that outlasts love, that conquers even the grimace of love, had cuckolded him" are all phrases which send chills up the spine. The word choice such as grimace and cuckold particularly twist the effect so that the resulting laughter is temporarily postponed. The entire thing on the bed is a rotting putrescence and when we realize that, we are horrified. But the effect is not culminated yet. Rather than this as the conclusion, we are given a frightening paragraph wherein we are made to believe that Emily had been sleeping with this corpse for the last forty years. The evidence of the indentation on the pillow and the "long strand of iron-gray hair" are irrefutable, but frightening. Finally, when we think that this is horrible, we remember that it is only the story and we begin to laugh at the joke, as if a skeleton jumps at us out of a closet and it takes us a minute to realize that we are not actually threatened. But here is Faulkner taking his humor apparently a bit too far. So, we think it could not be so and therefore can laugh.

In fact, Faulkner does not deny the reality of grotesque humor but enforces it as a method of communicating his theme. The theme of the story is a warning in several forms. The story shows how people as a group and as individuals can go wrong and is therefore a warning to avoid doing likewise. It is also a warning to be charitable before it is too late in order to avoid guilt over what might result. In the story, everyone gets what they deserve but in a twisted way. Emily wins and keeps her lover as she always wanted to do but as she was prevented from doing
by the town and her father. Grotesquely, she succeeds in death rather than in life. The townspeople get satisfaction in that they finally are admitted to Emily's mysterious house. They know enough to expect something strange and maybe frightening but are not prepared for the grotesque reality which faces them in the corpse and its shadow partner. We know that detachment is one requisite for grotesque humor and we now have the explanation for the time delay in telling the story. In one sense the present of the story is the day of Emily's funeral and the later housebreaking. But in actuality, the present of the story is some undetermined later time from which the narrator is telling the story. Only through this detachment of time can the grotesque humor work correctly. This is also an explanation for the fact that the narrator is unidentified and uncharacterized. He is made a shadowy presence which allows each of us to step into his place to make the story more immediate. His mysteriousness allows us to ignore him as a real person if we need to when we finally realize the significance of his revelations in the final page. This mysterious narrator may be Faulkner's device to achieve his own detachment from the story also necessary for grotesque humor. With a carefully portrayed narrator, Faulkner would have to be involved and work to make him believable as he does with the townspeople. Instead, with a mystery narrator, Faulkner can tell his story through someone else's eyes and words and therefore remain slightly above the proceedings.

Finally, we see how the grotesque humor is the theme of the story and how this reflects Faulkner's own attitude toward the South. The
theme is a warning of how people can go bad and how they might avoid doing so. The narrow-mindedness of the town resulted in the grotesque behavior of Emily. Such narrow-mindedness is not good in anyone and is especially abhorrent in Faulkner's beloved South. Emily is also narrow in her acceptance of the dictates of the small society and in her attempts to act accordingly instead of acting more true to her own character. Throughout the story, Faulkner is saying "Be charitable." Do not chastize and cajole people into being something they are not. Such a warning goes several ways. It is true as applied to the South and the way in which Southerners demand traditions be upheld and revered. This warning also goes for the rest of the country and the world in their attitudes toward the South and toward each other. The South should not be condemned for its narrowness and silly traditions without considerations for the individuals within the system. The criticism is against a narrow attitude and a narrow standard of judgement and it is applicable to all the world as well as the South.
In all three novels, the humor although strictly stock humor, is tied integrally to the theme. Although Jones is funny, his motives and actions are a source of life commendable in a novel so full of death and war. In Mosquitoes, the life and standards of the artist are parts of the major theme of the story and so Fairchild's stories and Gordon's lines are central. In Sartoris, Faulkner began his Yoknapatawpha saga with stock Negro humor and with Jenny, a character to be commended and revered as a representative of what is good in the South and what remains to the South after the war.

The humor of Soldiers' Pay, Faulkner's first published novel, comes from stock humorous situations and the character of Januarius Jones. The theme of the novel concerns the horror and results of war, but "alongside this intense preoccupation, [with the violence of war], there are passages of a most delightfully humorous kind." The serious theme of the novel is counterpointed and relieved with the stock comic characters and situations. The need for the comic relief is obvious throughout the work, and the scenes of comedy alternate almost directly with the scenes of sorrow or horror or realization.

Before the main characters are introduced or the main conflicts and situations outlined, the opening scene presents stock humor. The secondary character, Julian Lowe, the source of some funny lines and a few funny actions, is given the privilege of opening the novel. Among the

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first things we learn about Lowe is that "they had stopped the war on
him (p. 7)." He laugh because of the soldier's attitude, who rather
than being pleased with the peace and his return home, is annoyed because
he wasn't given time during the war to make a hero of himself. Lowe sees
himself, we learn, as a flying ace of exceptional courage and conviction,
a type of milos glorioso, the bragart soldier. The situation with Lowe
allows Faulkner opportunity for humorous but critical comments on war.
One plan outlined in the conversation calls for enlisting all the Dutch-
men in the Army and getting them quite drunk so as to "ruin any war
(p. 3)." Lowe comments that you "won't know whether it's a war or a
dance." But his drunken companion replies that you can tell because the
"women will all be dancing." The stereotyping of characters into brave
soldiers and frivolous women allows for the humorous comment about the
silliness of war.

With Lowe is a drunken soldier whose attitude and remarks we come
to appreciate. When this drunkard cannot find a match for his cigarette,
he blames it all on the war with the comment "Ain't war hell?" Again,
there is the reversal of audience expectations with such a comment. In-
stead of the question being posed during a discussion of the seriousness
and results of war, it is asked in a frivolous circumstance after the
war is over. There is a similar situation where the drunkard is trying
to move a prostrate companion on the floor, and he comments "Alas, poor
Jerks or something." We laugh because of the misuse of the name and
because of the difference between this situation and the one depicted
in Hamlet. But, true to Faulkner's mastery, the comedy does not stop
there. The drunkard continues "(I seen that in a play, see? Good line)
the humor is intensified because of the attitude of the drunkard and his cleverness in seeing the opportunity to use the line.

The confrontation of this opening scene comes when the conductor on the train suggests that the drunken soldiers' conduct is slightly unseemly. The drunkard we know as Yaphank, who later turns out to be Joe Gilligan, responds to the conductor with a long solemn speech.

... this is the reward we get for giving our flesh and blood to our country's need. Yes, sir, he don't want us here; he begrudges us riding on his train, even. Say suppose we hadn't sprang to the nation's call, do you know what kind of a train you'd have? A train full of Germans. A train full of folks eating sausage and drinking beer, all going to Milwaukee, that's what you'd have.

The speech does solemnize the mood of the characters and the reader and we being to agree with the speech even though its triteness causes us a slight smile while hearing it. We almost expect some further comment or moral about war and soldiers' due, the title content of the novel, when instead, we have a rebuttal from the conductor: "couldn't be worse than a train full of you fellows not knowing where you're going." The mood of the situation is immediately changed: what might have been an opportunity for serious commentary becomes an opportunity for stock humor. The point is not entirely lost, however; it is only dressed differently to make it less hurtful.

From here, the situation quickly degenerates into straight stock humor without much moral commentary. Because they are not wanted on the train, Gilligan conceives the plan to jump from the train immediately to show the conductor because, in their paranoia, they believe the train will not stop to let them off. Gilligan throws the third man's baggage
off the train as the first step to disembarking which awakens the man who complains that his baggage got thrown off first. Gilligan says they are all jumping off but they had better hurry or they will have a long way to go to get their baggage. The conductor calms them all down but the other continues to complain, and again Gilligan comes up with some good retorts. "Why, sure, I threwed your suit-case off. Whatcher wanta do? wait till we get to Buffalo and pay a quarter to have it took off for you? (p. 14)" We laugh because of the ridiculousness of the situation, where the suitcase is long gone so we should rejoice that a quarter was saved and because the bag and its contents worth more than a quarter were bartered to save a quarter. The conductor is so frustrated with the conduct of these men that he tells his porter to "wire ahead to Buffalo we got two crazy men on board (p. 15)." Here is the preparation for the following action as well as giving us the figure of the stock comic Negro servant character. Gilligan asks the porter to request a brass band for their arrival and peels off a few bills to give to the porter whose reaction is funny. "'Yas suh, Cap'm. White teeth were like a suddenly opened piano (p. 16)." We remember how the stock characteristics of the Negro servant character developed from genuine attributes of the race, and we have them here but intensified by the super white teeth.

The last step in the progress of degeneration comes when the conductor sets three civilian passengers to watch over the crazy soldiers until their arrival and Gilligan proceeds to get the civilians drunk as well. When they all arrive, the civilians are in worse condition than Gilligan
and Lowe so the soldiers present the civilians to the forewarned policemen and we have the stock situation of mistaken identity and exaggeration. When the cops will not take the drunkards, Gilligan claims they are the crazy men the policeman has been sent to look out for. "Oh, these are the crazy ones, are they? Where's the one they were trying to murder? (p. 21)" The exaggeration is apparent because no one was trying to murder anyone except that in a fit of exuberance, the third soldier had attempted to jump from the train trying to retrieve his baggage. Lowe and Gilligan had left him in the train and now claims that "he's with the doctor, working on the wounded one." From there, the wounded one becomes "that dead man" and the situation becomes increasingly funny. When the policeman begins to see that he has been had, he demands Lowe and Gilligan return to explain but they ignore him and continue on their merry way.

This opening scene introduces us to the important character of Joe Gilligan in a humorous way and the theme has been hinted at even before we see the main characters. The situation includes many elements of stock humor: drunken bragging soldiers; the dumb, gullible policemen; the serious but impossible attempt to restore order to chaos which comes from the train conductor, and the minor touch of the stock Negro humorous servant in the train porter. Exaggeration, speeches, mistaken identity, character reversals and witty retorts are all coupled with a man attempting to jump out a train window and flying suitcases to give us a scene with immediate appeal. The most important element of the scene is the character of Joe Gilligan whose first actions are indicative of his character throughout the novel. "Joe performs the usual actions of the comic
hero: protecting the helpless from cruelty and exploitation. His first mock serious speech about what would have become of the country if not for the soldiers' bravery functions in at least two ways giving us the character of the man and the theme of the novel. Through the humor, Faulkner can give the theme which, in a way, is a true tribute to men of genuine bravery like Gilligan and Donald Mahon. Gilligan's beliefs and values are hinted at and come to fruition in the next chapter with his adoption of Donald.

Another source of the humor of the story is the abrupt way in which characters enter to complicate the situations and the abrupt way in which situations develop. The entrances of Mahon and of Mrs. Powers are as abrupt as Gilligan's proposal and Donald's homecoming. Although some of these scenes may not be humorous, we do have a pause of surprise at the abrupt way each new development is introduced. The next few scenes of the novel give the rest of the characters who are stock humorous stereotypes.

The entrance of Mrs. Powers shows her as a two dimensional type of beautiful but mysterious dark lady who is likened to a drawing by Beardsley.

She was dark. Had Gilligan and Lowe ever seen an Aubrey Beardsley, they would have known that Beardsley would have sickened for her: he had drawn her so often dressed in peacock hues, white and slim and depraved among meretricious trees and impossible marble fountains. (p. 31)

The choice of Beardsley is important, both for the art of the man as well as for the humor of his drawings. The exaggerated stylization of Beardsley
drawings gives us an impression of Mrs. Powers as a woman more like a piece of statuary or pen and ink drawing than a real, warm three-dimensional person. Although this impression is never contradicted Mrs. Powers is still a type of mother figure, especially in the gently humorous scene the next morning with the bumbling Lowe where she treats him like a child, drawing him to her breast and cuddling him. She deftly puts him off with vague statements which sound like promises until Lowe believes them to be engaged and is ecstatic. That misconception provides for the humor from Lowe's character which occurs throughout the novel in his repeated love letters with their foolishnesses and misspellings counterpointed with the seriousness of Mrs. Powers and her attitudes and her treatment of Lowe. What we learn of Mrs. Powers' background comes from her remembrances and further cements her as a two dimensional femme fatale.

Margaret was young and overly romantic when she dated and danced with all the soldiers going off to war so, in an imagined fit of glamor and romance, she married Powers who got shot shortly thereafter. The marriage consisted of three days of foolishness which Mrs. Powers regrets when she later realized what she has done. The crowning irony of her character is that the most courageous and intelligent thing she ever does, writing the letter to her husband asking to call the marriage off, is abortively unsuccessful because he had been killed before he ever got the letter.

In many ways, Mrs. Powers is quite like Cecily Saunders, the other lovely maiden of the story. Cecily is always posing and performing, knowingly playing a role. She sees herself as desirable and sensible and in charge of her own destiny while she is really a silly, inconsistent
blushing maiden in distress. Even Mrs. Powers herself remarks the likeness when she goes to discuss Cecily's impending marriage to Donald. "Fool, taking time to powder her face. But you would, too, she told herself (p. 264)." Mrs. Worthington's later party provides scenes where Cecily and the other cast of background characters can perform their roles. We see Cecily as jealous and fickle and selfish, knowingly aware of her own body and the things she can do with it and the things she can make others do by using it. She fascinates Jones temporarily and George continually. She makes her father treat her as a child, at one time spanking her and at another cuddling and comforting her as a baby. Cecily is the stock figure of a flapper, the girl with a lot of energy but little sense whose antics provide for some stock humorous scenes in the novel.

The reverend Mahon is a stock comic preacher figure. He loves flowers and trivial conversation and he believes he is an educated gentleman dedicated to his parishioners. His size, his appearance, his conversations with Jones, his drinking scotch with milk, his reverence for the memory of his dead hero son all place him as a comic character which, however, changes slightly later in the book. The man himself does not change but the homecoming of his son causes him to react in a characteristically hopeful way which the audience knows is foolish and he thereby becomes the object of mixed sadness and laughter. The reverend's belief that Donald will get better with the good medicine of home and love and attention and Cecily causes him to act foolishly and humorously but causes in the audience both sympathy and laughter. Again, we see Faulkner using a character for humor as well as for part of the more serious theme of the
work. The faith in humanity and heroism displayed by the preacher are
characteristics of Faulkner's own South and his world gently portrayed
and set up as a type of example for the audience.

The major source of comedy in Soldiers' Pay is the character of
Januarius Jones and the situations he causes or gets himself into. Olga
Vickery makes this important analytical comment:

These forays and pursuits by Jones provide the novel with the bulk
of its comedy. Jones, of course, has an essentially serious and
sober view of himself, but set over against this is the comic view
of his personality and behavior which Faulkner and the reader share.
Unfortunately, this treatment largely fails as humor. Faulkner's
comic potential is simply not plumbed by the shallow cleverness
of the drawing room which relies principally on isolated witty
remarks at the expense of such individuals as Jones. At its best,
Faulkner's humor is cumulative and derives from the presentation
of a rationally absurd situation in which persons believe they
are, and in a sense are, acting in the only intelligent way pos-
sible in that situation. 63

Vickery acutely determines that the source of the humor of Jones is in
the attitude of the audience toward him controlled by Faulkner rather
than in Jones' own view of his character. I do not think that Jones
always takes himself as seriously and soberly as Vickery seems to assert
since there are times where Jones laughs at himself. I do not under-
stand why Vickery claims that this treatment is unsuccessful as humor
since the separation between that Jones thinks of himself and what the
audience thinks of Jones is part of the reversal and inversion of expec-
tations which is one standard source of stock humor. However, Vickery
is right when she claims that this drawing room society and clever
commentary is not the source of Faulkner's best humor which we see only

63 Vickery, p. 7.
in some of the later better works and not here in the early few. This comment need not be a criticism however since everything Faulkner wrote is not uniformly good or uniformly humorous. The comment that the humorous characters act as they think intelligent despite the fact that the audience does not see it that way applies to almost every humorous incident in the novel as well as specifically for Jones' character.

There are several important scenes to discuss in an analysis of the humor of Jones' character and of this novel, the first being where Jones appears and his character is introduced. The second chapter begins much like the first chapter: a character, in this case Jones, is introduced in a cursory tone giving name, birth, background, and such facts resulting in a humorous response.

Jones, Januarius Jones, born of whom he knew and cared not, becoming Jones alphabetically, January through a conjunction of calendar and biology, Januarius through the perverse conjunction of his own star and the compulsion of food and clothing—Januarius Jones baggy in gray tweed, being lately a fellow of Latin in the small college . . . (p. 56)

The name alone is pompous enough to indicate the character and cause laughter. The conjunction of "calendar and biology" and circumstances is also amusing. Jones is humorously described as baggy himself rather than applying that description to his clothes. The fact that Jones is "lately a fellow" rather than currently comments both on his status and his energy and he seems a type of seedy bum at first appraisal.

Jones and the rector get involved in conversation and scholarship of a sort so that "they concluded in galloping duet (p. 57)" the Latin verses. The two have a genial argument which gives Faulkner the opportunity for the rector to voice the country aphorisms characteristic of
a stock preacher figure. "It is jealousy, I think, which makes us wish to prevent young people doing the things we had not the courage or the opportunity ourselves to accomplish once, and have not the power to do now (p. 59)." Such a statement is part of the theme of the novel as well as a humorous statement tendered in a humorous tone. The conversation develops until the rector tells Jones the story of his efforts to save his favorite rosebush from cold when he was away at a conference. The contortions and pains the rector goes through to protect the rosebush result in some humorous and frantic actions and give the audience basis to believe the rector is slightly batty. When they go inside and Jones is to stay to lunch, Faulkner sneaks the humor on us unsuspecting.

... they trod their shadows across the lawn, herding them beneath the subdued grace of a fanlight of dim-colored glass lovely with lack of washing. After the immaculate naked morning, the interior of the hall vortexed with red fire. Jones, temporarily blind, stumbled violently over an object and the handle of a pail clasped his ankle passionately. The rector, bawling Emmy! dragged him, pail and all, erect; he thanked his lucky stars that he had not been attached to the floor as he rose a sodden Venus, disengaging the pail. His dangling feet touched the floor and he felt his trouser leg with despair, fretfully. He's like a derrick, he thought with exasperation. (p. 65)

The resulting scene is purely chaotic humor. Emmy attempts to wipe up the water spilled but is continually interrupted by the rector who seems to not notice the fact that Jones is dripping at first since he is busy apologizing for the "meagerness of the accommodation which I offer you (p. 65)." This sets Jones mentally lamenting the fix and anticipating husks for his belly. Eventually, the rector succeeds in getting off Jones' trousers and installing him in a pair of the rector's own dry ones but only after Emmy enters during the proceedings and Jones
is exceedingly embarrassed. Also, this is the first time the rector realizes that he does not know Jones' name and takes the opportunity to ask for an introduction. The tone of Faulkner's language of description is beautiful and adds significantly to the humor of the scene.

Jones surrendered in dull despair. He had truly fallen among moral thieves. The rector assailed him with ruthless kindness and the ginghamclad one reappeared at the door with a twin of the rector's casual black nether coverings over her arm. (p. 66)

Jones' attitude of despair is funny to the audience because he does not see the humor of his situation yet. Shortly, Jones is voluminously clad "like a sheep in a gale" and the rector tells him to make himself comfortable. There is a parenthesis wherein we are told that even Jones found irony in the comment. We see that now Jones is more aware of the absurdity and ridiculousness of the situation but when he is about to adjust to the circumstances, Cecily enters and he blushes slowly knowing but lamenting his fate. "Curse the man: one moment it was Emmy and no trousers at all, next moment an attractive stranger and nether coverings like a tired balloon (p. 70)." The embarrassment caused Jones causes him to react viciously when the subject of his apparel comes up.

"Yes, I stumbled over that pail of water the doctor keeps just inside the front door, doubtless for the purpose of making his parishioners be sure they really require help from heaven, on their second visit," he explained, Greek-like, giving his dignity its death-stroke with his own hand. "You, I suppose, are accustomed to it and can avoid it." (p. 71)

Faulkner says that Cecily screams with laughter as does the reader since the entire situation has gone from ridiculous to absurd. Yet, it does not take Jones long to readjust to be himself again and attempt to pursue Cecily. As they all go in to lunch, there "was a French comedy regarding
precedence (p. 74)." The humor here is almost more in what is not said than in what is said. The reader can just imagine Cecily, Jones and the rector all deferring to each other and none of them getting through the door; just as one decides to take the opportunity, both or all three do at the same time and the business is back where it started.

During lunch, Cecily and Jones discuss marriage and we get more of Jones' attitude and humor. Cecily asks if he believes in marriage and he replies, "Yes, as long as there are no women in it." The impossibility of such a thing is just the cause of its humor. Rather than admit the cleverness of the comment, though, Cecily "shrugged indifferently" and Jones is thereby further enraged and encouraged. The culmination of the scene comes in one sense when Jones succeeds in classifying Cecily as a hamadryad, a slim jeweled one (p. 77)." A hamadryad is the spirit of wood nymphs and in that sense a gentle, beautiful thing, but a hamadryad is also a king cobra and this is most appropriate for Cecily. Jones attempts to kiss Cecily and at first she thwarts him because she calls Emmy for protection, but Jones blithely requests his trousers and proceeds in his attempt to kiss Cecily. He finally succeeds but the rector walks in on them and the surprise is complete. Again, the audience can imagine the procedure of their springing apart in surprise so that Faulkner does not have to describe it. Yet, the surprise is not complete because the rector announces that Donald is returning home although Cecily and the rector believed Donald dead. It is somewhat of a surprise for the reader as well because of the timing of the announcement: just when Jones has succeeded in kissing Cecily, her dead fiance will be resurrected. The
tone of the scene is slightly changed, not ruined but heightened, because the rector is obviously shaken by the announcement and Cecily is puzzled. The rector knows that Donald is sick but characteristically refuses to see the truth of the matter. "But we'll cure him. Get him home here with good food and rest and attention and we'll have him well in a week" (p. 81). The extreme exaggeration of the rector's hope is cause for the audience to laugh at the rector's mistaken belief since the reader knows more about Donald's true condition. The comedy continues in the subtle battle between Cecily and Mrs. Powers in the living room rather than its being immediately concluded.

Jones gets in a second humorous situation only a little later the same day. Cecily has run off with George and has missed the cab to the station to meet Donald; when she returns, Jones continues his pursuit of her and the two of them two-step calculatedly around the room and then both spring. The dance of love in this case is much like an animal hunt. Jones is quick for his bulk but not quite quick enough so Cecily gets out of the room and locks the door. The picture of this fat, yellow eyed Pan springing across the room after the sweet young maiden is humorous, but then gets even better. Jones sees the doorknob move and thinks it is Cecily returning. "He sprang to it. 'Open the door, you little slut, or I'll kick your screens out,'" (p. 92) he exclaims. As we might expect in all stock humor of reversal and mistaken identity, it is not Cecily at the door. Emmy has returned to bring Jones his trousers and has been caught right in the middle of the lovers' games. The look on Emmy's face, "her frightened antagonistic eyes," is another source of the humor.
Jones quickly begins to question Emmy thinking she is Cecily, and Cecily demurely "stepped from the shadows, curtsying like a derisive flower." Jones' reaction is natural but humorous to the audience. Cecily planned the joke and so can increase its humor by her action, the sly gesture of homage ironically used to goad Jones further. Jones is put in the awkward position of needing a way out of the circumstances and is reduced to mimicking Cecily's earlier comment of checkmate "in a reedy falsetto." What is left out here is what forms the humorous picture in the reader's mind. Jones in the rector's baggy pants, Emmy frightened, Cecily bowing, and Jones using a female's voice add to the stock humor.

Ironically, Jones' motivations are made to be more lecherous than they are in reality and he becomes a standard for behavior. He is not a lecher or dangerous bothersome creature; he is a source of energy symbolic of the life force. His motives for acting put him in humorous circumstances but we respect his needs and desires. He is one of the last characters we see in the book, and that fact is important. All the scenes with Jones serve as contrast and humorous relief for the other serious scenes with Donald whose plight is indeed lamentable, but too much grief for him would cause the novel to become maudlin whereas, the alternation of the scenes with Donald and those with Jones provides balance for the novel. Jones never went off to war to be a hero so he never took the chances Donald did. The question of why Jones never went to war is ignored throughout the book and is, I think, a necessary point to contemplate. If Jones never went to war because he is inherently a pacifist, part of the moral of the novel becomes the suggestion that this is a
preferable existence to Donald's way. Jones is not a coward and is never
directly compared with Donald to the detriment of either. We cannot accuse
Jones of cowardice or disagreement with the government or anything of that
nature, nor can we really call Donald a hero since his wounds resulted
from his innocence and inexperience rather than from true bravery. Neither
Donald nor Jones can be criticized or commended for their actions. From
this, it may be possible to say that part of Faulkner's theme concerns
the fact that there are no winners and no losers in any war, only regrets
and perseverance.

One of the funniest scenes in the novel revolves around a mistaken
identity situation when Cecily decides she will marry Donald after all
and try to get used to his scar. This has partially been motivated by
the fact that her father has refused to let her see George if she doesn't
pay attention to Donald as well. So Cecily visits Donald. The scene is
first comic because of Cecily's overblown and trite rhetoric which indica-
tes the narrowness of her own attitudes and character. The scene also
plays as comedy in the revelations and the resulting complications and
accusations. Here it is at its best.

She entered the hall beneath the dim lovely fanlight, and her
roving glance remarked one sitting with his back to a window. She
said Donald! and sailed into the room like a bird. One hand covered
her eyes and the other was outstretched as she ran with quick tapping
steps and sank before him at his feet, burying her face in his
lap.

"Donald, Donald! I will try to get used to it, I will try!
Oh, Donald, Donald! Your poor face! But I will, I will," she
repeated hysterically. Her fumbling hand touched his sleeve and
slipping down his arm she drew his hand under her cheek, clasping
it. "I didn't mean to, yesterday. I wouldn't hurt you for any-
thing, Donald. I couldn't help it, but I love you, Donald, my
precious, my own." She burrowed deeper into his lap.
"Put your arms around me, Donald," she said, "until I get used to you again."

He complied, drawing her upward. Suddenly, struck with something familiar about the coat, she raised her head. It was Januarius Jones.

She sprang to her feet. "You beast, why didn't you tell me?"

"My dear ma'am, who am I to refuse what the gods send?" (p. 137)

Jones' final comment serves to break the tension of the scene, adds the ultimate humor, indicates his character, and enrages Cecily. But, as usual, the comic effects are not quite over. When we expect the situation to degenerate or to shift gears to a new mood, it does not; rather, the comedy is heightened. Mrs. Powers has been watching the entire scene with some interest and this realization further enrages Cecily, but, as a good actress might, Cecily plays the remainder of the scene well and succeeds in shifting the blame from herself to Mrs. Powers.

Her glance was a blue dagger and her voice was like dripped honey.

"How silly of me, not to have looked," she said sweetly.

"Seeing you, I thought at once that Donald would be near by. But I didn't know you and Mr. -- Mr. Smith were such good friends. Though they say that fat men are awfully attractive. May I see Donald--do you mind?" (p. 137)

There are several beautiful maneuverings in this short speech which account for its humor. First, Cecily's voice is like dripped honey; the comparison is appropriate but somehow funny: honey should be sweet and pleasant which Cecily's tone may be although her words are not. At first, Cecily accepts blame and calls herself silly, a very mild self accusation. Where we expect a young girl to feel the super fool, Cecily only admits to being mildly silly so the separation between how we see Cecily and how she sees herself adds to the humor of the scene. Now, Cecily reverses the blame for the scene by claiming she thought Donald would be wherever Mrs. Powers is thereby giving Mrs. Powers a backhanded compliment in saying the
men would find her attractive. Yet, the honeyed tone allows the double meaning that Mrs. Powers is somehow a loose woman which is increased when Cecily innocently remarks that she didn't know Mrs. Powers and Jones are such good friends. Actually, nothing could be farther from the truth and Cecily knows it, but she chooses to ignore it to get herself out of this touchy situation. She also increased the humor and the jibes by calling Jones Mr. Smith, a choice of names which is perfect since both are very common names and that is her logic for miscalling him. The address is an insult to Jones since it implies that he has not infringed on her consciousness enough for her to remember his name even though he has kissed her. Ironically, the fact that he has kissed her and she does not remember his name is also a point of blame for her, making her not quite the chaste maiden she appears. The best part of this insult is that we will never know whether it was intended. We wonder if Cecily does remember Jones' name but knowingly chooses to insult him in retribution for her own recent embarrassment. Or, we wonder if she does not remember his name and is thereby showing us more of her frivolous, fickle character, and in any case, she remains amusing in her maneuvering. The ultimate insult to Jones is that Cecily calls him fat to his face which may also be a compliment since she says that fat men reputedly are awfully attractive. Even in the compliment, though, there is further insult since Cecily is indirectly accusing Jones and Mrs. Powers of illicit undertakings. The final request to see Donald is not what it appears either since the apparent meek apology actually makes Mrs. Powers out to be some type of jail warden, an unfeeling creature whom one defers to only superficially. Cecily is either
a masterful actress or a phony young girl and provides, with Jones, much stock humor of situation and character.

There is still another stock comic scene where Jones fights with George late at night in the flower beds beneath Cecily's bedroom window. The situation alone is enough to laugh at: it is midnight, dark and quiet. George has snuck out to visit Cecily and has waited hours for the house to go to sleep. Jones too comes to court Cecily in the dead of night so we have the two medieval knights fighting for the favor of the lady except that here the lady does not even know the fight occurs and believes that both of them have deserted her since neither of them appear as hoped. The description in the scene adds to the humor.

The thing moved and came directly toward him and he sat motionless until it had almost reached the flower bed in which he sat. Then he sprang to his feet and before the other could raise a hand he fell upon the intruder, raging silently. The man accepted battle and they fell clawing and panting, making no outcry. They were at such close quarters, it was so dark, that they could not damage each other, and intent on battle, they were oblivious of their surroundings until Jones hissed suddenly beneath George Farr's armpit: "Look out! Somebody's coming!"

They paused mutually and sat clasping each other like the first position of sedentary dance. (p. 239)

First, Jones is described as a thing which is humorous since we know what he really looks like. Second, neither of the two expects the appearance of the other so surprise is a big element of the humor. Then neither of the two knows who his assailant is but since we know both, the humor for us is increased as the puzzlement for the characters increases. Also, they are described as clawing and panting, much as animals, a comparison which is one of the first characteristics necessary to stock humor. The picture of Jones' head hissing beneath George's armpit is itself laughable.
Finally, the arresting of the violent motion of the pantomime provides us with a tableau of the absurd likening the men to dancers. The difference between graceful, lithe dancers and the two oafs we have here is a last source of the stock humor. The scene breaks the mood of George's over-dramatic rambling thoughts and becomes the moral suggestion not to take love too seriously. When plans are made, they often go astray, especially in matters of love, so neither George or Jones succeeds and the scene is almost a gentle caution to be spontaneous.

This spirit of spontaneity pervades the final humorous scenes of the novel with Jones pursuing Emmy. His pursuits lead him to the garden under Emmy's window where Gilligan finds him with Jones enticing Gilligan to climb up on the window ledge where he tries to kick Gilligan in the face. Instead, Gilligan "caught his foot, releasing his grasp on the gutter. For a moment they swung like a great pendulum against the side of the house, then Jones' hold on the window was torn loose and they plunged together into a bed of tulips (p. 314)."

Another fight ensues but Jones takes off and is unpursued while Gilligan returns and talks with the rector who narrowly suggests the moral that fighting doesn't settle anything. The point is, in a way, the entire moral of the novel. The situation of the story is just after a massive war, another fighting which did not prove anything. Gilligan remains the soldier throughout and Jones remains the male pursuing the eternal female; neither situation is resolved but both provide humor for the reader. In an alternate sense, the moral of the novel is that possibly the fight is the thing; that is, the end of the war has caused
all kinds of difficult adjustments for the characters while the war itself
provided many roles for undecided actors. Jones is in continual pursuit
but never achieves resolution or wins any conquests so the humor comes
from the pursuit and conflict, not from any resolution. In a way, there
is no resolution to the novel, only a continuation of the pursuit. The
theme concerns "the absurdity of the human condition and modern man's in-
ability to cope with existence" which is dramatized throughout the novel
in the character of Donald as contrasted with Joe Gilligan and Januarius
Jones. War itself is an absurd human condition and the returning wounded
warrior is another opportunity for Faulkner to remark against such antics
with the characters of Jones and Gilligan. In an indirect way, the novel
is an anti-war statement which applies not only to the First World War
which is the immediate situation of the story, but also to the Civil War
which devastated Faulkner's beloved South. Rather than have war result
in characters such as Donald, Faulkner would prefer Jones' behavior in its
spontaneity and zest. The rector is a pathetic figure, good for little
but humor, who never finds consolation in his religion despite extreme cir-
cumstances which would imply his need to do so. Instead, Joe and Jones
are the only comforts, so the theme also becomes that religion is little
comfort and only human relationships will help.

The humor of Mosquitoes comes from the humor of stock characters and
the telling of tall tales. In this, Faulkner's second published novel,

64Edmond L. Volpe, A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner (New
the humor is especially direct, simple and stock, even imitative. Hoffman calls Mosquitoes an "avowed imitation of Aldous Huxley [where] Faulkner tried to do what Huxley did with a number of half comical and cynical types in his early novels." 65 In the same vein, Thompson claims that "Mosquitoes attempts the satirically comic" 66 which is certainly true but a somewhat too often stated explanation for the humor of the novel. For anyone who has read Huxley's satiric humorous comments, those same elements are apparent in Mosquitoes and don't need particular interpretation. On the other hand, the humor of Mosquitoes is also in the tradition of Southwestern tall tales and the way in which folk humor may comment on society. "Characteristic of the humor of the old Southwest . . . are exaggerations . . . [and] tall tale--or yarn-like flavor . . . That Faulkner knows Southwest humor is specifically shown in Mosquitoes," claims Miner. 67 To anyone who has read Mosquitoes, these elements of Southwestern tall tale humor are obvious but might require some interpretation or explanation for their necessity to the story or justification for them. Hence, "the most obvious way folk humor is used [is] to comment on the human comedy," 68 and the satiric comment and tall tale technique are apparent in Mosquitoes.


68 Otis B. Wheeler, "Some Uses of Folk Humor by Faulkner," Mississippi Quarterly XVII (Spring 1939), p. 188.
The main sources of stock character humor are the major figures of Fairchild, Mr. Talliaferro, and Mrs. Maurier. Fairchild is a breed of his own and will be discussed later in his function as a tall tale teller. Mrs. Maurier is noteworthy for several reasons, including her statements on art. Mr. Talliaferro is the most important stock humorous character.

Mr. Talliaferro is granted the privilege of opening and closing the novel. "The sex instinct . . . is quite strong in me (p. 9)," he declares as the opening line of the story. At first, we might accept this assertion but as we get to know Mr. Talliaferro, we realize the ridiculousness of it. Immediately, we have Faulkner playing with our expectations and giving us ironic comment even though we do not know it yet, on first reading. The concluding lines of the novel come from an unknown female voice on the telephone who has eavesdropped on Mr. Talliaferro's conversation with Fairchild. "Your tell 'em, big boy; treat 'em rough (p. 288)" she says. Now, the obvious humor and satiric commentary from Faulkner are apparent in the contrast between these statements and Mr. Talliaferro who is a stock frustrated, incompetent, bungling lover. Longley says that "one of the most comic spectacles in the world is provided by a man who is horribly in love." Mr. Talliaferro, in the course of the story, certainly falls in love with the most remote object, Jenny. Some of the funniest scenes of the novel are his pursuits of her, especially the closing ones where she jilts him. Throughout the four day sea voyage, Mr. Talliaferro has been prodded and prompted and pushed and

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69 Longley, p. 105.
encouraged to pursue his passionate nature. We know, by the beginning of the voyage, that he has no real passionate nature because we have the opening depiction of character. Finally, Mr. Talliaferro gets up the courage to take Jenny out on a date, but only after they have docked.

Continually Mr. Talliferro has asserted that the way to a woman's heart is by being bold, but when he finally is bold enough to escort Jenny to a dance, she jilts him for a superior physical specimen although a mental and psychological inferior. Mr. Talliaferro is undaunted and goes home attempting to analyze why his plan of attack failed and he comes to the same conclusion he has come to all along: he must be bold and fearless.

In these characteristic self-analyses, and their resulting abortive actions, Mr. Talliaferro is a type of Don Quixote figure. "Excess is authentically and indisputably the essential attitude of the comic hero: the quixotic determination to defend whoever and whatever he decides must be defended, whether defending is requested or even desired or not." The difference between the way Mr. Talliaferro interprets an action and the way in which Jenny, the object of his action, interprets the action results in the humor. The element of misconception abounds in the relationship of these two: Jenny sees him as a bungling old man, while he sees himself as a sexual animal. The truth is somewhere in between, never stated in the novel but left for the audience to glean from the occurrences of the story. The separation of word and deed throughout Mr. Talliaferro's character becomes one humorous theme of the novel.

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70 Longley, p. 38.
The opening depiction of Mr. Talliaferro provides immediate humor. Faulkner tells us that Mr. Talliaferro has "obsequious courtesy" and that he is concerned with the dust he is getting on his clothes and "his neat small patent leather shoes (p. 9)." We know he is reassured with the superiority of "his own symmetrical sleeve" rather than Gordon's "muscularity in an undershirt." In contrast to these pieces of his true character, we have the statements and responses of Mr. Talliaferro himself. "Frankness compels me to admit that the sex instinct is perhaps my most dominating compulsion," he asserts. We know from the previous comments that this is not the case and the separation between thought and deed provides the humor and part of the theme.

The following scene where we see the discomfort caused to Mr. Talliaferro by his errand for Gordon's milk reinforces his humorous character. The fact that Mr. Talliaferro agreed to do the errand for Gordon indicates his humility and lack of spine. Mr. Talliaferro does not really want to do this errand because it causes him acute discomfort, but he was "quite honorable: he had passed his word (p. 13)" and therefore he persists despite his trouble with the dirtiness of the bottle and the fact that he does not want anyone to see it and wishes he had something to wrap it in. This makes him feel "like a criminal" because he is transgressing upon his own high standards of conduct. At the store, Mr. Talliaferro succeeds in getting the storekeeper to wrap the bottle so as not to soil his clothes and to disguise the nature of his package. Unfortunately, Mr. Talliaferro runs into Mrs. Maurier and her niece and he is caused severe discomfort as we see him acting with gallantry despite his troubles.
Mrs. Maurier claims that "here is an example of the chivalry of our Southern men. (p. 15)." The fact that all Southern men are called on as a defense for Mr. Talliaferro does two things: first, it gives him increased stature and second, it places him in a tradition. All Southern men are expected to be gallant, courteous, chivalrous and so forth. Mr. Talliaferro attempts to be these things and thereby becomes a stock comic Southern gentleman, as well as the bungling lover we see him to be later in the story. Mrs. Maurier shows Mr. Talliaferro a special find of hers and Mr. Talliaferro responds with the appropriate cooings. But this causes the discovery of his package which Mrs. Maurier believes to be a more important piece of artwork than her own. There is humor in that the audience knows the real nature of the package while Mrs. Maurier does not. When the milk is discovered, Mrs. Maurier asks if Mr. Talliaferro has "turned artist, too." The logic of the question completely eludes the reader and is left unexplained but provides us with a chuckle and important character analysis.

There are a few major incidents wherein Mrs. Maurier fulfills her comic purpose to perfection. Mrs. Maurier is the stereotyped matron and patron of the arts who refuses to admit her age, her lack of intelligence or class, and the ridiculousness of her appearance. Instead, she steadfastly believes she is a charming, witty, entertaining, charitable, devastating paragon of society and manners. The opening description of Mrs. Maurier as a ship under sail serves to make her obnoxious.

She was under full sail and accompanied by a slimmer one when she saw him, but she tacked at once and came about in a hushed swishing of silk and an expensive clashing of impediments—handbag and chains and beads. Her hand bloomed fatly through bracelets, ringed and
manicured, and her hothouse face wore an expression of infantile trusting astonishment. (p. 14)

The passage itself, funny in extreme, is an appropriate comparison carried out throughout the book when we are reminded of it every time the niece Pat reprimands Mrs. Maurier to "Haul in your sheet, Aunt Pat; you're jibbing." This early tacking of Mrs. Maurier as a ship to meet Mr. Talliaferro prefigures the later maneuvers of the "Nausikaa" especially when she runs aground. It is as if Mrs. Maurier runs aground of society even before her yacht does. Mrs. Maurier's coquetry aboard the ship is another source of the humor of her character as she announces at the first day's luncheon that "girls will be at a premium this voyage. To the winner belongs the fair lady." Her comment also comically prefigures the outcome of the novel where no one wins those illustrious ladies because most of the men cannot act but only talk about the possibilities. Mrs. Maurier is always fishing for compliments from the gentlemen and paying them compliments in an attempt to win their approval and cooperation. Mrs. Maurier, and all the other women on board as well, is a living example of Fairchild's later comment concerning "the illusion that you can seduce women. Which you can't. They just elect you." The inconsistency between Mrs. Maurier's intentions and her actions also makes her humorous. After four days of ridicule and abuse, Mrs. Maurier finally gets up the courage to dispose of the cause of her discomfort, Fairchild's supply of booze, which she does with the help of the captain in the dead of night. Ironically, the men are on deck and hear the splash. Major Ayers suggests that it is the "steward throwing out grapefruit (p. 242)," and the humor of the incident is complete with the punchline. Because Mrs. Maurier is as she is, her action comes too
late and is therefore futile in rectifying the unseemly situation.

Both the secondary characters and the situation of the novel are elements which add to the stock humor of the work. The name of Mrs. Maurier's yacht is appropriately "Nausikaa," the girl who discovered the shipwrecked Odysseus and directed him to her father's palace. Ironically, this yacht itself is sort of shipwrecked in that it has gone aground because of a silly, unthinking action on the part of Mrs. Maurier's nephew, Josh. Josh needed a particular shaped part to burn a hole in his home-made pipe and goes to the ship's engine room and removes a piece of the steering mechanism under the mistaken idea that because it was so clean, it was probably unnecessary to the running of the ship; and besides, he was not going to hurt the part. Because of this misconception, the ship is stranded for four days, and the remainder of the humorous incidents result. To make matters worse, the ship is besieged by mosquitoes which plague the guests serving the symbolic function of a gadfly character. The mosquitoes add to the humor of the situation and the actions of the characters because we see Mr. Talliferro especially swatting at his ankles and wrists in a feeble and unsuccessful effort to rid himself of the affliction. It is as if he wants to rid himself of Mrs. Maurier, the human pest as well and also as if Faulkner is a swarm of mosquitoes prod-ding the characters to be more sensible and less ridiculous, to act more and to talk less.

The mosquitoes are most prominent in the scenes with David and Pat in the swamp. Pat is so bothered by the insects that she cries and nearly faints, playing to perfection the part of the insipid, silly young flapper who is out to do anything for a lark. (We are reminded of Cecily Saunders.)
pat swims naked in the early morning and when David won't turn his back so she can demurely get out of the water, she gets out any way and flaunts her nakedness. When they first run off to Mandeville, she says she thinks it is grand and sees herself as some sort of two dimensional heroine. When the mosquitoes get increasingly worse, Pat acts the part of the maiden in distress but instead of her knight having to put his cloak over a puddle in the pathway, her knight David must give her the shirt off his back and then carry her, not with any dignity, but like a sack of potatoes slung over his shoulder. The mosquitoes are more than a prop in this scene; they are an active force in the action. They show up Pat's real character, or rather, lack of stamina and intelligence. She foolishly forces David to go the wrong way on the road when he intuitively uses sailor insight to point the right way. Faulkner is saying that foolish people like Pat will always insist on the wrong way and will always force more sensible people to be drawn into the predicament as well. The scene is humorous in many ways including the appearance of the characters. Pat wears shoes and stockings and David's wet undershirt under her own dress; David appears like a troubled puppy following every step of its master. The two have a breakfast which Pat considers camping and thinks is grand but which is a silly picnic in a swamp. They thrash through a jungle-like swamp where their every move is hampered by the growth and the mosquitoes. Finally, they find the road but go the wrong way on it. Eventually, they find a house and a man to take them back to the "Nausikaa" in a launch, but he is totally unsympathetic to their plight and makes fun of David and insults them both. If the mosquitoes were not enough to impress the
characters, and the reader, with the stupidity of the two, this country
man with his insults reinforces the impression and heightens the humor.
"Git a real man, next time, (p. 176)" he tells Pat!

The comic situation of being aground and pestered by the mosquitoes
culminates when the guests come up with a scheme to move the yacht. They
will get into the rowboat and attempt to pull the yacht off the bottom
sand on the mistaken assumption that the boat is not very heavy and be-
cause they are tired of waiting for the arrival of the tug. When they
all get into the boat for the chore, it is "loaded to the gunwales like
a nigger excursion (p. 160)." Mrs. Maurier leans over the boattrail and
waves her handkerchief at them as if they were some type of exclusive
tourists off on an international voyage while the situation in the row-
boat is absurd. "Almost everyone had an oar: the small boat bristled
with oars beating the water vainly, so that it resembled a trantula with
palsy and no knee joints," and "the tender evinced a maddening inclina-
tion to progress in any fashion save that for which it was built (p. 160)."
Throughout the proceedings, the captain, the helmsman, and the deckhand
stand behind Mrs. Maurier at the opposite rail and casually observe the
absurd, as does the reader. The people have tied a rope to the yacht and
to their small boat. On one occasion, it hangs loose in the water and the
conclusion is that "she must be moving then (p. 164)." The misconception
itself is humorous but the line from Mrs. Wiseman increases the humor.
"Maybe it's because we aren't singing," as if singing could do any more
for the already ridiculous scene! The culmination comes when they think
they have the yacht loose and that it is moving down on them. Mr. Tallia-
ferro screams that she is coming and then we have the climax.
A faint abrupt shock. The tender stopped immediately. They saw the sweet blond entirety of Jenny's legs and the pink seat of her ribboned undergarment as with a wild despairing cry Mr. Talliaferro plunged overboard, taking Jenny with him, and vanished beneath the waves. All but his buttocks, that is. They didn't quite vanish ... (p. 164)

The situation is absurdly funny because Mrs. Maurier is "shrieking with alarm and astonishment," and "the sailors had discreetly vanished (p. 165)."

The humor here is almost strictly slapstick humor of situation which would play well in a comic movie. Yet, the humor grows out of the stock characters portrayed and also out of Faulkner's attempt to make gentle fun out of these well meaning but silly people. The same type of humorous situation will be used frequently in Faulkner's novels to give the reader laughter while gently chiding the characters involved or their standards of behavior.

The other characters in the action are also stock comic types. Jenny is a beautiful example of young maidenhood. Throughout, she is described as bovine and placid and is a type to be found later in Lena Grove. Jenny is innocent despite the way in which she can entrance all the males aboard the ship, especially Mr. Talliaferro. Again, the separation between word and action is apparent in the difference between Jenny's appearance and her whispered shocking language. Jenny's preparations for the voyage consisted in buying a comb and a lipstick. Her naivety puts her in the humorous situations with Mr. Talliaferro's affections and Pete's jealousy.

The scene in the rowboat shows Jenny playing the distressed maiden since she is continually stifling screams of fear; when she falls overboard, the humor is complete. Externally, Jenny is a fast girl with loose talk and looser morals; internally, she is purity and chastity personified. This
inversion of appearance and reality adds to the humor of her character and emphasizes the theme of word versus action.

Pete is a type of stock comic dandy and a boor. He is not very bright, says little but is apparently devastating with the women. Miss Jameson is attracted to Pete and he dances with her but refuses to make a formal date with her. He is noncommittal with the men on the ship but forceful with Jenny. He is the butt of much of the men's humor and he takes it without thought or reaction. His dandyish straw hat is his trademark. At first, Pat attempts to get him a string to keep the hat on but Pete simply jams it tighter on his head and leans into the wind. He refuses to remove his hat even at meals because he does not want to let it out of his sight. Finally, he gets used to the hat being behind him on the chair when they eat. He is chided so much about it, that he finally decides to put it in a safe place on a low serving shelf during the final dinner. Naturally, it gets knocked off there and finally stepped on by Mrs. Maurier. This is an appropriate end for the ignominious object, but this stock, even slapstick humor is not enough because Faulkner has Pat ask her aunt to pay for the hat since Pete and Jenny think that would only be fair. Mrs. Maurier screams with indignation and the audience screams with laughter.

Gordon is the stereotyped artist from the opening pages. He lives in squalor amidst his art. He is inconsiderate, unmannered, self centered, witty, and takes advantage of Mr. Talliaferro, of Mrs. Maurier and of almost everyone. He is moody to the extreme that he is missing from the yacht until people think he has drowned. He is sarcastic although the
sarcasm is lost on his audience but not on the reader. For example, when Mrs. Maurier visits him and remarks that his room has a view, he replies "I would have if I were eight feet tall," since his only window is that high in the wall. When Pat is examining Gordon's statue of an undeveloped girl, she remarks that the girl has hardly any breasts. Gordon retorts that "you haven't much there yourself." Rather than being insulted, Pat is sincere in her attempt to understand his art, but the reader is entertained with the humor. Gordon is the only example we have in the novel of anyone succeeding in any actions, and those are particularly artistic. He can create and is a real artist while the rest of the characters can only talk about art. Gordon does not participate in the discussions aboard the ship; in fact, he is missing from many of them. In the Epilogue, we see Gordon acting with a prostitute rather than talking about a passion as Mr. Talliaferro does.

Major Ayers is a dupe, the gullible outsider. He is an Englishman and a type of salesman in his ideas on how to get rich quick, the best of which is the proposition he presents at the first luncheon aboard. "All Americans are constipated" he asserts. The remark itself is funny but Faulkner does not let it stand alone; we must hear the rest of the scheme which is "to put the salts up in the tweaky phial . . . that will look well on one's night table: a jolly design of some sort." The exact nature of the design arrived at is hysterical. "The American flag and a couple of doves holding dollar marks in their bills, and a handle that when you pull it out, it's a corkscrew, (p. 53)" suggests Fairchild. What is said in jest becomes deadly reality later when we see the Major actually
attempting to sell his idea to some distributor at the end of the story. It is not enough for Faulkner to give us stock humorous characters, they must be taken to extremes of the ridiculous. Major Ayers serves as a kind of comic foil for Fairchild so Faulkner can comment humorously on the American character for the benefit of the foreigner.

Fairchild, with his wit and stories, is the other major source of the stock humor in the novel. He is almost completely the stock comic tall tale teller, the fabulous liar, and the situation of the yacht adds to his character as a story teller since he has a captive audience and since the men sit around in deck chairs on the boat to listen to him. The sailor is often notorious for his yarns and it is appropriate that we should have the "Nausikaa" aground to foster the spirit of those sea yarns. Cooley claims that tall tales are "usually a masculine genre" and aboard this ship we have a preponderance of men. Also, the language of the tales gives us the "illusion of an oral idiom," an important element in the effect of tall tales, indicating Fairchild's character and pacing the story. They begin relatively quietly and build to the final whopper, they have the "classic framework device, the use of an educated, sophisticated narrator to introduce the low brow character who then proceeds to tell the story." Old Hickory and Al Jackson do not tell the stories but they are the major actors in them, in contrast to Fairchild's sophistication. The tales use the standard technique of "deflating characters by describing

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72 Cooley, p. 271.
73 Wheeler, p. 110.
them in animal terms.\textsuperscript{74} Besides giving us Fairchild's character as a novelist, a liar and egoist, these tales "serve as examples of Faulkner's ability as a humorist."\textsuperscript{75}

The first major tall tale occurs after the first disastrous luncheon where Major Ayers' proposal for "salts" was discussed, good preparation for the tale to follow. Fairchild claims Major Ayers should give a bottle of the salts to Al Jackson and the game is on. Al Jackson is quite a character in New Orleans because "he wears congress boots all the time... even wears 'em in bathing (p. 55)." Rather than give us the explanation for this strange behavior, Fairchild turns to the character of Old Hickory only four days later do we get the explanation in another kind of tall tale: Al Jackson had webbed feet! The impossibility of the occurrence has nothing to do with the fact that the tale is good and we laugh at the circumstances. It seems Old Hickory bought a place in Florida where he sent a "bunch of mountaineers from his Tennessee place" to herd the horses. But the place was "pretty near all swamp" so they attempt to make the best of it.

Some of these horses strayed off into the swamps, and in some way the breed got crossed with alligators. And so, when Old Hickory found he was going to have to fight his battle down there in those Chalmette swamps, he sent over to his Florida place and had 'em round up as many of those half-horse half-alligators as they could, and he mounted some of his infantry on 'em and the British couldn't stop 'em at all. The British didn't know Florida. (p. 56)

This is as ridiculous and characteristic as a tall tale can get with the exotic animals which are parts of two species. To heighten the effect

\textsuperscript{74}Cooley, p. 273. \textsuperscript{75}Tuck, p. 131.
of the humor of the story. Julius explains that the reason the British did not know Florida was because "there were no excursions." The abrupt shift in time increases the tension and the resulting laughter of the story. Major Ayers declares that Fairchild is pulling his leg and so Fairchild has the opportunity to explain the moral of the story.

No, no, ask Julius. But then, it is kind of hard for a foreigner to get us. We're a simple people, we Americans, kind of childlike and hearty. And you've got to be both to cross a horse on an alligator and then find some use for him, you know. That's part of our national temperament, Major. (p. 57)

The moral comes from Faulkner as well but with a tongue in cheek tone. The impression is that Americans are so clever that they can intentionally breed strange animals. This American custom of story telling leads Major Ayers to a tale of his own explaining why "no Englishman nor Welshman nor Scot will eat an apple tart." At this point, Mrs. Maurier must interrupt to break the growing comradery among the men, but the mood is already set for the audience to expect further stories from the deck.

These tall tales culminate in the swamp sheep tale Fairchild tells the last night out. As Waggoner says, "the episode illustrates Faulkner's early mastery of the tall tale and suggests better than most of the writing in the first two novels the peculiarly Faulknerian blend of folk humor, a sense of the grotesque, and the interweaving of the absurd with the pathetic that was to distinguish much of his best later fiction. 76 The circumstances of the story are that old man Jackson saw how much ranker vegetation grew in the swampy land so he decided to raise sheep in the

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to save the sheep from drowning originally; the lifebelts and the rams' horns make the creatures funny even before their final evolution. At this point, the moral of the story should be some advice not to be so greedy or not to try to grow sheep in swamps. Instead, we have more of the story because old man Jackson will not quit. He vows to catch the animals if he has to get a diving suit and a fast motorboat so he gets his son Claude to help. "Claude was kind of wild: hell after women, a gambler and a drunkard--a kind of handsome humorless fellow with lots of dash. (p. 231)." This should be preparation for the final development but it certainly is not. Claude makes a trade with his dad, the standard tall tale situation. Claude gets half of every sheep he catches and so proceeds to grapple for them, forcing them out of the water with his bare hands. The sheep did not have any wool on them at all but "its flesh was the best fish eating in Louisiana; being partly cornfed that way giving it a good flavor." This almost sounds logical until we remember how absurd the entire business is. So Jackson begins to get rich selling this new exotic breed of good eating, and Claude quits gambling and women for the profit. Finally, Claude himself beings to evolve because of his work.

Pretty soon he could outswim the old sheep, and having to dive so much after the young ones, he got to where he could stay under water longer and longer at a time. Sometimes he'd stay under for a half an hour or more. And pretty soon he got to where he'd stay in the water all day, only coming out to eat and sleep; and then they noticed that Claude's skin was beginning to look funny and that he walked kind of peculiar, like his knees were stiff or something . . . Claude's eyes had kind of shifted around the side of his head and his mouth had spread back a good way, and his teeth had got longer . . . But that was the last they ever saw of Claude. (pp. 231-232)

We have this pause in the story and expect it to be the conclusion since it would be an appropriate one. What began with animals turning into
other types of animals might end with a man turning into an animal. But this is not enough.

Pretty soon after that, though, there was a shark scare at the bathing beaches along the Gulf coast. It seemed to be a lone shark that kept annoying women bathers, especially blondes; and they knew it was Claude Jackson. He was always hell after blondes. (p. 232)

This is the height of the humor of the novel and the story. This last development has come about surprisingly without any attempt at an explanation or justification although it is tied to the earlier description of Claude's character as a killer with women. From here, the situation aboard the yacht gets increasingly ridiculous. Major Ayers takes the entire business seriously and wants to know about the congress boots as well as about "this chap that got rich" which would lead into further tales and the structure of each tale outdoing the last in its extremity. But Fairchild has gained Pat's admiration and so stops the tales in favor of the dance.

The justification for these tales within the novel comes from Cooley. "At this early stage, Faulkner also gives the tales more thematic weight and more of the burden of delineating character than tall tales normally bear."77 We can easily see how the tales delineate character aboard the yacht. Fairchild tells the stories in a spirit of fun and as a true tall tale liar might, through them gaining the admiration of the niece and the attention of his listeners. Major Ayers takes the stories seriously as only a man who believed he could get rich by peddling laxatives might. Julius sleeps through the story knowing Fairchild well enough not to

77Cooley, p. 271.
need to listen to the story. "Jenny's round ineffable eyes were upon him, utterly without thought, (p. 232)" characteristically. As is true in all of Faulkner, his stock humorous characters are often that but more than that as well.

Mrs. Maurier is certainly a stock matron of ridiculous proportion but by the end of the novel we have some respect and sympathy for her. She has gotten up the courage to throw out Fairchild's drink and she is truly hurt by their jibbing at her continually serving grapefruit. She becomes quickly older and more sensible and therefore worthy of our sympathy. We learn that she has given up love for status and wealth and we are impressed with the sadness of this fact. Mr. Talliaferro, too, develops to the point where the reader is sympathetic with him. He is plagued by his failure with the ladies and we sadly recall his opening words that sex is such an important compulsion for him. Fairchild has seemed to be a second rate novelist, a loafer and a critic. In the final scenes when he is overpowered by Mr. Talliaferro's continual requests for advice with the ladies, we begin to feel sorry for Fairchild. He has gotten himself into this circumstance, true, but he can really see no way out and that is depressing. Somehow, we expect better things from Fairchild but they never materialize. Hence, Faulkner's stock comic characters are more than just two dimensional puppets.

The thematic relevance of the final tall tale is in its moral concerning greed, and stupidity and the separation of word and deed. The American character is ripe for swindling since he so often wants quick profit at the expense of common sense and the tale demonstrates characters
acting in this way. Mrs. Maurier and Mr. Talliaferro are sad characters despite their extremely funny exteriors. They are not bad people and hence Faulkner does not brutally criticize them but rather treats them with gentle humor so that we can see how they are ridiculous but how they are commendable as well. Mr. Talliaferro has a genuine type of courage when he demands Jenny go with him in simple courtesy because they have a date. The scene also shows Jenny's faults, and one source of the humor of her character, in her refusal to be courteous to Mr. Talliaferro and the looseness of her standards shown when she picks up a more brutal man in the dancehall.

The Epilogue provides the real moral of the novel in that there we see the final actions or lack of actions of the characters. Mrs. Maurier and Mr. Talliaferro are the objects of sympathy rather than cruel laughter, while Jenny is the object of our scorn and disrespect. Fairchild is commendable in his story telling ability but criticized in the cruelty of his impoliteness with others. Major Ayers is totally laughable when he actually tries to sell his laxative salts, but also, he is a sorry man who is driven to such desperation. Gordon becomes less of a figure to admire and envy in his artistic talents when we see him doing the town with the other men although we commend him for attempting some action. In the end, the novel asks us not to be selfish at the cost of others and to look gently on these people who deserve consideration and sympathy. It also asks us to act and live rather than talk and think, with the complete circumstances of the story demonstrating this. The humor from the characters and situations helps us to see these people less critically than they might deserve,
adding relief and fun to scenes which might be full of tension and bitterness without it. The characteristics of courtesy, generosity, consideration, simplicity, honesty and helpfulness obvious in Mr. Talliaferro and Mrs. Maurier are a standard for behavior to be commended wherever or however humorously they occur. Gordon, in his fierce moody actions, is also to be commended since he acts and the others do not.

Of these three so-called apprentice novels, Sartoris is the best in its techniques, themes, and humor. The humor here, not as imitative as the comedy of manners in Mosquitoes, depends on many things. There are isolated passages such as the dissertation on the state of life and potentials of mules which depend for their humor on the style and word choice. There are Byron Snopes' antics in his wayward attempts to see and court Narcissa, and "the various interludes of comedy provided by a boy's blackmailing of Byron."78 But the major humor in Sartoris comes from the stock comic Negro characters, especially Simon, and the character of Aunt Jenny DePre providing relief and balance necessary to the theme. This relief comedy comes from the stock Negro characters while the character of Miss Jenny provides humor which is tied to the theme of the novel and mirrors Faulkner's own attitudes toward the South.

As if to set the tone of the novel, the very first pages give the comic picture of Simon, the Negro jack-of-all-trades in the Sartoris household, who has come to pick up Old Bayard at the bank. Simon's actions

and appearance are humorous: "Simon in a linen duster and an ancient top hat... With his race's fine feeling for potential theatrics he drew himself up and arranged the limp folds of the duster... he appeared to be bursting with something momentous and ill-contained (pp. 20-21)." Simon is the stock comic black man whose assumed finery sets him off from ordinary field hands; in the hierarchy of nigger servants, Simon is a "house nigger" not a "field nigger." In this position, Simon can comment on the affairs of the world and more particularly, the affairs of the Sartoris clan and become the judge of and the standard for the gentility of the Sartoris family. Simon wants to encourage the men to be gentlemen by riding in the carriage with the horses rather than storming around in young Bayard's motorcar. He says to the Negro driver of another car parked before the bank's hitching-block: "Don't block off no Sartoris carriage, black boy... Block off de commonality, ef you wants, but don't inter­volve no equipage waitin' on Cunnel er Miss Jenney (p. 37)." The dialect and the misuse of words are part of the humor, as well as the irony of the fact that Simon should be the only one to attempt to uphold the Sartoris reputation. On another occasion Simon comments that a carriage, not a motor car, is the proper way for a gentleman to travel. "Ridin' in dat thing, wid a gent'mun's proper equipage goin' ter rack en ruin in de barn... Aint Sartoris sot de quality in dis country since befo' de War? And now jes' look at 'um (pp. 103-104)." Simon is more than a stock comic Negro; he is judge and jury and standard bearer for the Sartoris. There are a few major incidents when Simon outdoes himself as a stock comic Negro, one of the best being when young Bayard takes Simon for a
ride in the fast car. The scene opens with Simon hoeing the garden when Bayard drives up and leaves the car's engine running. Bayard asks Simon to turn the engine off and attempts to describe the proper lever for Simon's benefit. "Naw, suh ... I ain't gwine tech it. I ain't gwine have it blowin' up in my face (p. 104)," says Simon. His fear of the machine and its speed and modernity is a typical characteristic of comic Negroes who always seem to be a little behind the time and fearful of and baffled by modern machinery. The only lever Simon can distinguish in the car is the large shift lever on the floor. Bayard is exasperated and comes to shut the engine off himself. Simon is knowingly dumb in this case not because he wants to get out of any particular work, but because he is afraid of the consequences, so Simon succeeds in getting the master to do the job himself rather than doing as ordered by that master. The opportunity to evade commands is always taken whenever offered by a stock comic black servant. The little interview is good preparation for the scene that follows since now Simon knows which lever turns the engine off and he makes comic use of that knowledge later.

Shortly, Bayard asks Simon if he would like to go for a ride in the car. At first Simon defers although he admits he does not think the car will purposefully hurt or attack him while Bayard tries to convince him to go.

He [Simon] allowed himself to be drawn gradually toward the car, gazing at its various members with slow, blinking speculation, now that it was about to become an actual quantity in his life. At the door and with one foot raised to the running-board, he made a final stand against the subtle powers of evil judgment. "You ain't gwine run it th'ough de bushes like you en Isom done dat day, is you?" (p. 105)
Simon's characteristic of fear is ironically overcome by his other stock characteristic of curiosity. Simon gets in and they start off, Simon clutching the door handle and his shirt which we find later at the conclusion of the scene, hides his good luck charm, a mangy rabbit's foot, hanging around his neck. Again, the stock characteristic of fear and belief in charms provides us with some of the humor of the situation. When Simon's hat almost blows off in the wind, he decides that he has gone far enough and wants out, but Bayard does not stop and Simon keeps almost losing his hat until he jams it under his arm. "I got to weed dat bed dis mawnin'" he says. This is the first and last time we ever hear Simon volunteering for any chores; normally, he exhibits the stock characteristic of laziness but faced with this wild ride, Simon would rather be safely at work than careening the highways. When Bayard will not stop, Simon becomes a statue frozen with fear until his eyes are bloodshot from the wind in them. Then, he kneels on the floor of the car in some misguided attempt to protect himself or avoid his fate.

The wagon was moving drowsily and peacefully along the road. It was drawn by two mules and was filled with Negro women asleep in chairs. Some of them wore drawers. The mules themselves didn't wake at all, but ambled sedately on with the empty wagon and the overturned chairs, even when the car crashed into the shallow ditch and surged back on to the road again and thundered on without slowing. (p. 106)

The contrast between the slow motion of the mules with the wild speed of the car is one source of the humor of the scene as is the contrast between Bayard and the unblinking attitude of the mules and the obvious fear of Simon's attitude. Now, Simon attempts to shut off the car's engine by turning the ignition lever while Bayard attempts to drive and Simon himself cowers on the floor. The car stops and Simon gets out but
Bayard turns the car and attempts to lure Simon back into the car with promises that he will drive slower. The tension and humor of the scene are partially resolved but Faulkner's technique demands a further turn to the events. As Simon is walking home and thanking his stars and cherishing his rabbit's foot, "The wagon emerged from the dust, the mules now at a high, flow-eared trot, and jingled past him, leaving behind it upon the dusty, insect-rasped air a woman's voice in a quavering wordless hysteria (p. 107)." The return of the remains of the devastation heightens the humor of the scene as the wail of the woman echoes the mental wail of Simon and the laughing one of the audience.

The scene is important to the theme and interpretation of the novel. We see young Bayard acting just as the family expects after four generations, wild, free, probably guilt ridden, and needing to test his own courage to impress others. Bayard succumbs to the temptation to show off when he invites Simon for the ride and acts true to character when he drives wildly and scares what little wits Simon has out of him. The fact that Bayard has the car at all allows the interpretation of the novel along the modern age versus the olden days. We see the effects machinery has on the aristocratic Sartorises and we are not sure those effects are good. Aunt Jenny says that her brothers did more with horses in their war than young Bayard and his twin John have done in theirs. the differences in times and the commentary on them being important to an understanding of the novel. In the above humorous scene we see Simon acting the part of the stock fearful comic Negro, but also representing a way of life and a style of living and serving which is rapidly and
lamentably disappearing from the modern age. Simon is certainly the stock comic Negro but that is not all he is. He comments on the times and becomes almost a voice for Faulkner occasionally, especially when Simon says that the Sartoris's carriage is going to rack and ruin since he means that the family is going that way as well. Simon is endowed with the privilege of judging the family and the times and becomes a sort of spokesman and standard bearer; therefore, he is more important and rounded out than we'd expect a stock humorous nigger to be. Simon reflects Faulkner's judgment on the way of the world and is therefore more necessary to the plot and theme. Simon is not just a character for comic relief; although he gives us that, he is carefully tied to the theme as well and therefore transcends his function as a comic relief.

The other most important comic scene with Simon is the one concerning the money from Simon's church where the description of the scene itself is comic.

... preceded by Simon, the deputation came solemnly around the corner of the house from the rear. It consisted of six Negroes in a catholic variety of Sunday rainent and it was headed by a huge, bull-necked Negro in a hind-side-before collar and a Prince Albert coat, with an orotund air and a wild, compelling eye. (p. 220)

The stock comic Negro figure is apparent in the description of the men's attitude and their strange apparel. Simon joins Miss Jenny and old Bayard on the veranda "leaving no doubt in any one's mind as to which side he considered himself aligned with." At first, they could not tell who was out there, but then one of the men bows regally to Miss Jenny. These introductions provide some humor and show the deputation acting true to the comic Negro stereotype by deferring to the masters. Simon announces
that the men have come for "dat money you promised 'um" which interests Miss Jenny and enrages old Bayard. Miss Jenny asks for an explanation but doesn't get it since Simon and old Bayard argue whether or not Bayard ever promised to repay the money Simon seems to owe. In a burst of creativity, Simon says, "Why Cunnel. You said it jes' ex plain. You jes' forgot erbout it. I kin prove it by Miss Jenny you tole me-- (p. 221)."

Miss Jenny interrupts to announce that this is the first she has heard about any debts and so Simon's witness is discredited. The reader remembers an earlier request for financial aid from Simon and recalls that old Bayard denied he would pay Simon's debt and that they could put Simon in jail if they wanted. Bayard reiterates these sentiments now, exclaiming that he told Simon that if the niggers worried him about the money, Bayard would skin Simon alive. Bayard's responses are now almost stock humorous responses. Knowing his attitude and Simon's desires, we wonder how events will be resolved. Simon is surprisingly creative in his response saying that he "ain't gwine let 'um worry you . . . Dat's whut I'm fixin' now. You jes' give 'um dey money, en me en you kin fix it up later." We laugh at Simon's maneuvering but Bayard is further enraged and we know that the scene will get better before it is resolved.

Simon claims that somebody has to pay the niggers their money and Miss Jenny agrees but says she is not to be the one. Since Simon has already announced that he has no money, we begin to realize that the Colonel will pay the money but we are interested in how Simon will get him to agree to do so. Simon makes his plea.

"Ef somebody don't quiet 'um down, dey'll put me in de jail. And den whut'll y'all do. widout nobody to keep dem hosses fed en clean, en to clean de house en wait on de table? Co'se I don't
mine gwine to jail, even ef dem stone flo's ain't gwine do my mis'ry no good." And he drew a long and affecting picture, of high, grail-like principles and of patient abnegation. (p. 221)

Bayard has melted with the plea that Simon is indispensable and ailing so it becomes Bayard's duty to support Simon and care for him in his old age and misery. The direct reversal of roles between the two men provides for much of the humor here. When Bayard asks how much the debt is, there is opportunity for further humor in the shuffling and whisperings of the group. Before they can announce the amount, one man must announce that they will now announce the amount and the preparation is extended humorously. When the announcement comes no one can hear or understand the amount and so it must be repeated, further adding to the tension and humor of the scene. Bayard goes into the house to get the money and Miss Jenny wants to know, as the audience does, what Simon did with the money. All Simon admits is that he put it out and that he fixed it with the Colonel. Only much later do we learn that Simon leant that money to Meloney, Belle Mitchell's serving girl, for a beauty shop. This interlude serves to heighten the humor because Bayard returns with a check and gives it to the niggers and we expect the scene to be concluded. Instead, it is complicated by the fact that the minister makes an elaborate announcement that Simon is now reinstated in good graces in the church. Again, when we expect the scene to be concluded, it is really complicated. The delegation returns because Bayard forgot the forty cents on the amount, so we laugh while Bayard screams with annoyance. Bayard demands that Simon give them at least the forty cents of the debt but, as expected, Simon denies that he has any money. Miss Jenny chimes in that he should have fifty cents
change from the shoes from the previous day, and so he does. But Simon refuses to part with his shiny half dollar until he has his change in his hand as well. The argument reverts to the question of what Simon did with the money and Miss Jenny leaves as the scene is concluded.

Again, Simon serves in two important ways in this scene of comic relief. First, he is the stock comic Negro who is reluctant to admit any personal mistakes, who tries to blame others for his own folly, who tries to shift the buck from himself, and who whines and cajoles his master into doing what he wants instead of the other way around. The role reversal of old Bayard and Simon accounts for much of the scene's humor. Simon's character and actions alone result in more of the humor. But Simon is also a standard of action and behavior held up as a model in the novel. Here, we see Simon acting righteously in desiring to pay his debts as a good American must. He also acts as a good servant, deferring to his master. Miss Jenny seems to encourage Simon in getting the best of old Bayard and she seems to enjoy the prospect which goads Bayard but helps Simon. In the scene, Simon is a standard of righteousness which modern men do not value as much as they used to. The implied criticism of Bayard comes from Simon's antics and gives thematic interpretation as well as comic relief.

In this scene with the money, Miss Jenny acts true to her comic character as well. As mentioned, she goads Simon into arguments which make it impossible for Bayard to renge. Her attitude causes Bayard embarrassment but gives Simon and the reader pleasure. Even Miss Jenny enjoys seeing old Bayard bested for a change in much the same way she enjoys
seeing all the men's bombastic grave stone inscriptions and being happy that they will not be able to eulogize her. Dorothy Tuck comments on Miss Jenny.

Although Colonel John Sartoris embodies the swashbuckling and the glory of the Sartoris tradition, it is Miss Jenny who represents all that is most genuinely valuable. Strong, sensible, and eminently capable, she is able to reflect the best qualities of bygone days without living in the past or letting the past dominate the present.79

Like Simon, Miss Jenny is a kind of standard by which all the rest of the characters and especially the Sartorises, can be judged. Miss Jenny embodies all the good qualities of Southern women Faulkner revered in his own Southern women supporting all the men in all their schemes and caring for them when they have returned from battle with the world in all its forms.

In one of the first comic scenes with Miss Jenny, we see her making old Bayard remove his wet boots and socks. She does so far as to stoop and feel his socks, because, like a little child, he does not want her to know they are wet. Throughout, Miss Jenny cares for the men especially young Bayard when he breaks his ribs when his car goes into the river. Miss Jenny comforts Narcissa when Bayard leaves her with child for more active, reckless pursuits. In a way, Miss Jenny is a paragon of consideration and affection and is a model for activity integrally tied to the theme of the novel. She is one of the Sartorises but only an adopted kind of one and so can retain her dignity and her sense despite the world's stupidity surrounding her. Throughout the novel, the humor of Miss Jenny's

79Tuck, p. 20.
character comes from the retorts and quips she gives to everyone. At Belle Mitchell's party Miss Jenny quips that "the war just gave John a good excuse to get himself killed (p. 41)" and tells risque stories which "she repeated . . . anywhere and at any time, choosing the wrong moment and the wrong audience with a cold and cheerful audacity (p. 41)." She announces that she is going home because "I think we are all tired of your party. I know I am." However, her scandalous behavior does not insult anyone but is credited as frankness or honesty or sincerity. Later, on her way home from the party, Simon tells Miss Jenny that he thinks young Bayard has returned, thereby enraging her especially since no one has seen the boy. Simon says that maybe young Bayard went to the cemetery and Miss Jenny replies that "no Sartoris ever goes to the cemetery but once (p. 43)." The line, characteristic of Miss Jenny, is funny in itself but is also laden with thematic significance.

Miss Jenny is not a stock comic character except in her attribute of quick retorts; she is a three-dimensional woman whom we come to respect and appreciate. Unlike Simon, there are few extended scenes where she acts in a humorous way. Throughout she is humorous because of her tone and because she is the person she is. Walter K. Everett analyzes the success of Miss Jenny's character.

Faulkner seems to applaud Miss Jenny as a representative of the strongwilled women left in the South after the Civil War, women faced with the problem of strengthening and supporting men disheartened by a cruel war, women for whom will became a powerful tool for implementing order and meaning in a disrupted society. But these women were too often retrospective and sentimental. To compensate these tendencies in Miss Jenny, Faulkner has endowed her with a willingness to accept some aspects of the new and has
given her a comic position as a sharp-witted, sharp-tongued commentator. 80

We can see Miss Jenny's strong will, strength, and support in many incidents throughout the novel, but especially when she cares for young Bayard and when she comforts Narcissa late in the novel. Her comfort for Narcissa is a little consolation, however because Aunt Jenny contends that it will not matter that the child has been named Benbow; the name will not change the character. In that scene, Miss Jenny shows us both her humorous elements in her comments and her thematic relevance in the implications of those comments.

There is only one extended incident with Miss Jenny that is consistently humorous and that is her treatment of old Bayard's wen. The first time Miss Jenny notices the wen she uses it to break up a touchy situation. She had been riding with young Bayard in the car and old Bayard has found out that they were going forty miles an hour. "Forty fiddlesticks... It was fifty-four. I was watching the--what do you call it, Bayard?--speedometer (p. 81)." Old Bayard is upset and wants to reprimand the both of them but instead, Miss Jenny shifts the questioning and asks him what he has on his cheek. Bayard's reaction is amusing: "he rose so suddenly that his chair tipped over backward with a crash, and he tramped blindly from the room." Miss Jenny succeeds in thwarting Bayard's desires concerning the wen on a number of further occasions. Later they have another conversation about whether young Bayard would drive any slower if either she or old Bayard accompanied the boy. Miss Jenny says not,

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but old Bayard seems to want her to go riding. Again, she shifts the emphasis of the scene and adds to the humor of it by announcing "I'm coming down town in the morning and we're going and have the doctor look at that bump on your face, you hear?" The necessary consequence of this announcement is that they do go to town and they are about to have Doctor Alford remove the growth. Their entrance to Dr. Alford's office provided humor in the shenanigans of his young secretary and now the humor is increased with the entrance of Dr. Peabody, the eighty-seven year old, three hundred and ten pound town figure. Peabody storms in wanting to know if there is anything wrong. His analysis of the wen is that it should be left alone thereby providing some humorous lines. "Ten A.M.'s mighty early in the day to start carvin' white folks . . . Nigger's different. Chop up a nigger any time after midnight (p. 92)." Still later he says that old Bayard would "be about as well off dead, anyhow. I don't know anybody that gets less fun out of living than you do (p. 93)." Miss Jenny says that she does not think the growth is any thing but a wart but that she is tired of looking at it!

Eventually, Dr. Alford, Miss Jenny and old Bayard go to a specialist. Dr. Alford cannot get in to see the specialist at first and plummeted in Miss Jenny's opinion. When the specialist arrives, he seems to think that the patient is a female and that she should be undressed as Dr. Alford tries to clarify but has no success. There is some silly discussion about how busy the specialist is and about how none of them have had lunch yet. Finally, the specialist notices the black salve on old Bayard's face.
"What's that on your face?" he demanded, jerking his hand forth and touching the blackened excrescence. When he did so the thing came off in his fingers, leaving on old Bayard's withered but unblemished cheek a round spot of skin rosy and fair as any baby's. (p. 198)

The abrupt solution to the silly situation is amusing, but again it gets better before it is all over. Old Bayard discovers that this is the exact day on which old man Will Falls prophesied that the growth would fall off, so there is humor in the shift of expectations: where we expect the specialist to be credited with the cure we find that it is really Will Fall's ancient and mysterious salve which did the trick. To make it even better, "three weeks later they got a bill from the specialist for fifty dollars."

The humor is heightened and Miss Jenny must have a retort. "Now I know why he's so well known (p. 198)" she announces. Throughout the absurd circumstances, old Bayard is stubbornly a Sartoris while Miss Jenny is the strong-willed old lady who gets her way and controls her men despite all obstacles.

There are also a few minor sources of stock Negro humor in the novel, most of which come from Simon's family. Simon's daughter Elnora croons when she works and thereby provides us with some funny lyrics and a prefiguring of Uilsey in The Sound and the Fury.

Sinner riz fum de moaner's bench,  
Sinner jump to de penance bench,  
When de preacher ax 'im whut de reason why,  
Say, "Preacher got de women jes' de same es I."

    Oh, Lawd, oh, Lawd!  
Dat's whut de matter wid de church today. (p. 36)

The song, and all the other Negro dialect, is written like it sounds so the reader gets a fuller flavor of the characters and their speech. The lines of the song also characterize the stock Negro comic character in
the belief in grief and penance and the fear of the Lord, attributes which
Northern or white or modern audiences find amusing in Southern, black char-
acters. Yet, for all its humor, the song is a commentary for all times
from Faulkner concerning the state of the church. The trouble with the
church, and thereby with the world, is that the concerns of the church
and of the preachers are unseemly, worldly instead of spiritual. The
song is a suggestion to all readers and a humorous type of warning as
well as an indirect statement of the theme of the novel: what is wrong
with the world are the concerns of flesh and self placed over those of
spirit and community.

Caspey, Simon's son, returns from the war and provides some stock
Negro humor through his characteristics of the braggard soldier. He tells
elaborate stories about his prowess in combat and with women. Faulkner
comments on Caspey; "Caspey returned to his native land a total loss,
sociologically speaking, with a definite disinclination toward labor,
honest or otherwise, and two honorable wounds incurred in a razor-hedged
crap game (p. 64)." Caspey is characteristically lazy and proud; he brags
about his past medals when incongruously they were gained in a crap game
instead of in combat. Even at war, Caspey is displaying the same traits
he displayed at home only in war he gained some wayward recognition for
his actions. Now, Caspey is determined not to serve the white man any
longer because he believes it was the black men of the war who saved the
day for the white men. "I don't take nothin' fum no white folks no mo'
... War done changed all dat. If us culled folks is good enough ter
save France fum de Germans, den us is good enough ter have de same rights
de Germans is (p. 65).” Caspey has gone to war and has gained some class. The use to which he attempts to put it, however, only gets him into further trouble. Caspey is driven back to work by Simon but usually is successful in evading any kind of labor. Miss Jenny has a few good comments to and about Caspey first giving him one day in which he needn't work to recover from the war. Then, she says, "who was the fool anyway, who thought of putting niggers into the same uniform with white men (p. 68)?" The line is nicely ironic in light of Caspey's earlier bragging and Miss Jenny's handling of her servants.

The uniform that Caspey has brought home from the war provides much humor when it is on Isom's body. When Miss Jenny calls him to do garden work, he makes a grand entrance.

He now wore khaki, with a divisional emblem on the shoulder and a tarnished service stripe on his cuff. His lean sixteen-year-old neck rose from the slovenly collar's limp, overlarge embrace and a surprising amount of wrist was visible below the cuffs. The breeches bagged hopelessly into the unskilled wrapping of the putties which, with either a fine sense for the unique or a bland disregard of military usage, he had donned prior to his shoes, and the soiled overseas cap came down regrettably on his bullet head. (p. 58)

The difference between the size of the body and the size of the uniform is one source of the fun as are his antics in playing soldier on guard duty with the garden hoe. His expression is one of "rapt absorption (p. 61)," but his military bearing fades when Miss Jenny calls him, saying that this is the first time in his life he has picked up a garden tool of his own free will and that "if you want to play soldier, you go off somewhere with Bayard and do it. I can raise flowers without any help from the army." Again, the situation and Miss Jenny's comments provide
not only for the humor of the scene but also for the thematic relevance of it: the war is not always as devastating as it is made out to be.

When young Bayard turns his car over in the river and breaks his ribs, the situation of his rescue provides humor from stock comic Negroes. John Henry and his father at first think a tree fell, or something like that, because of the crashing noises. When they arrive on the scene, they see the car turned over with its wheels spinning and its engine running. John Henry exclaims that he can see Bayard under the car; "I kin see his feet stickin' out (p. 172)." The father is dubious about going near the car since he, like Simon, is afraid it will blow up, but the boy is charitably motivated and wants to try to get Bayard out. "Don't you tech 'im. White folks be sayin' we done it. We gwine wait right here 'twell some white man comes erlont," says the father. The lines themselves are funny and the attitudes they indicate are also amusing and those usually displayed by stock comic Negroes. Fortunately, Bayard's head is above water all this time and so there is hope for him. The Henrys retrieve Bayard's body, they realize his identity, and the boy asks if Bayard is dead.

"Co' se he is," the elder answered pettishly. "Atter dat otto'bile jumped offen dat bridge wid 'im en den trompled 'im in de creek? Whut you reckon he is ef he ain't daid? and whut you gwine say when de law axes you how come you de onliest one dat foun' 'im daid? Tell me dat." "Tell 'um you holp me." (p. 173)

The comments are funny in the attitudes toward white men which they portray, and the boy's retort adds to the stock humor. At this point there is a resolution and we expect someone to come along or them to take Bayard home. Instead, they exclaim humorously over the weak sounds that Bayard begins to make in his pain. The boy asks his father to drive slowly so
that Bayard's pain will be eased but the father retorts that he was not
the one who drove the automobile off the bridge and that he's got to get
on to town and home. The attitude is grudgingly funny because where we'd
expect sympathy for Bayard, the nigger is unconcerned. Ironically, Bayard
does not deserve sympathy and the nigger's attitude is a good one for
Bayard. The scene, besides being stock comic relief, allows the reader
to see how the Sartoris are viewed by some of the town's people and some
of the Negroes at that.

These two sources of humor in Sartoris, the stock comic Negroes and
the character of Aunt Jenny, reflect two types of themes in the novel and
Faulkner's attitude toward this place and these people, the first in the
Yoknapatawpha cycle. The comic Negroes are linked to the theme concerning
the separation of word and deed to be prevalent in much of Faulkner. The
niggers are always telling stories that are greatly exaggerated or even
outright lies giving the audience a chuckle as well as impressing on them
the awareness of that separation between word and deed. Caspey plays the
wounded hero when his wounds were won in a personal war of the crap game
rather than in a universal glorified war. Simon appears lazy and fearful
but he is the keeper of the Sartoris standards. Ironically, Simon is en-
chanted with a silly little serving girl who wants to open her own beauty
shop in a fit of ambition despite the fact Belle says there is no one but
two or three to patronize the shop. John Henry and his father complain
and criticize the Sartoris but, nonetheless, act in their behalf. Through-
out, the Negroes say one thing and act some other way, thereby emphasizing
that theme and providing stock humor.
Aunt Jenny's character is humorous in itself, especially in her attitudes toward and treatment of the Bayard men. But Jenny also represents the theme of the decay of a fine family because of the onslaught of modernity and the true strength and stability of character that Faulkner appreciated about his South. Jenny is a truly good and courageous woman saddled with silly and pompous menfolk and Faulkner has sympathy and commendation for her and women like her. Jenny is in contrast to the men and in contrast to the times. She is sensible and strong, and because she can be effectively so despite the times, there is hope. The world and the South would not be half bad if there were more women like Aunt Jenny around to run and control and cajole the foolishness of men. Jenny is a Sartoris and therefore upholds the tradition of the family but she also tries to thwart the extreme foolishness of that tradition. Jenny stands for what is good and commendable about the Sartorises and the South.

Critical comments concerning the humor of these early novels are not prevalent. Usually, critics admit the humor is there but as usually consider it a digression from the real themes of the works. All admit that the tales of Fairchild in Mosquitoes are funny but most claim that they were only an excuse for Faulkner to stretch those artistic muscles in imitation of Mark Twain. Michael Millgate says that Sartoris' "special richness derives . . . from its humours although this is too much on one level and often rather facile in its reliance on the comic Negro."81

Mr. Hillgate is right in saying that a predominant part of the humor comes from the stock negro characters but I do not think he is especially right in saying that reliance is facile. The need for the characters is integral to the theme of the separation of word and deed in much of Faulkner. That theme appears here in an early form and comes to fruition only later in novels such as As I Lay Dying where Addie says that words are no good and that only actions count. In Sartoris, the same holds true where the boys act often and foolishly despite requests and commands to the opposite. Their actions provide much of the theme of the novel while the actions of the Negroes in the novel also provide standards for behavior as well as stock humor. Although Jenny and Simon say and do funny things, the qualities they embody are qualities which Faulkner found commendable in all of the world and in the South especially. They are qualities Faulkner wants his reader to appreciate and possibly acquire.
CHAPTER IV

THE SOUND AND THE FURY

Like the humor of Faulkner's previous early works, the humor of The Sound and the Fury is basically stock humor which comes from the characters and some of the situations. Unlike the earlier works, however, the humor of The Sound and the Fury is more subtle and ironic, and in Jason's case bitter. There are three predominant sources of humor of The Sound and the Fury: the Negro characters, especially Dilsey and her grandson Luster where the humor is basically of stock characters and one-line retorts, the character and the actions of Jason, and the generally ironic tone throughout, especially in the section with Quentin and the character of Mrs. Compson.

Dilsey is the epitome of a stock Negro mammy, turban and all. In the appendix we see Dilsey quite old and almost sightless but, much as Tiresias, able to intuit motivations and reactions of others around her. We know only a little of how she looks, but she is dressed in clean gingham and a turban. Throughout the novel, we do not know what she physically looks like because the points of view of Benjy, Quentin and Jason do not bother to describe Dilsey for the audience. But when we finally see Dilsey from external eyes in the first paragraphs of the last section, even her
description is amusing and fulfills the characteristics of appearance of a stock Negro mammy.

She wore a stiff black straw hat perched upon her turban, and a maroon velvet cape with a border of mangy and anonymous fur above a dress of purple silk. . . . The gown fell gauntly from her shoulders, across her fallen breasts, then tightened upon her paunch and fell again, ballooning a little above the nether garments which she would remove layer by layer as the spring accomplished and the warm days . . . She had been a big woman once but now her skeleton rose, draped loosely in unpadded skin that tightened again upon a paunch almost dropsical . . . and above that the collapsed face that gave the impression of the bones themselves being outside the flesh. (pp 281-282)

On first reading, we are struck by the physicalness of the description, the turban, the cape and the hanging purple dress, exactly the accouterments we would expect a stock Negro mammy to wear. Dilsey is only missing her apron which seems to be a part of her, but that appears as well in the next description when Dilsey again goes forth, this time dressed for the rain. Here, we are also struck by the physicalness of the results of a life of service devoted to the Compsons so the first comic impression of Dilsey is subtly shifted until we realize that she may be funny in appearance, but she is also terribly important and necessary in the Compson family and history. Immediately we realize that although Dilsey may look and act like a stock comic Negro mammy, she is also endowed with a symbolic and thematic importance in the novel. Dilsey emerges once more to brave the rain: "This time in a man's felt hat and an army overcoat, beneath the frayed skirts of which her blue gingham dress fell in uneven balloonings (p. 282)." The difference in her apparel is funny because it only accentuates the absurdity of her costume, the borrowed uniform of her son, pointing to his stock character and emphasizing hers.
Besides being described as physically amusing in a stock comic way, Dilsey's physical actions around the house are also amusing and further place her as a stock Negro mammy. That Easter Sunday morning Dilsey is attempting to prepare the breakfast; "she sang, to herself at first, something without particular tune or words, repetitive, mournful and plaintive, austere (p. 286)." This crooning is a characteristic of stock Negro characters and especially nurses and mammys when they rock and comfort children. In this case, the crooning might lull the entire household but for the fact that the other people won't let it. As the fire warms the kitchen, Dilsey's singing becomes louder "as if her voice too had been thawed out by the growing warmth." We recall the characteristic appreciation for music and inherent knowledge of rhythm also characteristic of stock Negro characters. In the scene, Mrs. Compson calls for Dilsey and we have the further description of Dilsey's toiling painfully up the stairs. "Mrs. Compson stood watching her as she mounted, steadying herself against the wall with one hand, holding her skirts up with the other (p. 287)."

Dilsey descends in the same manner and then must return up the stairs once again. The fact that she goes up and down the stairs so many times despite the fact that she is so slow and her progress is so halting makes her seem like a puppet on a string and the similarity causes a sad laugh. Dilsey has an inherent sense of time despite what clocks say. None of the several clocks in the house tell the correct time or chime the right hour, although Dilsey knows the time: eight o'clock when the clock strikes five
times, so she appears eccentric or whimsical when she can announce the
time despite the clock. That eccentricity is another stock comic charac-
teristic and further places her as a stock Negro mammy.

There is another incident in which we see Dilsey reacting as a stock
comic Negro mammy. When Caddy has put on perfume to attract the boys and
to signal her growing sexuality, Benjy smells it and begins howling be-
cause Caddy no longer smells like trees, no longer smells like her
innocent and loving self. When Caddy realizes that this is what is both-
ering Benjy, she washes off the perfume and vows not to use it again giving
the perfume into Benjy's hand to give to Dilsey as a gift. "'Well I'll
declare,' Dilsey said, 'If my baby aint give Dilsey a bottle of perfume.
Just look here, Roskus' (pp. 61-62)." Dilsey takes the perfume and is
pleased with the gift, unaware of the motivations behind the presentation.
Dilsey's resulting attitude is grateful, happy and proud; she shows the
gift to Roskus showing how simple things make simple people happy. We see
Dilsey reacting to the gift in the stock comic way which is also ironically
comic that the gift should be perfume. Caddy is discarding it temporarily
and its link with sexuality while Dilsey is accepting it and reinforcing
her mothering instincts. Whether or not Dilsey will wear the perfume will
be immaterial because the gift has been tendered and accepted; it is ir-
resistable in a woman of any type but particularly so for a stock Negro
mammy who envisions herself as quite a grand lady rather than the plain,
stolid woman she is.
In addition, Dilsey speaks some stock comic lines which add to her characteristics as a stock figure. When Mrs. Compson is badgering for attention, Dilsey claims "she ought to know by this time I aint got no wings (p. 50)." The line is entirely amusing but is also ironic because in a way, Dilsey does have symbolic wings since she is quite an angel in the household. In the major incident with Caddy and her muddied drawers in the tree, Dilsey calls Caddy "You, Satan (p. 64)." The name is appropriate, but only in a way; it is a beautiful demonstration not only of Dilsey's sense of humor, but also of her perceptiveness in analyzing the children, especially Caddy. When Luster taunts Benjy by taking his graveyard flowers away to where Benjy can't seen them, Benjy wails and Dilsey comes to his rescue. "Is you been projecking with his graveyard (p. 74)," Dilsey remarks. The line is funny because of the misuse of the word "projecking" and because we cannot decide what the word is that Dilsey really wants; none we can think of really fit the bill or the construction of the sentence. It does not matter though, because we get the meaning of the sentence despite the misused word and that increases the humor of the line. When Benjy's name is changed and Dilsey discovers this, she exclaims, "He aint wore out the name he was born with yet, is he (p. 77)." The remark is funny because of the implication that a name can be worn out. Dilsey continues to say that "my name been Dilsey since fore I could remember and it be Dilsey when they's long forgot me." The sentiment is laudatory but the expression of it is amusing, and Caddy is clever enough to catch the fault in the logic when she asks how anyone will know Dilsey's
name when it is long forgotten. Dilsey responds with characteristic faith that because her name is written in the family Bible, it will never be forgotten, and she will not even have to be able to read it because others can and "All I got to do is say Ise here." This line of semi-religious logic appears later when Dilsey chides Luster who has lost his quarter and can't go to the carnival show and is strongly lamenting the fact. "Ef I jes had a quarter," Luster says; "I could go to dat show." "En ef you had wings you could fly to heaven (p. 271)," Dilsey answers. In one sense, the humor of the line depends on the fact that the result of the if clause might itself be funny: Luster flying with wings, while the rest of the humor of the line comes from the total absurdity of the possibility. Finally, it is also humorous because of the Negro dialect, another characteristic of stock Negro comic characters. In another situation, Dilsey tells Luster that he is "bound fer de chain gang, but I'll send you dar fo even chain gang ready fer you (p 334)." The logic of the threat is particularly stock Negro because of the preponderance of black chain gangs and the assumption that Luster is a stock riotous black who will one day end up unjustifiably on the chain gang. At that time, the chain gang will not be ready for him because they will not know the terror they will be getting. The imagined sight is funny but Dilsey's line that she will get him there sooner increases the humor.

Other similar humorous retorts or comments come from a variety of sources. When Dammudy dies, the Compson children do not seem to know what a funeral is but Frony tells them that a funeral is "where they moans . . ."
They moaned two days on Sis Beulah Clay (p. 52)." The definition is particularly Negro and therefore humorous to the audience especially in the narrowness of the definition because what Frony said is true but only a small part of the business. Caddy then claims that white folks do not have funerals and again, Frony replies humorously. "I like to know why not . . . White folks dies too. Your grandmammy dead as any nigger can git, I reckon." Several things are going on here since Frony speaks the truth in many facets. First she asserts that white people die, a fact which is true and unhumorous but which becomes funny because of the extremity of the situation which demands voicing such a truth. Frony also announces that Dammudy is dead but her attitude indicates no sorrow on her part; she seems almost superior in her knowledge and the privilege of making her announcement so her characteristics are those of the stock comic Negro desiring to get the best of his white companion. Caddy again has a funny retort: "Dogs are dead." Somehow, Caddy and the children, especially Jason, refuse to admit the fact of the death; even Benjy rebels against its smell with his wailing. Caddy's comment further degrades Damuddy and makes her like an animal, a dead dog which is funny because of the incongruity of the elements. The entire scene is slightly funny in the childish misconceptions it demonstrates.

Another incident on the same occasion provides more humor from the misconceptions of the children who are outside and see lights in the window where Dammudy is laid out. Caddy remarks this and says the next window "is where we have the measles (p. 57)." The difference between
death and the measles causes a smile from the audience increased by the seriousness with which the children react. Caddy asks "Where do you and T.P. have the measles, Frony." The question itself is funny because of Caddy's desire to know the room or location in a house rather than the disease's location on the body. The literalness of Frony's reply increases the humor. "Has them just wherever we is, I reckon." Frony's reply is almost more sensible than Caddy's question. When Caddy says that they have not started yet, the humor is further increased because of the opportunity for confusion. At first, we think she means the measles and this is enforced by Frony's earlier statement indicating that she has little idea what measles are all about or where they occur. Then, we realize that Caddy means that the adults have not started their activity, which she thinks to be a party. Instead, it is a funeral and the audience is allowed a chuckle because of the split between a party and a funeral and the misconception of the children.

In Quentin's section, when he reflects on the past, what begins as an unorganized rambling of thoughts ends as a humorous story concerning the nigger Louis Hatcher and his seldom cleaned lantern. The last time Louis cleaned the lantern was the night of a large flood because he thought he might need it. This sounds sensible until we later find that the flood was "way up in Pennsylvanie . . . [and] it couldn't even have got down this far (p. 133)." Louis' retort is classically funny: "Watter kin git des ez high en wet in Jefferson ez hit kin in Pennsylvaney, I reckon. Hit's de folks dat says de high watter cant git dis fur dat comes floatin out on
de ridge-pole, too." Louis is right but we still laugh at him. He is funny because of the absurdity of the statement and because of his belief that because the water is high in Pennsylvania it will get as high in Jefferson. He is also right in saying that truism about those who are most unconcerned being the victims but this leads to the further laughter from the picture of people "floatin out on de ridge-pole." The visual elements of the scene lead to some of its humor despite the superficial soundness of the statement which echos the type of proverbs we come to expect from stock comic Negroes. The humor is intensified when we realize that Louis will not clean the lantern until the threat of another flood because he believes it was the clean lantern that "dep us outen dat un." Quentin disbelieves him but Louis say "you do you way en I do mine. Ef all I got to do to keep outen de high watter is to clean dis yere lantun, I wont quoil wid no man." The proverbial nature of the statement complements the content of the statement and leaves the audience laughing.

When Jason is complaining about how slowly the nigger assistant to Earl gets the machinery put together, the man replies with some stock comic lines and Negro attitudes. Old Job is "uncrating them, [the cultivators] at the rate of about three bolts to the hour (p. 207)" which en-rages Jason who remarks that Job should be working for him since "every other no-count nigger in town eats in my kitchen." Job remarks about how much he works and exclaims that "aint nobody works much in dis country cep de boll-weevil, noways." The statement itself is funny in the likening
of men and insects and interesting because of the attitude toward work. It is almost as if Faulkner instead of Job was remarking about the South. Jason continues that if the boll-weevils waited for Job to get the cultivators together they would work themselves "to death before they'd be ready to prevent you," and Louis' retort is beautiful. "'Dat's de troof,' he says. 'Boll-weevil got tough time. Work ev'y day in de week out in de hot sun, rain er shine. Aint got no front porch to set on en watch de wattermilyuns growin and Sat'dy dont mean nothin a-tall to him.'" The lines themselves, the picture they conjure in the reader's mind, the dialect, and the attitude toward work and leisure are elements of the humor. Finally, the characteristic of Negroes liking watermelons is played up to the point where we see a man on his porch just watching them grow and coveting their taste so the comparison of men and the insects provides the silly but funny picture of a boll-weevil watching watermelons grow. Job continues in this humorous vein when he realizes later that the carnival must pay for the privilege of performing in the town. Job remarks that he wants to see that show so badly that he would be willing to pay ten dollars for it: "I's pay ten dollars to see dat man pick dat saw, ef I had to. I figures dat tomorrow mawnin I be still owin um nine dollars and six bits at dat rate (p. 248)." Jason uses the opportunity to comment about letting the niggers get ahead, and Job says that he does not begrudge the carnival men their money because he can afford his quarter. The humor arises from Jason's being characteristically infuriated, Job's being characteristically calm, and the conflict of the circumstances remaining
unresolved. Jason cannot win the argument and Job doesn't get riled so the two together provide the audience with some laughter.

Most of this stock humor from the Negro characters comes from single line retorts such as those just mentioned. However, there are a few brief incidents where the actions and conflicts themselves are humorous in a stock comic Negro way. One important incident is when Dilsey cries at the Easter sermon of the guest reverend from St. Louis. The humor comes firstly from the description of the tears that course their way down the profusely lined visage of Dilsey. More humor comes from the way Frony tries to chide her mother into acting dignified and wiping her tears on the way home. "'Whyn't you quit dat, mammy?' Frony said, 'Wid all dese people lookin. We be passin white folks soon.' (p. 313)." The line is funny because it indicates the concern with appearance, especially appearances in front of white people, that is a characteristic of the stock Negro and because of the dialect. The scene continues to be funny because of the mysteriousness of the replies Dilsey gives Frony and because Frony cannot understand what her mother has said or what has gotten into her.

Throughout the day, Luster's continual taunting of Benjy results in humorous scenes. Luster takes Benjy's flowers away and when Dilsey perceptively realizes this and accuses Luster, Luster denies it. Luster always resorts to a guise of innocence whenever he is accused of anything and the picture of assumed innocence is funny. We can see his dirty child's face, with big brown eyes, rolled to the back of his head in hurt
pride and defense whenever he is accused. Because Luster is accused of many transgressions throughout the day, we know he must be quite a terror. Later in the day, Dilsey sets out a birthday cake for Benjy and Luster which is funny itself because it has candles which are little, big, and some little pieces of big candles. The hodge-podge of candles is characteristic of an unorganized household and they are appropriate for Benjy's birthday cake. That Dilsey is the only one who remembers or cares to commemorate Benjy's birthday attests to her love and steadfastness and the fact that the candles are so inconsistent only shows the disadvantages against which Dilsey must work. Luster eats two pieces of cake before he gives Benjy any and when he reaches for still another piece, Dilsey threatens to cut his hand off with a butcher knife. Finally, Dilsey catches Luster taunting Benjy and sends them both out to play where we expect the scene to be resolved and concluded. But Benjy burns himself and the ruckus he causes gets Mrs. Compson out of bed and down stairs where she sees that Dilsey has provided a birthday cake for Benjy. We expect her to be grateful or ashamed that she herself did not get the cake but instead, she accuses Dilsey who says she bought the cake rather than make it from ingredients which Jason inventories. "Do you want to poison him with that cheap store cake . . . Is that what you are trying to do. Am I never to have one minute's peace (p. 79)," Mrs. Compson queries humorously and ironically. It is true that store-bought cakes are often inferior to home baked goods and Mrs. Compson senses this in her position of Southern gentility, but it is not true that such cake will poison
Benjy or will cause Mrs. Compson any grief. She takes the whole incident upon herself as cause for more complaining so we criticize her for her attitude toward Benjy and Dilsey while we laugh at her comments on the cake. We also sympathize with Dilsey and Benjy while we laugh at the incidents while are held as a model for what is good and commendable in the family, Dilsey and her efforts, and what is the cause of the family's downfall, the attitude of Mrs. Compson. Hence, the scene becomes more than just comic relief in our feelings for Benjy and more integrally tied to the theme of the disintegration of the family.

A last such humorous extended incident is the antics between Luster and Dilsey on Easter morning. When Mrs. Compson desires a hot water bottle, Dilsey says she will get it as soon as the water is hot and remarks that Luster "over slep dis mawmin, up half de night at dat show (p. 284)." Mrs. Compson's reaction is characteristically selfish: "If you permit Luster to do things that interfere with his work, you'll have to suffer for it yourself." The reversal of the reader's expectations results in the first bit of humor. Dilsey goes to the kitchen door and calls for Luster who appears innocently around the corner. When Dilsey asks him "Whar you at," the question is amusing but senseless because Luster is standing right there. But Luster knows what his grandmother means and replies first "nowhere," so again, the answer is funny but senseless. There is further explanation when Luster admits that he was in the cellar but that he wasn't doing anything there either, so Dilsey resorts to telling Luster to fill
the wood box as she told him to do the night before. We expect some excuse from Luster as to why he did not do the job previously, but surprisingly he claims he did fill the wood box. We are surprised and puzzled and await an explanation. Dilsey asks him where the wood went since it is not there now, and again we expect some sort of excuse from Luster, but again, instead, he disavows all knowledge of the wood saying "I don't know 'm. I aint teched hit." His innocence is so overwhelming that Dilsey can only ask him again to refill the wood box. The description of Luster and the wood is quite funny.

He loaded himself mountainously with stove wood. He could not see over it, and he staggered to the steps and up them and blundered crashing against the door, shedding billets. Then Dilsey came and opened the door for him and he blundered across the kitchen. "You Luster!" she shouted, but he had already hurled the wood into the box with a thunderous crash. "H'h!" he said. (p. 285)

Luster's overloaded blundering provides us with some slapstick humor of action. In a kind of resigned despair, Dilsey sends Luster up to dress Benjy as a quieter occupation for the boy and he flaunts her not with disobedience but with exaggerated obedience. He starts out the back door and when Dilsey asks him why he explains: "I thought I better go round de house en in by de front, so I wont wake up Miss Cahline en dem."

Luster has thought fast and cleverly, more so than we have ever seen him do before which cements him further as a stock humorous Negro in his characteristic of feigned stupidity and exaggerated obedience to commands.

Later, Mrs. Compson calls Dilsey again and Dilsey finds that Luster has not been upstairs to dress Benjy, so she will come to do it. Mrs.
Compson claims that if Dilsey will drop everything to dress Benjy, she herself will come down to prepare breakfast so that everything will be on time. "En who gwine eat yo messin?" Dilsey retorts. Dilsey's comment places her as a stock comic Negro particularly here because of her implied criticism of her mistress and because of the truth of the criticism. Dilsey returns in search of Luster, and again we have the question and answer period concerning what Luster was up to. This time Luster's excuse is that Jason asked him to research a leak in the cellar and since this is such a good rainy day, Luster takes the opportunity. But Dilsey knows him better than we do. "En when wus hit he say fer you to do dat? . . . last New Year's day, wasn't hit?" Luster is stymied but Dilsey is not; she tells him to bring another armload of wood since he is outside. We expect another such scene and get one but slightly altered since this time Dilsey also knows what to expect from Luster so she warns him not to throw the wood down but he says he cannot get it down any other way. Dilsey succeeds because she makes Luster stand there while she unloads him piece by piece. "Here I sont you fer wood en you aint never brought mo'n six sticks at a time to save yo life twell today. What you fixin to ax me kin you do now?" Dilsey certainly does know the child and can second-guess his desires, but the carnival show has gone and we wonder what Luster will think to ask or do next. The scene is temporarily in hiatus, but it is concluded shortly. Luster announces that Jason is accusing him of breaking Jason's bedroom window so Luster calls on Benjy as his witness; that fact alone is funny. Luster uses the situation for
a comment on the Compsons: Dese is funny folks. Glad I aint none of em. In such a statement, Luster is pretty smart for such a dumb nigger and again displays that stock characteristic of feigned innocence and stupidity as Dilsey's reply increases the humor. "Aint none of who?... Lemme tell you somethin, nigger boy, you got jes es much Compson devilment in you es any of em." Dilsey and Luster both show they are stock comic Negro characters while being more than that as well. The fact that Dilsey compares Luster to the Compsons places Luster on a level with his supposed master which is a type of commentary from Dilsey and through her from Faulkner concerning the Compsons particularly and the South generally. Only slightly later Dilsey again makes such a true, perceptive comment when Jason asks where Quentin is. Dilsey says "Where she is ev’y Sunday mawnin' (p. 293) which is beautifully ironic because Quentin is believed in bed rather than in church as might be expected. It is further ironic that Easter Sunday because the reader knows that Quentin is not in bed either but that she has run off with a carnival man symbolically repeating the actions of her mother and thereby becoming an example of the family’s disintegration. By extension Dilsey’s comment is applicable to all the South. Because the line is funny we are distracted from its further thematic significance at first but we do realize how Faulkner has used Dilsey and Luster, and in this case Mrs. Compson, as comic foils for each other but also as links in the thematic significance of the novel.

Shortly after, there is another brief comic confrontation between Luster and Dilsey when they are about to set out for church and Luster
emerges wearing his new hat. As a stock mammy should, Dilsey asks why he is not wearing his old one. Luster claims he cannot find it and we have more evidence of how well Dilsey knows Luster since she accuses him of purposely "loosing" his hat. Then the confrontation shifts to the ultimatum that Luster can wear the hat if he brings the umbrella since it is threatening rain which Luster is reluctant to do, acting here as a stock Negro dandy. Frony displays some of the same characteristics in her wearing a new expensive dress. T.P., too, is the stock dandy especially when the appendix describes his "cheap intransigent clothes (p. 21)."

The Deacon at Harvard who appears in every parade and celebration the town or the school holds is another example of a stock comic Negro character. Quentin reflects.

. . . I had last seen the Deacon. It was on Decoration Day, in a G.A.R. uniform, in the middle of the parade. If you waited long enough on any corner you would see him in whatever parade came along. The one before was on Columbus' or Garibaldi's or somebody's birthday. He was in the Street Sweeper's section, in a stovepipe hat, carrying a two inch Italian flag, smoking a cigar among the brooms and scoops. (p. 101)

The picture of the Deacon is amusing in a stereotyped way but when we get the explanation for his actions, the point of the scene changes although the humor remains and is increased. "I was doing that for my son-in-law," the Deacon says. "He aims to get a job on the city forces. Street cleaner. I tells him all he wants is a broom to sleep on (p. 117)." This explanation is itself funny because we wonder over what good marching in a parade will do in getting someone else a job. Then we realize that such motivations
are true to life and that they pay off and are practical. The humor of
the scene and the figure of the man become a commentary from Faulkner on
the way things are presently run. Another such scene with the Deacon is
Quentin's rememberance of the Deacon as he meets each new train load of
incoming freshmen. The Deacon can pick out a Southerner in the crowd at
a glance and "he had a regular uniform he met trains in, a sort of Uncle
Tom's cabin outfit, patches and all (p. 116)," Quentin tells us. Again,
the way the Deacon looks makes him funny and places him as a stock comic
type. The Deacon has a hatband which he believes is part of Abe Lincoln's
military sash and his gullibleness is another characteristic of the stock
comic Negro. Also, after the first meeting at the train station, the
Deacon then appears in "a cast-off Brooks suit and a hat with a Prince-
ton club I forget which band;" this new adopted finery is another charac-
teristic of a stock comic Negro. At first, we think this man appears in
the narrative simply for the humor of his character but it is certainly
more than than. Quentin draws the moral of the man: "I suppose that with
all his petty chicanery and hypocrisy he stinks no higher in heaven's
nostrils than any other (p. 117)." Here we can hear Faulkner speaking as
well; not only are we to laugh at the antics of the comic man, but we are
also to learn from him. He is a good and kind man and sincerely motivated
to help the boys, attributes which are commendable wherever they occur and
despite the fact that they are assumed to be necessary in a Negro servant
of a Southern man. The Deacon becomes commendable for his attributes as
well as structurally necessary to get Quentin's suicide message to his
roommate the following day. We see Faulkner treating comic stock types but he is endowing them with significance which makes them important for more than just comic relief.

Critics see Quentin as a serious, sympathetic character. John Arthos claims that Faulkner's "sympathy prevents the detachment necessary for comedy." On the surface, this is a comment that we can all agree with. Yet, it is a rather narrow comment because, although Quentin himself may not be a laughable character, he does come up with some funny lines and get himself into some funny situations.

For instance, in the second page of the Quentin section, he remarks to himself that he will not see the Harvard boat race next week if he commits suicide. He never voices the suicide intention but we know from Benjy that it is an accomplished fact and we get the idea from these first pages. Quentin says that "if you attend Harvard one year, but don't see the boat-race, there should be a refund (p. 96)." The comment is laughingly ironic and much more meaningful than is apparent at first. It implies Quentin's suicide and is therefore serious despite its ironic tone; also, the line gives the implication that the boat-race is a major event at the school and that everything centers around the activities connected with it which is actually a fact and the idea that Quentin can jibe over it allows Faulkner the critical commentary of the system involved in Quentin's comment. Quentin also regrets his position and the fact that he will not

82Arthos, p. 108.
see the race. One can imagine Quentin postponing his suicide so as to see the race and get his money's worth, as well as to uphold the superficial phony appearances of class. As Quentin continues his reminiscences and comes to the topic of virginity, again, there is the opportunity for funny but critical comments. "In the South you are ashamed of being a virgin. Boys. Men. They lie about it. Because it means less to women, Father said. He said it was men invented virginity not women. Father said it's like death: only a state in which the others are left (p. 97)." The line about virginity being for others and never oneself is funny in the way it is stated and in the fact that it states. The comment is actually a judgment from Faulkner on the state of affairs in the South's concern with sex and apparent morality. The entire book depends on the theme of Caddy's apparent transgression despite the fact that her heart is in the right place. Here we have that theme in one humorous line: virginity is a state for other people, more a mental state than a physical reality.

Quentin voices other such critical but important facts throughout his section. When he is packing his trunk to be returned home, he recalls his father saying that "it used to be a gentleman was known by his books; nowadays he is known by the ones he has not returned (p. 100)." Again, the comment is funny but true and a commentary on the society. The modern system allows everyone to have books through libraries but it also allows people the opportunity to retain and possess what does not belong to them or what they do not deserve or have not earned. Still later Quentin contemplates the state of Negroes and says that he thought "a
Southerner had to be always conscious of niggers. I thought that Northerners would expect him to (p. 105)." Quentin attempts to act as is expected even if he does so in extremely trying ways. Also, the differences in attitudes of Southerners and Northerners toward blacks do not have to be enunciated to a particular degree; instead, Faulkner can mention them humorously through Quentin and leave the moral of the lines to the audience. The technique succeeds; the point comes across. Quentin also realizes that "a nigger is not a person so much as a form of behaviour, a sort of obverse reflection of the white people he lives among." At first, the comment is funny because it seems to put niggers in such a lower, menial position. Then, we realize the line is true and valid and are struck by the fact that we laughed at it. In the same vein is Quentin's comment triggered by Mrs. Bland who forces her son Gerald to row on the river as an English gentleman might. The scene Quentin remembers is humorous and his judgement is even more so. "Ever since then I have believed that God is not only a gentleman and a sport; He is a Kentuckian too (p. 110)." We laugh at the notion that God is a Kentuckian, but then, when you think about it, the qualities of a stereotyped Kentuckian are qualities we might like our God to have and which He may have for all we know. The line is truer than we first expected but it remains as funny.

Some of the circumstances Quentin gets himself into in the course of the day are also humorous. When Quentin buys the irons to weight
his body during his drowning he exclaims that he did not know they were sold by the pound. His innocence of the ways of the world and the farm is humorous here so when Quentin buys the weights, he chooses the size because wrapped up, they are about the size of a pair of shoes. The irony is apparent: they will be cement overshoes at Quentin's demise. When his friend later asks him what is in the package, Quentin answers that it is a pair of shoes he had resoled so the irony between what he says and what he intends and does is funny. When Quentin asks the men fishing for the time in his ramblings, the men remark about his accent. One says that he thinks that Quentin talks like "they do in minstrel shows (p. 139)." The comment is funny especially when another of the men expects Quentin to be angry since the only people in minstrel shows are niggers and saying Quentin talks like a minstrel man is the equivalent of saying he is a nigger. The shift in our expectations is one cause of the humor. The Southern drawl is nothing like a Negro dialect but the men are too stupid to notice, they class both accents together. That Quentin should be called a nigger is funny. The next episode of the afternoon with the little Italian girl is another such humorous scene. Quentin comes upon her in the bakery and she attaches herself to him much like a sticky cake. All the attempts Quentin makes to return the girl only result in his being unable to communicate with some Italians, his spending money on the girl, his getting splashed with water and ridiculed by the swimming boys. The loaf the girl carries around throughout the scene is another source of the humor because it gets wet and dirty and
looks as if rats have been gnawing at it. Finally, his friendship with the girl results in Quentin’s being arrested for kidnapping because the girl’s brother is a mad Italian who is also paranoid. Mrs. Bland and her crew rescue Quentin from the authorities but only after Quentin has to pay a six dollar court fee for which Anse refuses to give him a receipt; Quentin is being taken. The funniest thing about the scene in the courtroom is that we feel the sheriff and the judge should be in Jefferson rather than in the Harvard area and their transplantation is funny. When Gerald is blowing off about his prowess with girls, Quentin takes the opportunity to fight with him in a symbolic carrying out of his death wish. The fight itself is funny because Quentin faints and Shreve must make some half-hearted excuse for Quentin’s bloody nose much like the other funny scene Quentin remembers where he was to duel with Dalton Ames but faints instead. Hence, many of Quentin’s characteristics, actions, and speeches provide humor to the novel while also being linked to the theme of the disintegration of a fine Southern family as well.

Another source of the humor in The Sound and the Fury is the character of Mrs. Compson who is the stock comic genteel Southern lady, and says so often and in many ways. Yet, Mrs. Compson is also ironically one cause for the demise of the family since she has no control over the children or their behavior. “Mrs. Compson is one of Faulkner’s most howlingly funny characters, at the same time she is horribly true to a certain type of American, and more specifically Southern, female
gentility.\textsuperscript{83} She is also the stock comic figure of the hypochondriac and the martyr/complainer. Most of her statements are ironic to the audience but true to her so the separation between fact and fantasy is another source of the humor of her character. She does not want Caddy carrying Benjy around the house because "You'll injure your back. All of our women have prided themselves on their carriage. Do you want to look like a washer-woman (p. 82)." By "all our women," Mrs. Compson means all the Bascomb ladies in particular and all Southern women in general. Later, she says that "a woman is either a lady or not (p. 122)." In a way the statement is true since a lady is one title which is inherited despite anything individuals within the family can do to gain the title; in another sense, the statement is foolish because training can do a lot. Ironically, the training she gives Caddy and Quentin is not exactly the training that will result in their being ladies to the public view, although Caddy is certainly a good woman at heart. Mrs. Compson is only concerned with what the town might say about circumstances rather than in the true nature of the circumstances so she is much like the phony Mrs. Bland that Quentin knows. Mrs. Compson is so concerned with only herself that she doesn't even know that Quentin has a report card and can do absolutely nothing with her; Quentin remains unruly and antagonistic. Mrs. Compson's silliness is exemplified in many ways but one important way is the fact that no one can mention Caddy's name in the house because Mrs. Compson is scandalized.

by Caddy, not so much by the fact that she is pregnant when she gets married to a man not the father of her child but by the fact that the man threw Caddy out and Mrs. Compson is concerned with how that will look to the world. Jason ironically calls his mother a "Christian forbearing woman (p. 234)." When she burns the money Caddy sends for Quentin, Mrs. Compson gets perverted pleasure from the act. Then, she can also say that it is "my place to suffer for my children . . . I can bear it (p. 238)." The truth or logic to this statement is totally nonexistent. Mrs. Compson is not very strong although all of her ailments are psychosomatic rather than real. It might be her place to suffer for her children but she does not practice what she preaches and so is another source of the novel's humor.

One of the funniest scenes with Mrs. Compson is Jason's remembered one when Caddy first kissed a boy. "She happened to see one of them kissing Caddy and all the next day she went around the house in a black dress and veil and even Father couldn't get her to say a word except crying and saying her little daughter was dead (p. 247)." The extremity of Mrs. Compson's actions in this case is the cause of its humor. We have already seen Mrs. Compson on Easter morning in her attempts to run her house despite the fact she keeps saying that it is Jason's house and he is the head of it. The crowning laughter caused by Mrs. Compson comes when they open Quentin's room and she is not there so Mrs. Compson immediately says to find the note since Quentin left a note when he did it. Her statement is totally absurd and we almost expect her to look out the
window to see if Quentin's smashed body is lying there for observation. She immediately jumps to the worst possible conclusion in the circumstances: in reality, Quentin has run away and thereby provided for much more humor in the fact that she got the best of Jason without premeditation.

Mrs. Compson is almost completely the stock comic complainer and martyr. But she is also a stock Southern aristocratic lady. She is the last of the Compson women to uphold the dignity and reputation of what was once a great family, the last example of the Southern women fighting to retain their virtue and their good name despite the dirtying effects of a malicious town. Therefore, Mrs. Compson is much more than just a stock comic figure: she is directly linked to the theme of the disintegration of the family. It is important that she is still alive in the end of the book and that only in the appendix do we learn of her death and Benjy's resultant emprisonment. Mrs. Compson is continually saying that her family is her judgment on herself because of her own sins although she does not quite mean it. Ironically, it is true and she does deserve the silliness of her family. Despite the humor of her character, we must respect much of what she stands for and many of the values she implies. She is the last of the genteel Southerners and we must almost be sorry that their time is passing.

Critics agree that the tone of Jason's third section of *The Sound and the Fury* is one of comic or sarcastic irony, and that this tone is different from the rest of the novel. That "Faulkner has abandoned high
seriousness for comic irony is true and the character of Jason, his attitudes, characteristics, and his actions, is the source of the ironic tone of the section. Jason is not strictly a stock comic miser, although he does have all that miser's attributes, but something else as well. He is the butt of the joke which is one central symbol of the novel, the theft of his money. Jason also partakes of the characteristics of the stock comic villain: he is bad but we laugh at him. Backman analyzes Jason and his function this way.

Although Jason may have been conceived out of hostility, his impact upon the reader is partly that of a comic character--a comic villain. After the morbidity and introversion of Quentin, the harsh wit and angry violence of Jason provide a sudden, welcome release through comedy. There is a double-edged humor in the rich sarcasm that flows naturally and easily out of Jason's permanent discontent, for he is both the maker and the butt of the satire. As his own anger, frustration, and frantic activity rise in tone and tempo, the comedy moves swiftly to its climax. When Jason finally fails in the pursuit of his money, earned as well as stolen, the comedy is complete. Some of Faulkner's finest comedy is found in this brilliant satire of Jason, the seeker of the golden fleece.

There is much here of interest and import. Jason grows out of hostility and that is one of his characteristics which results in humor, as we shall see. The comic relief provided by Jason is one function of the structure of the novel and of Jason's character. Still, Jason is not used solely for comic relief; his importance to the novel is apparent in that he is


85Backman, The Major Years, pp. 29-30.
the first sane Compson . . . and (a childless bachelor) hence the last (p. 16). "Most stock comic villains are somewhat stupid and therefore do not initiate jokes but only become the object of them. In contrast, Jason is clever enough to make jokes and also be the butt of them, a dubious distinction.

Jason has a plethora of characteristics which make him comic, the most obvious of which is probably his sarcastic wit. There are not specific targets for Jason's tongue: everything and anything might trigger his wit although the most general sources of Jason's criticism are his family and the niggers. When the librarian brings the newspaper photo of Caddy and the German staff general, Jason at first says "It's Cad, all right (p. 13)." His name for Caddy is ironic but appropriate. Later, he says "That Candace? . . . Don't make me laugh. This bitch aint thirty yet. The other one's fifty now (p. 14)." His shift in opinion causes the audience to smile because it shows more of Jason's devious character and because of his tone, calling "both" women bitches, echoing the opening and closing lines of his section which assert "Once a bitch always a bitch, what I say (p. 198)." Jason calls Benjy "The Great American Gelding" and his mother "a Christian forbearing woman." Both statements are funny but true. Jason means them for their truth and does not care much about their irony while the audience first notices how comic the lines are and only afterwards is aware of the truthful irony. Benjy's running up and down the fence causes Jason to remark that "first thing I know they're going to begin charging me golf dues, then Mother
and Dilsey'll have to get a couple of china door knobs and a walking stick and work it out, unless I play at night with a lantern. Then they'd send us all to Jackson, maybe (p. 205)." Again his comments are funny but true in a way. When Jason goes home from work and finds Benjy and Luster are not waiting to greet him at the front gate, he takes the opportunity for more funny criticism. "Well at least I could come home one time without finding Ben and that nigger hanging on the gate like a bear and a monkey in the same cage (p. 269)." The comparison between the two people and the animals provides much of the humor as well as the tone of the remark. When Jason asks a nigger to get his car from in front of the store when he himself does not want Earl to see him, the nigger takes the long way around the square. Jason says "I never found a nigger yet that didn't have an airtight alibi for whatever he did. But just turn one loose in a car and he's bound to show off (p. 236)." The comment shows up Jason's niggardly character as well as the humorous characteristics of the Negro race. Money is another of Jason's favorite topics. He continually complains comically about having to feed a house full of niggers with their feet on the fire grate. As we saw earlier, Jason invites old Job to eat in his kitchen too because every other no-count nigger does. He also says that "money has no value, it's just the way you spend it (p. 212)" which is so ironic because Jason acts exactly contrary to the sense of the line.

Jason's attitude toward women, and especially his girlfriend Lorraine, allows for more humorous comments. He claims he never lets a woman know
what he's going to give her and he never promises her anything. "That's the only way to manage them. Always keep them guessing. If you can't think of any other way to surprise them, give them a bust in the jaw (p. 211)." At first, we almost agree with Jason's theory; it is sometimes apparently true. But his final line counteracts our agreement and causes us to laugh at Jason's theory rather than take it seriously. Jason also says that he has "every respect for a good honest whore (p. 251)."

The line itself is laughable but its significance coming from Jason is more so because he is so extremely concerned with appearances but yet he can have a whore for a girlfriend. Even when Jason does this apparently scandalous thing, it turns out that he is concerned with appearances because he is very domestic: having Sunday breakfast with her and shopping in grocery stores.

Other groups besides women and niggers become the target for Jason's wit as well. Jason calls the jews "a bunch of damn eastern jews (p. 209)," but differentiates them from "men of the jewish religion." As if this might sound a little harsh, Jason goes on to further clarify his own charitable attitude. "I give every man his due, regardless of religion or anything else. I have nothing against jews as individuals . . . It's just the race." The distinction Jason makes provides for the sense of his statements to himself but also provides for the humor of his wit for the reader.

Another important characteristic of Jason's which provides for some of the humor is his pride and his concern with appearances. Ironically,
Jason believes that he is responsibly upholding the good name and reputation of his family. Externally, Jason condemns Caddy, chastizes his mother and Dilsey, harangues Quentin and abuses Benjy and the servants in order to impress them with how important appearances are. But Jason is genuinely as much a source for the family's downfall as all the rest of the members, despite his attempts to the converse. He never questions how it looks when he goes to Memphis to see Lorraine or when she sends him her love letters. He is unconcerned with all of the house and grounds as long as they are basically kept up, but in the mean time he is exceedingly concerned with the privacy of his own room because he is holding the money. In a way, Jason knows that the family no longer has the position and respect it once had, but he attempts to retain what it still has. He seems to have few misconceptions about the family but he actually has many he does not realize. Vickery says that "one of Jason's dominant characteristics . . . is his pride that he has no illusions about his family or himself. The humor, however, arises not from the situation but from the way in which Jason talks about it."86 This is certainly true and valid but I don't think Vickery is totally justified in saying that this pride is the "main source of humor." Rightly, Jason's pride gets him into some ridiculous situations such as the one when he loses all his money on the stock market and he resorts to being nasty with the Western Union clerk who brings him the message. Yet, Jason's other actions and characteristics also contribute significantly to the humor of the section.

86 Vickery, p. 42.
Jason is also vicious, inconsistent and paranoid, contributing to the humor of the man. Jason's inconsistency results in basic stock humor because of the closeness of inconsistency with the characteristic of incongruity of stock humor. Hunt's statement that "there is comic incongruity in his gross inconsistencies which arises from their justification in the unrelieved logical and emotional consistency of his self-centeredness." sounds more complicated than it is. Jason is extremely self-centered and all of his actions and attitudes are a result of this characteristic. Because he is selfishly motivated, Jason might do some things which result in inconsistencies with other things he does or says. For instance, there is Jason's concern with appearances but linked to that is his inconsistent action of dating a whore already discussed; the justification for both actions lies in Jason's selfishness. What appears inconsistent, incongruous and therefore funny to the audience, is consistently justified and logical to Jason. Jason is also "flatly vicious, malicious, and without heart or redeeming virtue of any kind, unless it is his sardonic sense of humor [which] accounts for the curious delight the reader finds in his narration." The reader genuinely dislikes Jason as a man yet, depicted safely as he is in the novel, Jason becomes the object of the audiences' laughter. Jason's malicious attitude toward Benjy results nonetheless in some funny comments about the cavalry using geldings. Jason's viciousness and rage cause him to pursue Quentin without taking his normal precautions of camphor necessary because he gets sick from

87 Hunt, p. 81.  
88 Hunt, p. 71.
gasoline fumes. Therefore, Jason gets a terrible headache and becomes the object of Faulkner's fun and the audiences' laughter. Jason is also paranoid and we remember how the mad and insane can be humorous. Hunt says that Jason is blinded by his paranoia and is unaware of the dramatic irony of his narration. This is certainly true, because, as we saw earlier, Jason believes he is acting rationally and sensibly, while we see him reacting in rage and disbelief. Jason's remarks may be humorous as listed earlier, but they are "a camouflage for an acute anxiety." Jason's paranoia best appears in the way he keeps the door to his room locked except when is is passing through it. He will not even let Dilsey change the sheet on his bed; he does this chore himself because he is so afraid someone will find his money. His paranoia is also painfully obvious in the way he counts his money several times a day resulting in the audience being amused and making Jason more of a two dimensional miser figure.

Possibly Jason's two most prominent characteristics, his humor and his hostility, account for the reader's laughter. James Mellard analyzes Jason's character and claims that he "is a man who has two interesting characteristics, a highly developed sense of humor and a great deal of hostility."  

89 Hunt, p. 79.

90 James M. Mellard, "Jason Compson: Humor, Hostility and the Rhetoric of Agression," Southern Humanities Review 3 (1969), p. 259. Mellard further separates Jason's humorous elements into the three forms Freud calls "humor," "wit," and "the comic," where humor is pleasure which comes from feeling: it is gentle and self-protective. The comic is pleasure which comes from thought, while wit is pleasure which comes from inhibitions. These separations need not be argued since we see them all at work in Jason's character making him more of a stereotyped miserly comic villain by attaching so many pat rules and theorems to his character.
The main significance of Mellard's article is in the link he claims exists between the two elements of humor and hostility. "A momentary pain from an inner source creating humor will trigger an aggressive response against something outside that destroys it." This is a good enunciation of Jason's actions and motivations, humorous or otherwise: Jason has a headache so he snaps at his mother or Earl or Job. The headache itself is humorous because it was caused by Jason's own rashness while the snapping also results in humorous lines which brings us back to a realization of what a nasty character Jason actually is without negating the humor. We laugh through the realization.

There are several sustained actions of Jason's which provide much of the humor of his section. When Jason threatens Quentin that she had better stay in school, he little knows where his threat will lead. Jason sees Quentin talking with a man a full forty-five minutes before she is supposed to be out of school for the day and is infuriated because Quentin dares to defy him the same day he threatened her with punishment. The immediately following realization which annoys Jason is that the man has a red tie. Jason cannot seem to imagine what kind of man would wear a red tie until he finally realizes that the man is one of the show people. At first, Jason is furious because of the tie itself and the way it seems to flaunt all the respectability which Jason thinks he stands for. However, the audience sees through Jason and knows that his apparent respectability is only superficial providing for the first of the

91Mellard, p. 260.
humor. When Jason storms home looking for Quentin, he is foiled because she is more clever than he is at this point: she knows enough not to come home before school is supposed to be out for the day. On his way back to the store, Jason sees "a ford come helling toward me. All of a sudden it stopped. I could hear the wheels sliding and it slewed around and backed and whirled and just as I was thinking what the hell they are up to, I saw that red tie (p. 255)." The description itself is funny since it is almost a Keystone cops kind of street scene. Jason pursues the two but is stymied because he gets a headache since he forgot his camphor. The road complicates his headache: "damn if it isn't like trying to drive over a sheet of corrugated iron roofing." He laments the tax money characteristically; he also says that he thinks too much of his car to treat it like a ford running it over the bad roads, although he does just that. Jason also chides himself for pursuing her when he says "from now on you have only yourself to blame because you know what any sensible person would do (p. 256)." What any sensible person might do would be to return home, take care of the headache, and confront Quentin at another time. What Jason says a sensible person would do is another humorous matter entirely. "I says if I've got to spend half my time being a damn detective, at least I'll go where I can get paid for it." Instead of simplifying matters and making them better, Jason complicates them and makes them worse in the humorous misconception that he would be sensible.
The pause at the fork in the road allows Jason rest time and the audience more humor from his contemplations. Jason's claim to fame is that "my people owned slaves here when you all were running little shirt tail country stores and farming land no nigger would look at on shares." All Jason can do at this point is insult the carnival man rather than actually confront him which leads Jason to say that "It's a good thing the Lord did something for this country; the folks that live on it never have." Jason covets the land he looks at and feels that he is one of the exceptional who do appreciate the land and do something for it. Ironically, his family has done nothing for the land but sell it off for Quentin's pretentious year at Harvard but somehow this is supposed to be preferable to the nigger sharecropper's use of the land. The logic is quite distorted and humorous as is Jason's entire attitude at this point. Jason's headache reminds him to complain about how much money his mother spends on medicine while he refuses to take aspirin which he thinks is sugar to placate hypochondriacs. If Jason was not so paranoid, he might have fewer headaches but he might not be as amusing to the audience either.

Jason gets out to continue his pursuit of Quentin and walks through a field, the only plowed one he has seen since he left town. Jason thinks the people have plowed the field solely to make his progress more painful while the owners of the field hardly had that motivation but Faulkner with his sense of the comic certainly did. Jason gets turned around in the woods and pauses to get his bearings; when he does, his headache
pounds more, and the sun gets "down just to where it could shine straight into my eyes (p. 258)." Again, Jason's paranoia shows and the audience is amused by his voicing of that paranoia. Jason hears a dog and does not want to move to shoo it away for fear of being discovered so he is like a comic statue. "Then I happened to look around and I had my hand right on a bunch of poison oak. The only thing I couldn't understand was why it was just poison oak and not a snake or something (p. 258)." Jason's paranoia is increasing as is the reader's fun. Jason finds the car and begins running toward it just as it starts up and spirits away, its horn blowing "like it was saying Yah. Yah. Yaaahhhhhhh, going out of sight (p. 259)." Quentin has certainly got the best of Jason in this case, the joke is on Jason and it is his own fault for foolishly pursuing the two. We expect the scene to be over and resolved by Jason's returning dejectedly home. Instead, Jason true to his rashness, attempts to continue the pursuit and Faulkner intensifies the humor. Jason returns to his car and starts off not realizing that he has a flat tire so the joke is a further insult to Jason and comes across best in Faulkner's own rhetoric.

They never even had guts enough to puncture it, to jab a hole in it. They just let the air out. I just stood there for a while, thinking about that kitchen full of niggers and not one of them had time to lift a tire onto the rack and screw up a couple of bolts. It was kind of funny because she couldn't have seen far enough ahead to take the pump out on purpose, unless she thought about it while he was letting out the air maybe. But what it probably was, was somebody took it out and gave it to Ben to play with for a squirt gun because they'd take the whole car to pieces if he wanted it and Dilsey says, Aint nobody teched yo car. What we want
to fool with hit fer? and I says You're a nigger. You're lucky, do you know it? I says I'll swap with you any day because it takes a white man not to have anymore sense than to worry about what a little slut of a girl does. (pp. 259-260)

We almost begin to believe that Jason has come to some sort of realization concerning the circumstances which are kind of funny in the absurdity of his efforts to chase Quentin. Actually though, Jason realizes nothing because he continues his pursuit symbolically Sunday morning when he discovers Quentin has left with all of his money. The scene is also funny because Jason talks about the kitchen full of niggers who cannot get any of his work done. In reality, the kitchen is not full: he could not possibly expect Dilsey to do the job; Roskus is too old, and Luster must watch Benjy. Granted, Luster could probably change Jason's tire and watch Benjy at the same time but that possibility hardly accounts for a whole kitchen full of lazy niggers.

Jason's persecution complex is coming out more and more. He borrows a pump but says "that was just an oversight on their part (p. 260)" that Russell's had the pump. His paranoia also shows when he says "It's not playing a joke that any eight year old boy could have thought of, it's letting your own uncle be laughed at by a man that would wear a red tie." The red tie and appearances are still bothering Jason to the point that he cannot act sensibly. Again when we think the scene will be concluded, Faulkner extends it and intensified the humor. In Jason's rage he returns to town and before he knows what he is doing, he takes a telegram from the messenger which gives instructions to sell, further infuriating
Jason. His own rashness has caused him two major troubles: he does not succeed in catching Quentin and he loses everything at the stock market. If Jason had acted in a way that the audience would call sensible instead of the way he thinks is sensible, he might have been spared both embarrassments. Somehow, the audience is glad this has not happened because then we would be robbed of the comedy of errors.

The entire Easter Sunday morning fiasco is the last of the extended scenes where Jason can display his humor. It begins when the earlier ruckus with Luster and Mrs. Compson results in Jason's being wakened on his one day to sleep. He is peevish and wants Quentin to come down to breakfast so that Dilsey does not have to waste time with two breakfasts. Actually, he wants Quentin downstairs so he can badger her. Jason is also annoyed because he has discovered the broken window in his room which he tries to blame on Luster who, truly innocent, denies any knowledge of the broken window. Then, Mrs. Compson announces that she has given Dilsey permission to go to church this Sunday and Jason is further annoyed because he will not get a hot lunch if any at all. Mrs. Compson takes the blame on herself, which is partially deserved but which Jason ignores and uses as an opportunity to retort scandalously "You never resurrected Christ, did you? (p. 295)." In the mean time, Dilsey has been laboring up the stairs in order to call Quentin to breakfast and please Jason when the real complications begin. Dilsey calls Quentin who is not answering while Mrs. Compson simultaneously grills Jason about when the window got broken. When Mrs. Compson says that it is as if someone tried to break
into the house, she triggers a violent and comic reaction in Jason who jumps up, knocking over his chair, and bounds up the stairs. When he meets Dilsey, who tries to explain that Quentin is sulking because Mrs. Compson has not yet unlocked the door, Jason tries to determine from her where the key to the room is, but Dilsey at first does not understand him. So he attempts to get the key from his mother but she is quite slow and exasperating so “he fell to pawing the pockets of the rusty black dressing sacque she wore. She resisted (p. 297).” Jason is so extremely frustrated and anxious to get into the room that he calls his mother a fool and rips the keys from her, while she futilely contends that she never lets anyone take her keys from her. Mrs. Compson resorts to saying that she has tried “so hard to raise them Christians” and she offers to help Jason find the right key. As she struggles with him in her attempts to help him, he flings her aside. Jason finally gets into Quentin's room and discovers that the bed has not been slept in and that the window is open and the pear tree is nearby. The reactions of the characters are individually funny. Dilsey ignores the fact that Quentin is not there and assumes she will be able to find her shortly, but in the mean time she tries to calm Mrs. Compson. Mrs. Compson immediately and apparently illogically asks them to “find the note . . . Quentin left a note when he did it (p. 299).” Her logic is faulty but the conclusion is close to correct. At least Mrs. Compson senses more than Dilsey does the seriousness of the empty room. Perhaps Jason senses the significance of the empty room more
than any of them because of his secret horde of cash. Jason has run into his own room and locked himself in and refuses to answer Dilsey's call. An ordinary person or a peevish child might do the same thing in order to get attention or to feel sorry for himself. At first, Jason looks like he is acting sensibly, but then we realize Jason's secret cache. Now, only after all the previous activity and rashness, does Jason act with any deliberation and that only temporarily. He "carefully tilted the contents of the box out upon the bed. Still carefully he sorted the papers, taking them up one at a time and shaking them. The he upended the box and shook it too and slowly replaced the papers and stood again, looking at the broken lock (p. 299)." Jason is finally brought low: all his saved and stolen money has been taken from him in the continuation of the joke Quentin pulled on him two days earlier.

The spell is broken and Jason returns to more bizarre and seemingly senseless activity. He calls the sheriff and attempts to report a robbery but has some difficulty in impressing the urgency on the deputy. There is a pause after the whirlwind as Jason leaves. Luster adds to the humor because he speculates that Jason beat Quentin and is on the way for the doctor. Actually, Luster has the events in reverse since Jason will attempt to beat Quentin when he can find her. Only after the interlude at the Negro church do we return to Jason's flight. He had gone to the deputy for help but received no satisfaction from the sheriff who is cloyingly attentive but slow and frustrating to Jason. The sheriff wants to know all the details but Jason claims he will explain
in the car on the way. The reader still does not know where Jason intends to go and so mystery is added to the humor. The sheriff cleverly attests that Jason does not know who actually took the money since he only suspects Quentin. When the sheriff asks what Jason intends to do with Quentin if he catches her, Jason launches into another of his humorous sarcastic speeches.

> Nothing ... Not anything. I wouldn't lay my hand on her. The bitch that cost me a job, the one chance I ever had to get ahead, that killed my father and is shortening my mother's life every day and made my name a laughing stock in the town. I won't do anything to her ... Not anything. (p. 319)

We are struck humorously by the outright lies and exaggerated misconceptions in this speech. We know Jason's violent nature and can image what he will really do if he finds Quentin. Then, Quentin did not cost Jason his job. Caddy did, but Jason merges the two for the purpose of his argument. Nor did Quentin kill their father; drink did but that might be too scandalous a thing for Jason to admit to the town. We are also struck by the ironic thought that if Jason had kept his mouth shut about the entire business, no one would be the wiser and he could have saved face. Humorously, Jason is the cause of his own demeaned position, not Quentin. Again, he is the maker and the butt of the joke. The sheriff ultimately refuses to help Jason track Quentin because he has "some suspicions about who that money belongs to that I don't reckon I'll ever know for certain (p. 320)." The sheriff is supposedly a good man and can therefore intuit that although Caddy had an illegitimate baby, she is still a good person and her heart is in the right place, whereas Jason's is
not despite his apparent goodness. When Jason realizes that help is not coming from the sheriff, he resorts to idle threats that "You'll regret this. I won't be helpless. This is not Russia, where just because he wears a little metal badge, a man is immune to law." Again, the logic of the statements is faulty and provides for the humor, enhanced because Jason sincerely believes his threats.

At this point we expect the scene to dissolve until Jason actually arrives at Mottson where the show is playing. Instead, we are given all the mad dreams and rambling contemplations of Jason as he drives there. Jason again has no camphor to prevent his headaches from the gas fumes and he sees himself "mocked by his own triumphing (p. 322)." He thinks about Lorraine to calm himself and take his mind off the fact that he will gleefully "be at the greatest possible distance from both towns when noon came (p. 321)" and can thereby be more of a martyr since he will miss lunch and give himself a headache. He believes that no one can stop him from prosecuting the sheriff for failure to do his duty; he even thinks "of himself entering the courthouse with a file of soldiers and dragging the sheriff out." Where Jason will get the soldiers or why they should be soldiers at all never enters his thoughts although those things do occur to the audience, however, and result in increasing the humor of Jason's musings.

The scene is finally resolved when Jason gets to the circus and demands to know where "they" are, as if every one else will automatically know who he is talking about. When he is told they are not there, he
denies the truth of this and the comedy is in full swing again. The circus man takes offence at Jason's calling him a liar and the fight is on. Jason is no match for the man and gets hit in the head; we wish the blow would knock some sense into him but we know it will not and in a way hope it does not so the comedy can go on. Jason thinks he has been hit on the head with a hatchet when he has only hit his head on a railing. The embellishment Jason gives to the truth to save face increases the humor of the fight. Finally, the show manager convinces Jason that the two are not there since they were thrown out the night before when the man learned the nature of the circumstances. Jason is foiled and returns blindly home. He has paraded his stupidity widely throughout the incident and has provided much humor for the audience. Locked rooms, the chase, a confrontation, a fight and defeat are all humorously depicted because of Jason's extreme rashness and selfishness of character: he remains a miser but now he must begin his hording anew.

Throughout the third section "narrated by Jason, the tone has been essentially comic and satiric. Not only does Jason come through as a largely comic character but his narration tends to bathe the whole Compson history in a somewhat comic light."92 Jason provides a new viewpoint on the entire Compson family: where we pitied and sympathized with the Compsons earlier, we now laugh at them. "Had the novel ended with this section we would view the Compson history largely with a sense

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of grim amusement." Hence, there is the need for Dilsey's section to provide more balance to the theme and another type of less raucous humor. If we look at the theme of the novel as the disintegration of the family and therefore the South, we can see how the humor adds to and balances the picture of the fall. If we view the novel with a theme concerning external appearances versus internal morals, we see how Jason and Mrs. Compson especially humorously point up that theme. If we see the novel as a story of rebirth and rejuvenation linked to the Easter ritual and Benjy's innocence, we see how the humor of Luster and Dilsey tempers the theme so that we do not take it too seriously or act on any such notions. With Caddy as the central figure of the novel, we can see how her actions cause the humor of Quentin's section and Jason's idle pursuits. However we interpret the theme of the novel, the humor is inherent to that interpretation rather than being superficially added on to it. Hence, the humor of circumstances and stock retorts and characters is given more significance. The comedy is not in the novel solely for comic relief although it does function that way; the humor is also linked to Faulkner's suggestions to act sensibly despite appearances.

93 Slatoff, "The Edge of Order," p. 188.
As I Lay Dying is completely and totally grotesque as every page and paragraph bristles with chilling laughter. It is difficult to enumerate the elements of the grotesque because the novel is so full of it; all the characters, actions, techniques and themes add to the effects of the grotesque humor. Every character says or acts or thinks grotesque things, but Anse is the prize, who, like Popeye, is probably one of the most consistently grotesque characters Faulkner ever created. The entire funeral journey itself is grotesquely humorous and particular actions and scenes within the journey are especially so. While the tone of the novel has some of the feeling of the old folk tale humor, it is a tragi-comic handling of the story and the mock epic nature of the novel results in some of its grotesquetry. Finally, the theme itself may not be grotesque but it probably says that life is grotesque. The novel is troubling, funny, sad and absurd all at once, just as grotesque humor should be.

All the characters of the novel are grotesquely humorous partially from the fact that we are detached from them and see them as characters in a novel rather than real life friends of ours. The characters are probably not grotesque to each other and in fact, are assumed to be acting normally when we see them acting grotesquely, part of which also
comes from the fact that they are often mistaken about the nature of things. Hillgate says that "a major source of ironic, and often comic, effects in As I lay Dying is the frequency with which characters are completely mistaken in their judgments of each other, and of themselves." Any number of demonstrations of this fact come to mind but a particularly funny one is the assumption of the townspeople that Anse and the family are on a small vacation after the funeral rather than still in the process of burying Addie. Cora Tull, too, is a good example of how a character can be mistaken in their impressions of self and thereby provide grotesque humor for the reader.

This ability to be easily mistaken, looked at from another point of view, becomes a new characteristic. "Much of the humor of the novel depends on the absolute innocence on the part of the players of the terrors, real and implied, of the 'perilous' journey," says Walter Brylowski. This innocence is a strange quality since the characters may appear innocent to themselves, but they are certainly not innocent and probably definitely guilty to the reader resulting in the difference between how characters in the novel view each other and how the readers view them. Anse, Cash, Dewey Dell, and the entire crew see themselves as helpless, innocent victims of some greater power while the reader sees them as victims of their own stupidity and therefore probably accountable for their fates. The difference between how we see the players and how they

94Hillgate, p. 106.

see themselves results in their hypocrisy, another characteristic providing grotesque humor. The difference between what they say and what they do and what they should do according to the reader provides for their grotesquely humorous hypocrisy. Peter Swiggart claims that "the comic figures of As I lay Dying . . . may be called puritan heretics."96 In other words, these characters say ridiculous, blasphemous things under the guise of reason and religion in much the same way the Salem witchcraft doings were carried on and reasonably accounted for. Anse plays the puritan heretic when he persists in sticking to his promise so exactly despite the difficulties. This persistence also results in the ultimate grotesquery of the novel, the journey. "The supposed idealism which underlies the trip, the devotion to Addie Bundren's memory, is transformed into a joke played upon the reader--or upon the Bundrens."97 Again, the grotesque humor comes from the separation of how we judge Anse and his actions and how he judges himself. He sees himself as a dutiful man, an idealist as Swiggart calls him, carrying out the last testament of his dead wife. The fact that the joke is perpetrated on the reader and Anse by Addie adds to the grotesque effect.

The character of Anse Bundren is a major source of grotesque humor in the novel because he merges elements of comedy and horror within his personality and his actions. Cleanth Brooks calls Anse "the human

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97 Swiggart, p. 110.
buzzard and likens him to the real, horrifying buzzards, a comparison which is funny but appropriate. Stock humor often compares men with animals but here, the element makes the humor grotesque rather than stock because of the choice of animal. The buzzard itself is grotesque in its awkwardness and its instincts; but when a man is compared to it, the grotesque humor is increased. Both the buzzards and Anse coexist in the novel as actualities, but linked together as they are, they provide grotesque humor. We visualize Anse squatting on the front porch waiting for his supper, and by the way, waiting for his wife to die, a picture which is more amusing if we contemplate the comparison with the buzzard. "Pa rubs his hands slowly on his knees (p. 16)," Darl says, as if Anse is rubbing his hands in anticipation of carrion. The description continues. The shirt across pa's hump is faded lighter than the rest of it. There is no sweat stain on his shirt. I have never seen a sweat stain on his shirt. He was sick once from working in the sun . . . and he tells people that if he ever sweats, he will die. I suppose he believes it . . . Since he lost his teeth his mouth collapses in slow repetition when he dips. The stubble gives his lower face that appearance that old dogs have. (pp. 16-17)

Anse's hunchback adds to the power of the description of him as a buzzard. The sunkenness of his lower face because he has no teeth also adds to the humor; if Anse's visage is like that of an old dog according to Darl, how much more grotesque Anse might be to the reader. The fact that Anse has never sweated and will never do so also reinforces the humor of his character by making him exceptionally lazy; the excuse that he will die is good because only Anse believes it since not even his children believe him.

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Anse is a luckless man; he says so himself many times. "I am a luckless man. I have ever been (p. 18)," he claims, and seems to use this as an excuse for everything which happens to him. Unlike other men, Anse claims he does not curse his luck. When Anse reminisces about the road running past the house and how it has changed the expectations of the people in the house, he also explains his luck.

I have heard men cuss their luck, and right, for they were sinful men. But I do not say it's a curse on me, because I have done no wrong to be cussed by. I am not religious, I reckon. But peace is my heart: I know it is. I have done things but neither better nor worse than them that pretend otherlike, and I know that Old Marster will care for me as for ere a sparrow that falls. But it seems hard that a man in his need could be so flouted by a road. (p. 37)

Anse's righteousness is in itself amusing and becomes grotesque in light of his later actions where he uses his promise as an excuse to get new teeth. The truest thing he says in the speech is that he is not a religious man and even that becomes grotesque when we see him later at the funeral, all dressed and dignified by his grief. The least true thing he says is that the "old Marster" will care for him. If Anse were a reasonable or logical man, he would see that the "Old Marster" is deliberately flaunting him through the extremity of the occurrences; rather, Anse believes that is how the master is watching over him, the difference of opinion resulting in grotesque humor.

Anse displays the same characteristics when he contemplates the overflowing river and wishes the bridge were still up. He continually says "if the bridge was just up (p. 119)" without any realization of the irrevocable fact that the bridge is not up. In the wishing scene, Anse is either stupid or grotesquely funny and probably both. Further on,
Anse explains that the trouble is in turning back: "It's the turning back... It aint no luck in turning back (p. 133)." Anse dimly perceives that things are not going well and he seems to need some type of explanation since he himself is blameless. His little proverb fulfills the need by placing the blame on luck rather than a wrathful or annoyed god or on his own stupidity. The lucklessness of the man concludes when they attempt to finally bury Addie and they find they forgot their spade. While the children argue over buying another, Anse claims he will borrow one, believing there are Christians around who will help a man in his need but that his continual borrowings will not cause him to be "beholden." The incongruity of act and deed continually gives grotesque humor. For instance, Anse never wants to be beholden, "God knows" and uses that as an excuse to get the second team of mules after they drowned the first team; or when they buy raw cement for Cash's leg and need water to mix it, Anse wants to borrow some but claims he will not be beholden. "Then make some water yourself (p. 197)" Darl retorts. The answer increases the reader's sense of the grotesque by making us aware of the ridiculous extremes Anse goes to to stay out of any one's debt.

While Anse is luckless and unbehendon, he thinks he is a wily dealer. When he bargains with Snopes for a new mule team, Anse is really taken in an almost stockly humorous, tall tale bargaining kind of way. Anse gives a lot for the team while believing he got a good deal and the way he hedges in revealing that he gave Jewel's horse is funny as well. The grotesque humor comes when we see the real hurt Jewel suffers by the loss of the horse at the hands of his silly father. These characteristics
almost explain Anse as a stock comic figure: "Anse, with his hunchback, his whining, and his complete ineptitude, is almost a stock comic figure," says Tuck. Yet, the fusing of these elements with the rest of his character causes him to be a grotesquely humorous man rather than a stock comic figure. Anse never stops being the human buzzard; his attempts to get something for nothing result in his losing rather than winning.

Slatoff, too, sees Anse as essentially comic.

Much of the time he appears as an essentially comic character, a one-dimensional caricature of shiftlessness, ineptitude, and self-pity. How else can one think of a character . . . whose speech consists largely of the sort of reiterations that define a Dickens minor comic character.

It is important that Slatoff calls Anse a caricature because the nature of a caricature is exaggeration and exaggerating Anse's characteristics results in the picture of him as a buzzard and the grotesque laugh from the audience. Anse's lucklessness is even remarked by Peabody, who says "I knew that nobody but a luckless man could ever need a doctor in the face of a cyclone (pp. 40-41)." Peabody almost begrudges Anse his aid, because of Peabody's own difficulties in getting to the house; yet, Peabody comes through only to blame Anse for not calling him sooner, for begrudging the expense. Anse plays innocent to the charge although we see him do the same thing when it comes to Cash's leg. We see how continually "the distance between what Anse says and what he does is ironically and humorously emphasized." Incongruously, maybe the lord is looking out for this luckless man since Tull says that "I done holp him so much already I

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99 Tuck, p. 36.  100 Slatoff, p. 169.  101 Vickery, p. 238.
"can't quit now (p. 32)" and then later the townspeople say that the Lord, too, has helped Anse so much already that even He cannot quit now. The fact that the townspeople believe the Lord might look after Anse while the reader remarks the impossibility of the Lord's doing so provides for the grotesque humor of the situation.

There are a few grotesquely humorous pictures of Anse in the book besides the brief picture of Anse sitting on the porch like a buzzard. There is the extended description of Anse at the death and funeral services for Addie beginning with Darl's description of Anse at the death bed after Dewey Dell has smoothed the covers and left the room.

Pa stands over the bed, dangle-armed, humped, motionless. He raises his hand to his head, scurrying his hair, listening to the saw. He comes nearer and rubs his hand, palm and back, on his thigh and lays it on her face and then on the hump of quilt where her hands are. He touches the quilt as he saw Dewey Dell do, trying to smooth it up to the chin, but disarranging it instead. He tries to smooth it again, clumsily, his hand awkward as a claw, smoothing at the wrinkles which he made and which continue to emerge beneath his hand with perverse ubiquity, so that at last he desists, his hand falling to his side and stroking itself again, palm and back, on his thigh. The sound of the saw snores steadily into the room. Pa breathes with a quiet, rasping sound, mouthing the snuff against his gums. "God's will be done," he says. "Now I can get them teeth." (p. 51)

The last line of this paragraph has often been remarked as grotesquely funny when actually, the entire scene is grotesquely funny. First, the description of Anse, "dangle-armed" and "humped" reminds us of the buzzard; then he scratches himself like a monkey, another picture which adds to the humor. When he tries to smooth the covers for Addie, he only succeeds in wrinkling them since even in death he cannot let his poor wife rest. His hand becomes a claw rather than a hand because it is also awkward, thereby adding to the grotesque creature which is Anse.
Finally, Anse's comment is grotesquely funny because we cannot at first see any logic to his announcement. How death should lead to teeth is not apparent until we get some explanation later that money and a town visit have kept Anse from getting his teeth but now that he must go to Jefferson to bury Addie, he can kill two birds with one stone, so to speak. Later, when Anse tries to help Cash finish the coffin, he gets drenched in the pouring rain, but he "Dont begrudge her the wetting (p. 74)" he says providing the grotesque laughter both at the scene and Anse's comment.

This scene at the death bed is only a prelude to the more extremely grotesquely funny scene at the funeral services where, Anse plays the role of the publicly grieving widower while inwardly feeling dignified and enriched. Swiggart explains some of the humor of the scene when he says that "Faulkner qualifies Anse for his comic role by depriving him of any human qualities which might support his public mask of grieving widower."102 Externally, Anse is a grieving soul; internally, or genuinely, he is another creature altogether and the difference between the two provides for the grotesque humor of the scene. Here is Tull's description of Anse.

Anse meets us at the door. He has shaved, but not good. There is a long cut on his jaw, and he is wearing his Sunday pants and a white shirt with the neckband buttoned. It is drawn smooth over him hump, making it look bigger than ever, like a white shirt will, and his face is different too. He looks folks in the eye now, dignified, his face tragic and composed, shaking us by the hand as we walk up onto the porch and scrape our shoes, a little stiff in our Sunday clothes, . . . (p. 81)

As with Addie, Anse attempts to fix himself for the public and the ordeal

102Swiggart, p. 111.
but only succeeds in messing himself worse; he cannot even shave without mutilating himself. The contrast of his cut jaw and the white buttoned neckband of the shirt is funny and becomes more so when we realize that is the extent of Anse's preparation for his wife's burial. We might expect Anse to wear a tie or coat for the occasion but all he can do is get his shirt buttoned. The scene becomes more grotesquely humorous when we remember Anse's announcement that he could get his new teeth because Addie died and we can almost see Anse anxious to get her into the ground so he can chaw on a steak.

The final scene of Anse with his new teeth is the culmination of the grotesque comedy of the novel in some ways. As Slatoff says, "As I Lay Dying ends with Pa's acquisition of new teeth and a new wife, a cynical, almost farcical note."103 The scene itself is grotesquely funny occurring almost immediately after the burial. Pa has mysteriously gotten a shave and combed and slicked himself; he even smells "sweet with perfume (p. 248)," and perfume on Anse is itself grotesquely funny. When Anse is all gussied up, he asks the kids if they have any more money so we wonder what he has up his sleeve because we have forgotten about the teeth. Cash does not bother to ask why Anse wants the money because there is none; Peabody had to give them the money to stay the night in a hotel. Here there is further grotesque humor in the difference between word and deed as Anse claims to be beholden to no one but has just stayed the night in a hotel at some one else's expense. Anse never bothers to thank Peabody

but only asks Cash for more money. Cash answers that if there is something they need, they could probably ask Peabody for more help but Anse says there is nothing more they need. We wonder again what he has up his sleeve and we find out when Cash describes the scene. "We see them coming up the street. Pa was coming along with that kind of daresome and hangdog look all at once like when he has been up to something he knows ma aint going to like, carrying a grip in his hand . . . (p. 249)."

This alone is grotesquely funny because of Anse's guilty expression, and the reader begins to prepare for the worst. It is exceptionally funny that what Anse has done, "ma aint going to like" because no one seems to notice or care about the fact that ma is dead and just recently buried although she still exudes a presence for the family which is about to be scandalized. Jewel announces that pa "got them teeth."

It was a fact. It made him look a foot taller, kind of holding his head up, hangdog and proud too, and then we see her behind him, carrying the other grip--a kind of duck-shaped women all dressed up, with them kind of hard-looking pop eyes like she was daring ere a man to say nothing. (p. 249)

Anse's appearance is grotesquely funny: his slicked down hair, spindly limbs, perfume, hump, and new teeth all add to the grotesque picture.

Then, too, the woman is grotesquely funny in her "duck-shaped" form with her pop eyes, all dressed up for the occasion. There are also a few other grotesque touches to the scene. Dewey Dell and Vardamen, eating bananas as the woman and Anse arrive, are so surprised at the proceedings that they stop eating and their mouths hang open. The picture reminds us of the scene in a zoo at feeding time with the monkeys surprised by a loud child or something. Here, the monkeys are Dewey Dell and Vardaman with
the "half-et bananas" in their hands and the other half-et bananas in their mouths. Finally, Anse gets around to introducing the woman, "kind of hangdog and proud too, with his teeth and all, even if he wouldn't look at us (p. 250)." The picture of Anse with new teeth is grotesquely funny but is increasingly so when he announces "meet Mrs. Bundren." That Anse could have met, courted, proposed to, and married a woman all in the space of a few hours in grotesquely humorous, that any woman would have the creature Anse causes more grotesque humor because we wonder whatever possessed her to go with him. These final lines of the book surprise and delight the audience with their grotesque twist to the events since Anse has succeeded in killing more than two birds with one stone on this trip to Jefferson: he has buried one wife, gotten new teeth, and found and married a new wife. Anse is certainly returning laden with new possessions since not only does he have the teeth and the woman, he also has her dowry which consists of a portable phonograph which is just the prize to delight the children and make them forget the grief of their mother's death! So, Cash's money has not been spent in vain; it has actually done double duty, to get Anse teeth and a wife and thereby indirectly, to get Cash his phonograph. The human buzzard has returned victoriously in possession of his prizes.

The rest of the characters of the novel are also as grotesque as Anse in their own smaller ways. Anse is the driving force of the events of the story and therefore has greater stature as a grotesque humorous character. Yet, Cash, Vardaman, Dewey Dell, Cora, Peabody and Addie herself all have attributes of the grotesque which contribute to the total grotesque humor of the novel.
Cash's most obvious characteristic, his literalness or reasonableness, results in some grotesque humor early in the novel when Jewel gives us a one line story. "It's like when he was a little boy and she says if she had some fertilizer she would try to raise some flowers and he taken the bread pan and brought it back from the barn full of dung (p. 14)." This one line is itself grotesquely funny but also shows up the extreme literalness with which Cash acts. Any good farmer would defend Cash's action of using dung for fertilizer, but any good housewife would scream in indignation at his using her bread pan to carry it. The wide divergence between the object and its container adds to the grotesque humor, yet, when you think about it, it's not as extreme as we first imagined because to raise flowers is, in a way, like raising bread. But then we are again struck by the grotesqueness of the situation. We can also see Cash's literalness when he replies to the question of how far he fell from the church when he broke his leg: "twenty-eight foot, four and a half inches, about (p. 85)." Finally, the most grotesquely funny thing Cash does is to give his literal reasons for building Addie's coffin the way he does. Where we might expect someone to resort to saying it was a labor of love and leaving that as justification for the extreme care taken, Cash gives us a list of thirteen logical reasons. One reason, number six, reads "Except," which is grotesquely funny until we unravel the entire passage and find that it is not really thirteen different reasons, but several all run together and then almost arbitrarily separated and numbered. Some of the reasons are grotesquely funny by themselves; for instance, one says that "A body is not square like a crosstie." Such an obvious truth is not necessarily
funny but becomes so when we remember the literalness with which Cash sees things. He also says he beveled the coffin because of "Animal magnetism," and again, we are not sure this means anything until we remember Cash and then a small, grotesque logic appears when we get the following explanation about stresses on a slant. Finally, Cash says, "It makes a neater job (p. 78)" which is almost the most logical reason of all until we remember that Cash beveled the thing at the cost of a drenching in the rain and in the middle of the night so the grotesque humor of the scene rather than its reasonableness is apparent. One characteristic of grotesque humor was the extreme to which the humor was taken and we have a good example here in many ways. When a single reason, the final logical one, might suffice for an explanation for the job, Cash gives "thirteen" semi-logical and totally illogical ones; where emotion might explain the task, Cash resorts to dubious reason. As McCole says, "the screeching of the saw outside the window serves as a painful and horrible accompaniment to the macabre scene within the dirty house,"104 and Cash is the cause of that screeching and the grotesque humor.

Vardaman is another grotesquely humorous character in two particular actions: he continually claims "My mother is a fish," and he shoos the buzzards off her coffin. (He is also grotesquely comic when he drills the holes in the coffin but that action will be discussed later with the other grotesque actions of the novel.) It is partially understandable how Vardaman came to the conclusion that his mother is a fish since, early in the story, he catches a fish "nigh long as he is (p. 29)" and

104 McCole, p. 208.
brings it up to the house because "I aim to show it to ma" he explains. There is some argument about his cleaning it but he does eventually, so there is the association of the fish being dead and later his mother being dead. He is upset over the blood and his mother's death and the line that "my mother is a fish" is a sort of refrain throughout the book, providing a grotesque laugh whenever it sounds because we visualize the fish as Faulkner describes it.

Vardaman comes back and picks up the fish. It slides out of his hands, smearing wet dirt onto him, and flops down, dirtying itself again, gapmouthed, goggle-eyed, hiding into the dust like it was ashamed of being dead, like it was in a hurry to get back hid again (p. 30).

Along with his refrain, Vardaman is grotesquely funny when he is shooing the buzzards off his mother's coffin. At an earlier point, Jewel mentioned that the lady visitors were "sitting there, like buzzards. Waiting, fanning themselves (p. 14)." Visualizing Anse as a buzzard and the visiting women as buzzards adds to the humor of the scene when we see Vardaman with the real creatures. Armstid tells the story.

There must have been a dozen of them setting along the ridge-pole of the barn, and that boy was chasing another one around the lot like it was a turkey and it just lifting enough to dodge him and go flopping back to the roof of the shed again where he had found it setting on the coffin. (p. 178)

The buzzards wait patiently in a row like crows on a fence but the humor becomes grotesque because they are buzzards and not crows. Then, Vardaman chases one around the barnyard as if he were a little boy playing with a pet. Armstid even says the animal was like a turkey flapping around. The game they play is grotesquely funny because the buzzards are smart enough to just evade Vardaman rather than going entirely away; they know they
will win in the end and so are not worried enough to retreat. Vardaman does not know that his action is useless and so sweeps around the yard in an attempt to keep the buzzards away from his mother. The reader knows who will win the game too, and so is grotesquely amused by Vardaman's antics.

Dewey Dell is another grotesquely humorous character in her belief in determinism. The first picture we have of Dewey Dell is when she is fanning her mother like a mechanical device which is made to sweep its arm in idle motion. She is hardly human; she does not talk or move or even seem to think. She has been fanning her mother this way for ten days and we can almost imagine that she has never moved. Yet, Dewey Dell does contemplate something when she talks about "picking down the row." On that occasion, she says that if the sack is full at the end of the row it will not be her fault if she succumbs to Lafe because then it would have been meant all along. When Lafe picks into her sack, she does not object or change her deterministic ideas at all, and so now she is pregnant but it is not her fault, a kind of earth mother figure and a prefiguring of such characters as Lena Grove. Dewey Dell's determination appears as more grotesque humor when she changes clothes just before they get to Jefferson. Throughout the journey, she has had a package under her arm and somewhere along the line Anse and the rest of us think that the package contains Cora's cakes for sale in the city. Actually, the package contains Dewey Dell's Sunday clothes which she changed into under the guise of needing to stop to relieve herself. Darl describes her: "she now wears her Sunday dress, her beads, her shoes and stockings."
The picture of Dewey Dell is grotesquely funny after all she has gone through to keep the clothes which must be in quite a state after being tied in newspaper for ten days. But then, Anse's remark heightens the humor because he knows his daughter in ways which the reader does not.

Dewey Dell also partakes in an extremely grotesquely funny scene when she arrives in town and attempts to get something for her troubles at the local drugstore since an earlier attempt in Mottson was unsuccessful. MacGowan is the soda jerk at the fountain who happens to be in the store at lunch time when the proprieter is out and he can maneuver to his heart's content. MacGowan begins by not wanting to take care of Dewey Dell and says to tell her that "all the doctors have gone to Memphis to a Barbers' Convention (p. 231)," a comment which is grotesquely humorous by itself. Then, he decides that Dewey Dell is good looking enough to fuss over, so takes off his apron and goes to wait on her. She asks if he is the doctor and he claims he is so the resulting laugh is grotesque because we know he is really a soda jerk. Then, the second clerk, Jody, complains that he is not getting any of the action; MacGowan's comment is "What the hell do you think this is? . . . a studfarm?" The comment is facetious but true and the difference in point of view between his view and the reader's provides the grotesque humor. When MacGowan finally realizes what Dewey Dell wants, he remarks that she is not married or wearing a ring "but like as not, they aint heard yet out there that they use rings (p. 233)." Thinking he cannot lose, MacGowan gives her something to drink which smells like turpentine but will not tell Jody because "it wouldn't be ethical (p. 234)."
Throughout the scene, MacGowan's statements and actions have been grotesquely funny because he attempts to act like a doctor with a bedside manner, while we really know that he is a soda jerk. Finally, he cannot serve Dewey Dell before his boss comes back so he tells her to return for the rest of the treatment later tonight. That evening, she returns and he claims "I cant put no price on my knowledge and skill (p. 236)," when she says that she has ten dollars to give him. A real doctor might make such a statement but coming from him makes it grotesquely funny. Then, when Dewey Dell asks about the rest of the treatment, he says that she takes it in the cellar where we do not actually know what he does to her except give her six capsules filled with talcum powder; we can certainly imagine more than that. Dewey Dell, in a fit of brilliance, announces "It aint going to work . . . that son of a bitch (p. 241)." With her line, the grotesque humor is complete because we knew it all along but Dewey Dell only now realizes it after all the other absurd events.

Cora Tull seems to be Addie's best friend and one of the reader's best sources of grotesque humor. Cora is almost a stock humorous gossip figure but the content and manner of many of her statements bring them out of stock humor into the realm of the grotesque. Cora is a "scatter brain . . . treated humorously," a righteous hypocrite who is nosy but disguises it under the appearance of concern. When Cora visits Addie, Cora almost begrudges Addie the time because she has been neglecting her

own man and family in order to comfort the dying woman. We know what Addie thinks of that comfort and so get a grotesque chuckle when Cora turns on her self-sacrificing righteous lines. Cora explains herself this way.

Why for the last three weeks I have been coming over every time I could, coming sometimes when I shouldn't have, neglecting my own family and duties so that somebody would be with her in her last moments and she would not have to face the Great Unknown without one familiar face to give her courage. (p. 21)

That Cora's nosiness could comfort any one at the time of their death is a grotesquely funny thought as is her belief in the "Great Unknown" unshared by Addie. Addie should be giving Cora the advice and that reversal of situations results in more humor. Cora also seems to forget that Addie's entire family is around and that Addie might prefer to see them in her last minutes rather than Cora. Yet, because the Bundrens are as grotesque as they are, maybe Addie would prefer Cora's righteousness and nosiness to her own family. Cora is continually coming up with little amusing proverbs which result in more grotesque humor such as "the reason the Lord had to create women is because man dont know his own good when he sees it (p. 69)." The reversal of expectations and the extremity of the statement results in the grotesqueness of its humor. When Cora hears about the log which overturned the wagon with Addie's coffin, she says, "Log; fiddlesticks . . . It was the hand of God (p. 145)." Again, her trite beliefs and her righteousness provide the reader with grotesque humor because we know the genuine state of affairs. The best of Cora's proverbs is her explanation of how she saved out eggs to make the cakes, and then how she swapped extra eggs for the flour and butter for the cakes, and therefore, how the cakes haven't cost her anything. The punch line comes
when the woman will not take the cakes and Cora says, "It's not everybody can eat their mistakes (p. 9)." The absurdity of the conclusion after the elaborate explanation of baking and saving and the fact that the town woman changed her mind cause grotesque humor. But, we also have the explanation that "those rich town ladies can change their minds. Poor folks can't (p. 7)," which is so grotesquely funny because of the attitudes of the country folks it emphasizes juxtaposed with the reality of the statement. Again, the extremity of the explanations given for a comparatively insignificant event is what causes the humor to become grotesque and which results in the reader's laughter with Cora.

Finally, Peabody is another source of the grotesque humor of the novel. Simply his description is grotesque: he is extremely fat and awkward and Dewey Dell continually calls him "a tub of guts." At first, Dr. Peabody is almost a figure for stock comic relief: "Dr. Peabody . . . is put in just to afford a sort of comic relief or a definite purpose . . . Mainly it was to give for the moment what may be called a nudge of credibility to a condition which was getting close to the realm of unbelief." Yet, the appearance of the doctor adds to the disbelief because of his extreme size, and Dewey Dell's judgement that he is a "tub of guts." Much of what the doctor says might be straight comic relief if it were not said in such exaggerated or extreme circumstance; everything colored by Addie's death takes on an absurd and grotesque light.

Peabody's proverbs are humorous. When Anse finally sent for Peabody, he says that it is a "damn good thing (p. 40)" that Anse has finally worn

106. Gwynand Blotner, p. 113.
Addie out. "At first I would not go because there might be something I could do and I would have to haul her back, by God. I thought maybe they have the same sort of fool ethics in heaven they have in the Medical College (p. 40)." The difference between how we expect a doctor to act and how this man acts results in the humor but the grotesqueness comes when we realize that we are supposed to accept this quack as a doctor and the chill of fear we get in thinking that such things are possible. We would certainly not want to be treated by a man like Peabody but find it grotesquely amusing when he attempts to treat Addie. Peabody also says little things like it's "too bad the Lord made the mistake of giving trees roots and giving the Anse Bundrens He makes feet and legs. If He'd just swapped them, there wouldn't ever be a worry about this country being deforested someday (p. 41)." At first, the lines make sense and we laugh at what seems to be an ordinary joke at the expense of Anse; then, we laugh at the grotesque picture of Anse as a tree or a tree as Anse. Then, the grotesque humor is heightened because we have more feelings and sadness for the tree than we do for Anse; somehow, the trees would be getting the worse part of that deal.

The entire scene where Peabody attempts to get to the Bundren's house is grotesquely humorous because of the circumstances, the figure of the doctor and his comments on the affair. When Anse says that Peabody will have to walk up to the house, Peabody asks incredulously "Walk up that durn wall? (p. 41)" His tone is amusing and his own semi-objective view of himself is also grotesquely funny because we do not expect such a gross man to be unembarrassed about his figure. Then he asks "what do you aim
for me to do... Stay here and get blown clean out of the county when that cloud breaks?" The visual picture of this 225-pound doctor whirling away in the cyclone is grotesquely funny, but the situation is resolved when Vardaman arrives with the plow line and rigs it up to help hoist the doctor up the hill. Peabody announces that "I done already wrote this visit onto my books, so I'm going to charge you just the same, whether I get there or not (p. 42)." At first, the line is stockily funny, but then it becomes grotesquely funny when we remember Peabody is only keeping his books until he gets to the fifty thousand dollar mark of dead accounts. That no one ever pays Peabody and that he continues to keep the books of debts owed add to the grotesqueness of the picture. Finally, Peabody achieves the top of the hill, but not without a retort: "What the hell does your wife mean... taking sick on top of a durn mountain?" The extreme exaggerations provide for the grotesque humor of the lines since Audie has no power over her getting ill as the doctor seems to imply. The hill is nothing near a mountain in size; the perspective of it is from Peabody's eyes and so the exaggeration is funny because we think of him as being big as a barn. Finally, Peabody says that "when I was young I believed death to be a phenomenon of the body; now I know it to be merely a function of the mind (p. 42)." The grotesque humor comes from the realization of the meaning of the line where at first, we would like to believe Peabody because then we might cheat death if the mind were strong enough. But then, we know that the first part of his statement is almost more true than the latter part of it and we are saddened. The thought that possibly Audie might have some say so in her death and thereby plan this as a judgement
on Anse causes us to hope it is so and laugh at the possibility. The proverbial sound of the statement blinds us for a moment to its true meaning: when we realize that Peabody believes Addie is simply tired of Anse, we roar with laughter and the hope that it is so.

Generally, all the characters of the story speak from their own points of view but some of the time we have the Bundrens commenting about each other. The book almost becomes "a series of soliloquies, each designed to give us a different point of view toward the series of horrors--to light up, as it were, a different facade of this temple of pain and grotesquerie." McCole means that nothing which we hear from any one point of view makes anything any better; everything we hear simply adds to the horror and the grotesque humor of the characters. Vickery explains how the detachment necessary for grotesque humor works with these characters.

Because only the actions of the Bundrens and not their thoughts and emotions are perceived, they become grotesques. What is horror and pain for the family becomes farce for those who are not themselves involved and who merely observe with the physical eye. For the Bundrens, the journey seethes with unresolved tensions; for the townspeople of Mottson, it is only a ridiculous or macabre spectacle. This intermingling of humor and horror, which is part of the very texture of *As I Lay Dying*, issues out of the Bundrens' conviction that their actions are eminently reasonable and out of the spectators' conviction that the Bundrens and their coffin have long since passed beyond the realm of reason, logic, or even commonsense. The juxtaposition of the two views gives rise to a complicated and ambivalent feeling of hilarity and despair.

Miss Vickery is certainly right in the analysis and all we need do is add that the mixture of hilarity and despair results in the grotesque humor. Also, sometimes, the townspeople become involved in the actions and therefore find them scandalous such as when Armstid's wife keeps crying that

it is an outrage when Vardaman is shooing the buzzards off the smelly coffin. We, the readers, always stay detached enough to see the grotesque humor and never get even involved as much as some of the town. For the reader, the grotesque humor of character never fails.

Just as all the characters of As I Lay Dying are completely grotesque, so too all the actions of the novel are completely grotesque humor. This is as it should be since action usually evolves out of character. The comic action is usually an extreme one, a distortion of what is expected. Pushed to a further extreme, and with the addition of a result that is unpleasant or perhaps repulsive, the comic often becomes grotesque.109 We are reminded of the characteristic of extremity necessary to the grotesque; many ordinary actions become grotesquely humorous when pushed to some unpleasant extreme. The other characteristic necessary for the grotesque to be effective is the detachment of the audience, explained this way: "The series of catastrophes that befall the Bundrens becomes a source of macabre humor, for it is only when the ritual is disengaged from its symbolic function that the comic aspect becomes apparent."110 When we or the characters in the action are too involved in the action, the grotesque humor fails to be effective, so Armstid's wife complains that the coffin is an "outrage" because it is her barn and yard that the coffin is smelling up and the buzzards are invading, while to the reader, her reaction and the action itself are grotesquely humorous. Every single small action of the novel adds to the grotesque

109 Tuck, p. 36.  
110 Vickery, p. 53.
effect; the entire journey itself is grotesquely humorous. Because of Addie's promise drawn from her husband, the entire novel depicts the trek which becomes a joke on Anse, the Bundrens, and the reader as well. Partially, the laughter and "the horror of the novel . . . [are] that men and women are playing parts in a joke," with the extremity of that joke providing for the grotesque humor of the action of As I Lay Dying.

The first grotesque humor of action in As I Lay Dying concerns the actions of Addie's children in the circumstances. Cash constructs his mother's coffin outside her window, while she lies inside, dying and just the juxtaposition of the two facts gives grotesque laughter. Addie is thin as a rail and frail; she has not moved in ten days. The family and the reader know she will die soon. Outside her window, we might expect a tree and a sparrow and therefore opportunity for the author to comment on the comfort of a past good life and a family when dying; instead, we have the grotesquely humorous action of Cash making the coffin. Darl and Jewel too, act humorously when they are approaching the house. Jewel is behind and when he gets to the house, we would expect him to go around since his goal is somewhere on the other side. Instead, "looking straight ahead, [he] steps in a single stride through the window. Still staring straight ahead, . . . he crosses the floor in four strides with the rigid gravity of a cigar store Indian . . . and steps in a single stride through the opposite window and into the path again (p. 4)." The action becomes grotesquely funny for the audience because Jewel does not even break his

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Arthos, p. 116.
stride as he goes through rather than around the house. The fact that Jewel should go through windows instead of doors if he were going through the house adds to the grotesqueness of the humor. Almost, just almost, we might visualize someone going through a house as a shorter route than around it, but they most certainly would go through the doors. Here, we have Jewel doing something almost reasonable but making it grotesque by stepping through the windows. We laugh at the picture so we forget to even question why the windows should be placed at exactly the right points for Jewel to step through them, or why they should both be entirely open, or why they do not have screens on them, or why they are so big that Jewel can walk through them. Instead, we see Jewel as a kind of superman striding through life giving us a grotesque chuckle by the extremity of his action.

Now, the pace of the action increases slightly. Addie dies, the rain storm comes, Vardaman goes to get Tull as a witness that Peabody killed his ma. Cash has not yet finished the coffin and we would expect him to hurry a little more because of the death and because of the rain. That hurry might almost become grotesquely funny since we would think that Cash should have had enough notice with Addie lying there for ten days to get the coffin finished in time. Instead, Cash refuses to hurry and even determines that he has to bevel the edges despite the fact that will take longer; the exaggerated slow motion scene in the rain is grotesquely funny. Underlining Cash's grotesque slow motion job, is Vardaman's more frantic activity. The child is incapable or refuses to admit his mother's death and is afraid she will not be able to breathe, so, despite the rain, he
opens the window to Addie's room and the rain and wind blow in on her body. The extreme contrast of the tempest outside with Addie's immobility coupled with Vardaman's mad actions adds to the grotesque humor. But the soggy body and the drenched coffin are not enough; again the action must be taken a step further into the extreme. Tull gives us the story.

... at last they put her into it and nailed it down so he couldn't open the window on her no more. And the next morning they found him in his shirt tail, laying asleep on the floor like a felled steer, and the top of the box bored clean full of holes and Cash's new awer broke off in the last one. When they taken the lid off they found that two of them had bored on into her face. (pp. 69-70)

The abruptness of the announcement causes our surprise and at first we disbelieve what we have read but when we reread the passage there is no mistake. The grotesque action is complete and we laugh because of the extremity of the action. We can sympathize with Vardaman's desire that his mother be able to breathe or even feel sorry for the boy who has lost his mother. We can almost accept his actions of continually opening the window for her, but when we see that he has drilled holes in the coffin, we begin to be outraged. For that, we could almost chastize the boy since it is not proper. And finally, when we see that he has drilled holes in his mother's face, the only reaction we can have is a mixture of horror and humor. We laugh through the chills. The logic motivating the action is almost sound and we are almost primed to accept the action, but then the extremity of the resolution of the action will only allow us that grotesque laugh because we are disengaged personally from the action. If such a thing really happened we would be troubled but because we always
have the psychological excuse that this is only a novel, the hurt and outrage do not hurt as much. If the same thing occurred to someone we knew, we would be scandalized, but here it is funny because we can remain detached from the action.

The remainder of the funeral scene reinforces and carries on the grotesque humor of action. Where we figure we have had enough, Faulkner says "oh, no" and we are on to some more grotesque laughs. Now, we see Cash's attempts to repair the holes in the coffin. Again, Cash seems to work in slow motion and thereby gives us more grotesque humor; Tull says, he is trimming out plugs for them, one at a time, the wood wet and hard to work. He could cut up a tin can and hide the holes and nobody wouldn't know the difference. Wouldn't mind, anyway. I have seen him spend a hour trimming out a wedge like it was glass he was working, when he could have reached around and picked up a dozen sticks and drove them into the joint and made it do. (p. 82)

The extreme care of Cash's actions under these adverse circumstances lends to the grotesque humor. When they are ready to nail Addie in her coffin a second time, we get a glimpse of the scene: the coffin "tight as a drum and neat as a sewing basket (p. 83)," itself a grotesquely funny comparison. But Addie lies in her coffin backwards!

They had laid her in it head to foot so it wouldn't crush her dress. It was her wedding dress and it had a flare-out bottom, and they laid her head to foot in it so the dress could spread out, and they had made her a veil out of a mosquito bar so the auger holes in her face wouldn't show. (p. 83)

The extremity of the actions is what makes them so grotesquely funny.

Addie becomes a bride with wedding dress and veil rather than being the corpse she is; her life almost defies death. Then she is placed in the coffin upside down so her dress will not get crushed. We might almost
accept any excuse for her placement except such an absurdly silly one.
The best part of the action is the attempt to cover the holes in her face.
Nothing so reasonable as a hat veil was used; we might almost have been
able to accept that. Instead, her face is covered with mosquito netting
and the grotesque laughter is complete. What began as a simple but sad
funeral ends in grotesque laughter because of the actions of Vardaman
drilling the holes and the rest of the family's attempts to repair or
cover that damage. Nothing about the actions is entirely reasonable and
we laugh at the grotesque because of the extreme to which the action is
taken.

But still Addie refuses to die. The mourners now attempt to load her
coffin onto the wagon for the journey to Jefferson, but the coffin seems to
take on a life of its own. Jewel is the motivating force in the action of
the scene, the one to first pick up the coffin and to swear at the others
to carry their own weight. Darl describes the scene and says that they
"all spring into the lift to catch and balance it before he hurls it com-
pletely over (p. 91)." We are puzzled by Jewel's impatience so he becomes
almost irreverent and therefore funny. Ironically, Jewel seems to be scof-
fing at the ritual of calm and poise which accompanies the removing of a
coffin to a hearse. In this case, the coffin has holes in it, the pall
bearers are a mismatched set of children and neighbors, and the hearse is
a decrepit wagon. The procession moves out the door and down the steps
"balancing it as though it were something infinitely precious (p. 92)."
We remember the contents and the circumstances and smile at this action.
We begin to wonder when the grotesque will surface; these people are
almost acting too sensibly. Jewel complicates the action when he refuses to pause at the stairs so the men can balance the coffin for the descent. When Cash wants to stop to get another helper for the hill, Jewel refuses to wait, and even dares Cash to leave. We get the action best straight from Earl's description.

Jewel carries the entire front end alone, so that, tilting as the path begins to slant, it begins to rush away from me and slip down the air like a sled upon invisible snow, smoothly evacuating atmosphere in which the sense of it is still shaped.

"Wait, Jewel," I say. But he will not wait. He is almost running now and Cash is left behind. It seems to me that the end which I now carry alone has no weight, as though it coasts like a rushing straw upon the furious tide of Jewel's despair. I am not even touching it when, turning, he lets it overshoot him, swinging, and stops it and sloughs it into the wagon bed in the same motion. (p. 93)

The scene is funny partly because the characters are so stubborn in their actions; they will not listen to each other and persist in their vain endeavors. The scene is also funny because the coffin has that life of its own; it is not the normal dead weight entity. The comparison between the coffin and a sled adds to the grotesque humor although at first we question the logic of the comparison because the two things are so extremely different. But then, the extremity of the comparison provides us with the grotesque laugh, and the coffin is further compared to a straw in the wind. The cosmic view of the circumstances distances the audience enough from the action so that we can laugh at the scene. The final sentence seems to put the crowning touch on the grotesque humor. Jewel stops and lets the coffin overtake him, executing its own maneuvers at the end, doing a pirouette in air and finally settling in the wagon. The action has become increasingly frantic in an attempt to keep the coffin under control. It has been partially successful since the coffin is where it should be,
although it got there only through some grotesque footwork. Again, because we are not involved in the action and only observe it from a distance, we can laugh at the almost circus antics of these strange people.

The journey begins and meets only minor difficulties such as washed out bridges. Anse leads the party back and around in an attempt to get across the river. We remember him saying he was a luckless man and now we begin to anticipate the results of that luck. Finally, the attempt to ford the river with the coffin is one of the funniest grotesque scenes of the novel. Anse, Vardaman and Dewey Dell are useless in the endeavor and so are allowed to very carefully maneuver the nearly submerged bridge on foot while Darl, Cash and Jewel will attempt the ford with the wagon. Jewel is first to set across the raging river astride his precious horse. Cash laments that he had not come the previous week to take "a sight on it." Then the mood begins to build when Cash complains that the coffin "ain't on a balance (p. 137)." Now, we have the premonition that something bad might occur because we remember Cash's earlier warning about the balance of the coffin. Jewel again forces the action when he demands they get it across rather than going on down further as Vardaman is suggesting with his waving arms. Darl proposes a scheme but it involves Jewel's leaving his horse and so Jewel refuses as the tension builds and preparations are made. Cash attempts to secure the tools, which should logically have been taken off by Vardaman or Anse, and to balance the coffin, which also should have been done earlier. The mules do not want to participate in the activities and the people almost become as stubborn as the mules in their determination to get across the river. We almost commend the
people for their determination in light of such adversity, but they be- come grotesquely humorous by the extremity of their actions because even the mules have more sense than to go about the business as these crazed people are doing. They seem to be doing all right until the log, the "hand of God" and the pen of Faulkner, comes into the scene. Now, for a while, all is complete pandemonium. The mules drown and turn over, legs in the air and swirl around in the raging water. The wagon tilts dangerously, the coffin is off into the water and we see it, again with a kind of life of its own, swirling on down the current. Cash is also trying to save his tools from being dispersed into the waters. Vardaman is ashore screaming not to let his mother the fish get away. Tull is standing in the water yelling at Anse that it is his fault disaster has struck. To complicate matters. Cash cannot swim. But all this frantic activity does have a reso-

lution which is just as grotesquely humorous as the activity. Cash is dragged ashore with a broken leg holding to Jewel's horse; luckily it is the same leg he broke previously, the "luckily" argument causing grotesque laughter. Vernon and Jewel attempt to get Cash's tools back by diving for them and arguing over how to do it. Darl brings the coffin ashore, riding it like some sort of watery bucking bronco. It has gotten mud smeared but Anse is helpful; he is "scrubbing at the two mud smears with a handful of leaves (p. 155)" and complaining about his misfortune.

The entire scene has been grotesquely funny and we wonder why these people have no sense. Even now, when they might give up and make repara-

tion for their former stupidity by burying Addie as soon as they get Cash's leg taken care of, they persist in being absurd. They will
continue the journey! Addie is certainly getting her revenge for her life of having to live with these grotesque people. Logically, Cash should be left with the doctor and one of the boys so his leg can be taken care of. Also logically, they should bury Addie soon; finally, logically, they should return home and seek in their hearts forgiveness for their stupidity. But, no, Faulkner will not allow them to do anything so sensible. Cash must come along despite his leg, and they must continue the journey only pausing to obtain a new mule team. Because the Bundrens flaunt their stupidity through their brazen actions, the audience can laugh at the actions, the exaggeration and the scandal because we are sufficiently separated from that action.

The pause to get a new mule team is only temporary and the journey continues, out of the frying pan into the fire. When we hope there might be some sense returning to the people because of their most recent tragedy, they persist in their headlong plunge into the grotesque. In town, they are hurried along by the marshall because of the stench of the coffin while Anse argues with the marshall that he has as much right to be on the public street as any other man. The pilgrims pause to patch Cash's leg with the crude cement they purchased, a dime's worth from an entire huge bag they made the proprietor open just to get them out of the store. These people are repulsive in their actions and they become more so as the journey draws to a close. Darl, the crazy one, sets Gillespie's barn afire in an attempt to get rid of the stench. His action is much more sensible than anything we have seen the family do yet, but the way the people take Darl's action and the resulting circus scene are grotesquely funny.
Darl and Gillespie attempt to get the animals out of the burning barn using their night shirts to cover the eyes of the animals so the animals will not be afraid and will leave the barn. The figures are silhouetted, naked in the light of the fire. The cow comes rushing from the barn while the people are watching the loft dissolve in flames. "With a single whisling breath she rushes between us and through the gap into the outer glare, her tail erect and rigid as a broom nailed upright to the end of her spine (pp. 210-211)." The description itself is funny but the action becomes grotesque when we realize the genuine devastation being wrecked. We hope that the coffin is destroyed so the foolishness of these people can be eliminated, but not so since Jewel saves the coffin. Again, the coffin seems to take on a life of its own as Jewel single handedly upends the coffin and carries it from the flames like some grotesque Hercules.

... for another instant it stands upright ... Then it topples forward, gaining momentum, ... Without stopping it overends and rears again, pauses, then crashes slowly forward and through the curtain. This time Jewel is riding upon it, clinging to it, until it crashes down and flings him forward and clear ... (p. 212)

The description and word choice endow the coffin with life and make it seem like some kind of animal in a contest with Jewel. When we realize the truth of the circumstances, we laugh at the grotesque actions of the players. Instead of using the fire as an excuse to quit the ill-fated journey, Jewel must save the source of their agony and our grotesque laughter.

The entire journey is only concluded when they finally bury Addie in Jefferson after ten days. Even that final resolution is grotesquely funny
because Anse must borrow the tools and because only after the burial is Cash's leg taken care of properly. Then we also see how each of them used the journey for their own selfish ends and the scene is complete when Anse strides up with his new wife. What began as a simple death now ends in the grotesque laughter of the audience when we realize the monumental stupidity and grossness of the activities we have just witnessed. Because we can remain uninvolved with the activities, we are not hurt by them and can laugh at them. The subject of the novel has been death and burial, serious occurrences that are here turned into a grotesque circus. We begin to wonder why Faulkner made us laugh at the business rather than cry or be sympathetic, so we turn to an investigation of some of the techniques of the novel which result in its grotesque humor.

Critics have remarked the folk tale spirit of *As I Lay Dying* which, at first glance, should place the novel as stock humor. But when we recall the subject, death and burial, we note the first necessary characteristic for grotesque humor. The subject is a touchy one: it normally needs handling with gentleness and sincerity. What we have here might be sincere, but it is sincerely harsh and grotesque rather than gentle or sensible. "The novel is a folk comedy embodying tragedy, despair, and futility. These overtones are those particularly appropriate to Southwestern folk humor, which has been noted for its violence and cruelty." 112 The comment about violence and cruelty is especially important since we see so much of those in the novel. That they can still be funny is note-

112Miner, p. 116.
worthy, and that they can be grotesquely funny depends on the techniques used. The difference between folk humor or Southwestern humor and what we have here is outlined in this statement by Inge.

The material is handled so morbidly and grotesquely, that it is humor only of a macabre sort... In this respect, As I Lay Dying is like the yarn, as it too treats of the material and characters of Southwestern humor converted to a somberness and grotesqueness... a funeral procession which becomes a ridiculous or macabre spectacle. The journeys in both "Well! Dad's Dead" and As I Lay Dying become bizarre caricatures of what such sacred missions should be like... preponderant comic pessimism... keeps it from becoming... farcical.\footnote{113}

Certainly the humor of As I Lay Dying is partially grotesque because of its extreme since the material is often used but turned here into something quite different from the normal handling. Inge calls the funeral procession a "bizarre caricature" and his choice of words is especially important when we remember the need for extremity in grotesque humor; caricatures characteristically exaggerate the normal until it is extreme and laughable. Faulkner does some of the same with circumstances here: the novel is not farce or stock humor because of the seriousness of the subject and the continual impressions of frightening reality. The humor of As I Lay Dying is also like folk humor in its gustiness. "It has a quality of gusty humor (a sense of the outrageously grotesque heroic, related to the humor of the "tall tales" in folk literature) which is rare in Mr. Faulkner's work but which is always impressive when it appears."\footnote{114}


The likeness between the extreme exaggeration of folk tales and the exaggeration of *As I Lay Dying* is noteworthy, but the use to which the exaggeration is put in the novel turns the humor into a different mold, the grotesque humor. Certainly, *As I Lay Dying* is a funny and a good book but it becomes even more so with the addition of the grotesque element of humor, which serves to get the point over more easily. Tall tales were often grotesquely violent and the novel uses the quality since, "in one sense, *As I Lay Dying* is a comic novel that combines a humorous portrayal of country folk with the grotesque violence of the tall tales."\textsuperscript{115} That the violence is real and hurtful even as it is funny adds to the grotesque humor because of the detachment of the audience since involvement negates the effect of grotesque humor.

Another quality of grotesque humor is the tension arising from the events and the handling of that tension. The tragicomic nature of the novel adds to the tension since Faulkner "creates comic effects out of the material of personal tragedy."\textsuperscript{116} What first appears as tragedy we later see as laughable throughout the novel because Faulkner has mingled the elements of pain and laughter in the grotesque. The reader has some difficulty in knowing how to respond to the novel because of this tension.

The reader never quite knows what to take seriously and what to laugh at. Because of these artificial contradictions of tone, the total structure appears as fundamentally comic rather than tragic, as a mock-epic rather than epic. The comic structure is made possible by constant incongruity between the major characters and the situation in which they are involved.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{115}Backman, *Major Years* p. 62.  
\textsuperscript{116}Swiggart, p. 60.  
\textsuperscript{117}Swiggart, p. 57.
The reader’s reaction, though, is one of the most important aspects of grotesque humor because if the reader is offended rather than amused, the grotesque humor will fail. Throughout, the mock epic tone has come from the mingling of "the grotesque and the heroic, the comic and the pathetic . . . appreciating the heroic, he [the reader] may wonder whether his comic response is appropriate."118 The audience is attuned to both the comic and the pathetic and often we feel we are laughing when we should be crying or the other way around; then we realize that we must laugh at the entire thing because of its extremity since the grotesque laughter is not only appropriate but intended by Faulkner. As I Lay Dying is so funny because it reflects so much reality; the entire funeral journey is a picture of the fate of each of us. Yet the total experience of the novel is an experience of comedy, not tragedy; granted it is grotesque comedy but comedy nonetheless. The continual alternation between the spirit of comedy and the spirit of tragedy is the tone of tragicomedy or the result of the grotesque humor. That alternation leads to quite a tension which must be resolved but which can be resolved only through laughter. The process the reader goes through is as follows.

The only possible relief of tension . . . is that of withdrawal of sympathy . . . and a full appreciation of the comic or mock-epic elements . . . This lack of a fully comic or tragic resolution is part of the elaborate interplay between the serious and the burlesque that provides the novel with its mock-epic structure.119

Anse and the Bundrens are so extremely absurd we find it ultimately impossible to be sorry for them or sympathetic with them. They bring their

own devastation on themselves because of the stupidity and stubbornness
and so we only laugh at them and blame them rather than sympathizing
and identifying with them. The interplay between the serious and the
burlesque is a restatement of the tone and tension of grotesque humor
demonstrated by any incident in the entire novel and the resolving of the
tension in grotesque laughter.

Ultimately we must decide how to interpret this novel. Backman has
no hesitation in announcing that when Faulkner "fused anguish with comedy
... he struck a new note of affirmation." That affirmation might
be arguable but the purpose of the comedy is not; this is critical or
social comedy through grotesque laughter. When we ask ourselves why
Faulkner wrote this way, we come up with the proposition that he did not
like the Sutliffers or what they stood for, the "puritan heretics" that
most of these characters are. Cora Tull's pious hypocrisy is laughable
only because we are superior to her and do not deserve criticism ourselves.
The extreme literalness with which Anse carried out his promise ends up
in absurd, grotesque laughter. The entire novel almost becomes a warning
from Faulkner against stupidity and stubbornness and hypocrisy and a criti-
cism of the traditional, hollow but pious rituals of death. Waggoner has
an excellent way of putting the matter.

Faulkner's comedy, even with all his sharp awareness of social reali-
ties, is not in the last analysis social comedy but religious com-
edy ... Man's pretensions and his folly are amusing not so much
because he offends against manners and mores and good sense as because
he ignores and misconceives his position in nature.121

120 Backman, Major Years p. 66. 121 Waggoner, p. 211.
We can see how this is easily applicable to the Bundren's situations. Cora is a beautifully real portrait of a social hypocrite down to her comment that Kate's red necklace looks nice and no one would ever think it only cost twenty-five cents; the implied superiority of the comment is apparent but this is not its main purpose. Cora is only in the novel to play up and act as a foil for the Bundrens since through her and the preacher Whitfield we get comments and demonstrations of the differences between words and actions while Addie's entire soliloquy brings out this theme. Anse certainly offends against manners, mores and good sense with his dragging of the coffin through the countryside. But what prompts him to do so is his promise to Addie, a direct demonstration of his misconception of his position with her and with the world. Anse believes it is important to bury Addie in Jefferson when it does not really matter; what matters is how he thinks of himself and how that exaggeration allows the audience the grotesque laughter.

And so, what does it all mean? In the end, the theme is probably the most important point of the novel and how grotesque humor aided in developing that theme is reflected in the above discussion. It only remains to determine exactly what that theme might be. One important theme is the separation of word and deed as seen in the actions of Anse and the family. A more predominant theme with the critics seems to be the concerns with the phoniness of the rituals of society and how these are a commentary from Faulkner about the South and the world. As Vickery says, "Laughter is one means of re-examining the shibboleths of society and of
placing the individual and his world once more in perspective." In this case these shibboleths consist of the rituals of death and burial. That touchy subject results in the grotesque laughter of the novel and our assumption that Faulkner might be prodding us to contemplate more carefully why we do things, to act independently and sensibly rather than blindly according to some arbitrary form. "These horrible events have a humorous quality, largely because reverend customs are incongruously violated," a summary of the entire novel and its theme. Yet, Waggoner seems to say that the "story is at once grotesque and elementally traditional;" while the grotesqueness is apparent, the traditional is slightly harder to realize but not impossible since it lies in the subject of death and burial. Nothing can be more elemental or more traditional or eternal than death which comes to us all. Yet, the handling Faulkner and the Bundrens give to the traditional makes it grotesquely humorous as well. Hoadley calls the theme "cosmic pessimism," and summarizes the entire novel.

The theme of cosmic pessimism counterbalances the farcical actions of the Bundrens and prevents the story from degenerating into mere farce. Similarly, their comic antics lighten what would otherwise be tragedy. The extreme and incongruous effect produces a surrealistic humor.

Because of the balance between farcical actions and cosmic pessimism,

122 Vickery, p. 82.
124 Waggoner, p. 62.
125 Hoadley, p. 79.
grotesque humor results; the two elements are in equal proportions and in balance. Often, we wonder what it is all for and then we realize that we do not need an answer or that no answer is possible. It is almost that As I Lay Dying is an existential novel: neither tragedy nor farce will out and in the end neither amount to much. This is certainly a defensible way to view the novel and maybe a comforting way since we do not have to question and find answers to all the extreme circumstances.

But there is also a type of analysis which results in a quite positive interpretation to the novel. Such an interpretation sees the conclusion to the story as a "reaffirmation" of life, and the theory has many followers. Brylowski compares The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying as two extremes of vision. "The negative tone of The Sound and the Fury is balanced by a comic, positive reading of life in As I Lay Dying," and goes on to say that As I Lay Dying "is certainly a comic affirmation when compared to the wasteland of The Sound and the Fury."126 I do not think that The Sound and the Fury is all that pessimistic as Brylowski seems to think, but his point is valid. I do believe As I Lay Dying is an affirmation of life, I would simply question what kind of life the novel is affirming.

"The feeling we are left with after reading As I Lay Dying is a ruefully humorous conviction that no matter what happens life goes on,"127 which is true but the life which endures in this case is extremely grotesque and not at all as positive a force as that asserted when Faulkner says of Dilsey "she endured." As I Lay Dying affirms life and does so humor-

126Brylowski, pp. 85 and 96. 127Adams, p. 83.
ously, but that life is grotesque as is the humor. Faulkner is saying that life as putrid and stupid and selfish as Anse, the human buzzard, does not deserve to exist. The hypocrisy and selfishness which Anse epitomises are not to be commended but to be criticized by Faulkner. Life will prevail in spite of such stupidity and grotesqueness but it might be better off without it at all. "Life, Faulkner seems to be saying, is nothing more than a grim and horrible joke . . . which might well be regarded with amusement." 128 Brylowski continues to argue that when characters find themselves in conflict with an idea, the resolution is tragic whereas "when they find themselves in conflict with natural forces it is comic." 129 This may be superficially so in the Bundrens' battle with the river and the burning barn, but it is not the natural forces which make the novel so funny; it is Anse's dogged adherence to the idea of his promise to Addie. Maybe Brylowski is right but should go a step further to say that when a character finds himself in conflict with both an idea and nature, the resolution is grotesque humor. This would fit with the assumption that grotesque humor mirrors some criticism toward events from Faulkner. The ideas behind funerals and religion put men in conflict with those ideas and with natural forces as a result of those ideas and thereby result in grotesque humor and criticism.

128 Slatoff, Quest for Failure, p. 172.
129 Brylowski, p. 127.
Sanctuary is so completely grotesque, both humorously and otherwise, that to thoroughly investigate the workings of the grotesque humor would mean analyzing every page. For lack of space, then, we will look at two major chapters or scenes for their grotesque humor, and only briefly mention a few other points where grotesque humor is at work. The first major scene is the one beginning with the dance where Red is killed and ending with Miss Reba's drunken tea party following his funeral. The other major chapter is the last chapter where Popeye's background and demise are depicted. The Snopeses, Temple, Gowan and Miss Jenny are other secondary sources of grotesque humor in the novel, but these will be investigated more briefly.

The incidents with Virgil Snopes and Fronzo in Memphis are one source of grotesque humor. These two country boys come to town and some extremely funny incidents occur because of their innocence of city ways. The first part of the joke is that Virgil claims to have been in Memphis before and to know his way around. When we see how he maneuvers later, the irony of his statement becomes more apparent to the audience. The boys turn down a few hotels as too highly priced because you pay for
"that ere plate glass and monkey niggers (p. 184)." We laugh but then roar when we hear his companion's answer: "Why? It's already bought when we got there. How come we have to pay for it?" Their innocence is extreme but the humor becomes grotesque when the explanation develops through the wild assumption that something would get broken in the hotel and the proprietor would not be able to find the culprit and so would make his patrons pay their shares. Innocence itself is not necessarily funny and certainly not grotesquely humorous, but when the innocence is taken to such extremes as it is here, the mood changes and the humor becomes grotesque; we disbelieve that any one could actually be as innocent as these two are pretending. Finally, the two go down a side street in search of cheaper lodging and come upon Miss Reba on her front porch. Because they see what they believe to be an outhouse in the front, they attempt to go around the back and find "a row of automobile salesrooms (p. 185)." The humor has again become grotesque because of the extreme exaggeration and because of the social criticism implied by Faulkner. Fronzo begins to doubt Virgil's credibility as we begin to doubt if these two are for real. They return to Miss Reba's and ask for a room; at first she does not know what to do with them but finally gives them a room. They see many of the ladies running around and think that Miss Reba has a rather large family. Fronzo comments to Virgil "that was another one. She's got two daughters. Hold me, big boy; I'm heading for the henhouse (p. 187)." We laugh because he does not realize he is in a whorehouse, and the explanation they find for all the activity is
that it is a party and they wish they were invited. When they even ques-
tion what business Miss Reba is in, they decide they wish they worked for 
her with all those "women in kimonos and such running around (p. 189)."

Virgil, in his superiority, replies "wouldn't do you no good . . . They're 
all married. Aint you heard them." His logic indicates his innocence 
and adds to our humor. Miss Reba even goes so far as to tell them she 
needs to borrow their room and when they return, they discover a lady's 
undergarment. From this, they deduce that Miss Reba is a dressmaker and 
they are more concerned to see if anything was stolen from their room. 
Their innocence and their country suspicion of city folks adds to the 
humor, which becomes grotesque because of the extremes to which it is 
taken. The last of the extremes comes when Fronzo announces that he 
has discovered a pleasure he chides himself for missing the last two 
weeks. They go to a different brothel as patrons this time and Virgil 
complains at the three dollar expense. When they return rather late to 
Miss Reba's they get out of questioning by saying "We been to prayer-
meetin' (p. 190)." The hypocrisy of the two linked with their stupidity 
make them the butt of Faulkner's grotesque joke while the reader laughs 
and gets a point about the hypocrisy of all men.

Temple is another secondary source of grotesque humor. She is al-
most a stereotyped flapper girl, inconsistent in her desires, phony, 
flirtatious and shallow. She pirouettes through the Old Frenchman's 
place as if it were her college campus and she was rough housing with 
the boys. On the few occasions when she realizes she is not back at
school, she remembers the campus and wishes she were there. Temple's actions are almost schizoid in their jaggedness. She jumps from one part of the room to another, continually prims and powders her face and plays at sex with the men. She continually makes little snide remarks which result in some grotesque humor. When she and Gowan are on their way to the baseball game, they stop at Dumfries. Later, Temple notices how Gowan's beard has grown since the morning and says "It was hair-oil he drank. He bought a bottle of hair-oil at Dumfries and drank it (p. 37)." What makes the comment grotesquely funny is the fact that we begin to think that maybe already Temple is going crazy the minute she is out of her college element, sort of like a fish dying out of water. When she does not have the attention and adulation of all the boys surrounding her, Temple resorts to jibes of this sort which indicate the shallowness of her personality and therefore contrast with the humor of her remarks to give us grotesque humor. When Popeye refuses to take them back to town, Temple is again forced to make a snide remark about Popeye's tight black suit. "What river did you fall in with that suit on? Do you have to shave it off at night (p. 49)." In one sense, her comment is true: Popeye's suit is extremely tight but that only symbolically points up his impotence for the audience. So the comment becomes grotesque humor because of the mixture of truth and horror in it and because of the innocence with which Temple is playing with fire. Finally, Temple is so scared that she retreats to the corner and attempts to hide behind the box with Ruby's child. She tries to pray, "but she
could not think of a single designation for the heavenly father, so she began to say "My father's a judge; my father's a judge (p. 50)." The resulting laughter from the comment is truly grotesque because of its significance. Temple cannot pray and so resorts to the facade of civilization and her father's position to save her. The prayer is sacrilegious because of the replacing of god's name with a judge's. There is social significance in the replacement, despite the fact that neither entity can or will save Temple from violation now. Temple is truly scared now and so to her the comment is reasonable and somewhat comforting. But to the reader who is uninvolved in the action, the comment is totally grotesque humor. We are detached enough, the subject is delicate enough, and the tone is mixed enough to make it so.

Gowan Stevens, a strictly two-dimensional cavalier figure, is another secondary source of some grotesque humor. He courts Narcissa for some unfathomable reason; then when he breaks off with her, he sends her a trite love type letter which is itself grotesquely humorous in its tone of injured innocence and humility, in direct contrast to what we know is his genuine character. The scene where Gowan gets drunk with some of the town boys after the dance gives us some grotesque laughter as Gowan continually asserts that he knows how to drink well because he went to school at Virginia, and they "teach you how to drink there (p. 32)." Throughout the night, we see Gowan so drunk he does not remember much of what went on despite his being taught to drink so well. He also thinks he is quite a gentleman and ladies' man because of his inherent goodness
or something like that while we see him acting as quite a coward and cry baby. He gets taken by the town boys when they tell him to run over the wrong side of the road so as not to get a flat tire from the broken glass they have placed there for that specific purpose. He gets abused and beat up by Van and the crew at Goodwin's because of his feeble attempts to keep up with their drinking and defend Temple's honor at the same time, neither of which he can do effectively. He finally abandons her at Goodwin's because he cannot face the thought of the town's knowing what he has done and his fear of social scorn; he takes the coward's way out of every situation. He himself is grotesquely humorous because of the difference between what he asserts and what he does. He is also grotesquely humorous because his character is only an example of all the college boys like him and the resulting opinion of them is critical. Faulkner says, with Gowan and boys like him, that the educational system has strange priorities, that the students do not seem to learn anything, and that youth is shallow, especially the youth who thinks he is a Southern aristocratic gentleman. Gowan, although he does not know it himself, point up more of the hypocrisy of the society in which he lives and attempts feebly to function.

Miss Jenny returns in Sanctuary exactly the same as she was in Sartoris, with one exception: her humor is quite the same but the surrounding circumstances turn the humor into grotesque humor instead of stock humor. Miss Jenny's comments are still the quick retorts and jibes of Sartoris, but now they are aimed at a slightly different subject
and tempered by her increasing age and so are slightly more bitchy. Two
comments of Miss Jenny's are particularly noteworthy. When Gowan and
Horace are at the house, both men move to help Miss Jenny with her wheel
chair; their gallantry is exaggerated since they are both playing the
part of the Southern chivalrous gentleman. Miss Jenny has a beautiful
response to the situation. "Narcissa, will you send up to the chest in
the attic and get the duelling pistols . . . And you [Benbow] go on ahead
and tell them to strike up the music and to have two roses ready (p. 26)."
Her response is laughable because of the extreme to which she takes the
actions of the men and because she points up the hypocrisy of the men and
their adherance to the dying image of the Southern gentleman. But yet,
the retort itself is not enough. As if Faulkner has to hit us over the
head with the obvious, he shows Narcissa and Benbow acting in accordance
with the low opinion Miss Jenny has of all such foolish beings. The boy
simply questions "Strike up what music" thereby showing his stupidity
and unfitness for the role of Southern chivalrous gentleman which he
should one day assume. Narcissa, in her obliviousness to the world around
her, takes the comment especially literally. "There are roses on the
table . . . Gowan sent them. Come on to supper," she says. Our disap­
pointment with Narcissa is acute just as our liking for Miss Jenny is
increased. Miss Jenny also later comments on Gowan's drinking ability
saying "put a beetle in alcohol, and you have a scarab; put a Mississippian
in alcohol, and you have a gentleman." Miss Jenny is commenting on the
character of the whole of the South as well as that of a Mississippian or
of Gowan. These comments come direct from Faulkner and the subject of alcoholism as a cause of the downfall of the South is hinted at. The humor is not just comic relief since it is tied to the theme of hypocrisy and sham rampant in the South with which Faulkner is dealing. The picture of a man wriggling like an insect in a vast jar of alcohol is so grotesque that we laugh first at the picture and then later grotesquely at its significance.

These secondary sources of grotesque humor are integrated to the theme of the novel but subservient to the more predominant examples of grotesque humor. In fact, the whole question of the integration of the humor of the novel has been one the critics have been debating since the book was first published. Mostly, it has been argued that the humor of Sanctuary is a kind of folk humor for comic relief. William Van O'Connor seems to separate the types of humor in the novel slightly.

Much of the humor of Sanctuary--the scenes with the three madams, Miss Reba's sense of propriety, Uncle Bud's getting drunk, and the escapades of Virgil and Fronzo Snopes--is folk humor. Some of the satire on the townspeople of Jefferson is in the realistic tradition. . . Faulkner was more concerned with telling a sensational, grim, and sometimes funny story than he was with investigating its significances.130

O'Connor's is an interesting statement but arguable. Because he does not discuss this further, I assume that what makes the scenes mentioned folk humor has to do with mistaken assumptions, exaggeration and twisted

expectations. Yet, these things go on in grotesque humor as well. The delicate topics of whorehouses, death and alcoholism help to make the humor of the scenes mentioned more grotesque than stock. Also, the tone of the scenes is often mixed between horror and laughter, fear and delight, also making the humor more grotesque than stock. When O'Connor claims that Faulkner was more concerned with the story than its significance, I am afraid I cannot quite agree. The significance of the story comes from the grotesque humor of many of the occurrences of the story. Temple's rape with the ludicrous fertility symbol, the mouse eaten corncob, the trial of Goodwin which is a mockery of justice with the D.A. telling Temple all the good fathers and brothers in the audience will help right her wrong, and other such scenes are inherently tied to the theme and do not occur simply for the sensationalism of the story although their grotesqueness may add to the story's sensationalism.

Irving Howe takes a similar but more perceptive tack concerning the humor of Sanctuary. Howe does not call the humor folk humor and does admit that the humorous scenes are the best in the novel. However, he claims that the scenes are totally unessential to the theme of the novel.

Several chapters--the visit of the Snopes boys to Memphis, Miss Reba's memorable tea party, Red's funeral--are not essential to the theme of the novel. Yet these chapters are the finest in the book. [There are] wild burlesques, ... stock elements of folk humor . . . apparently meant as relief from the narrative. 131

The scenes mentioned, especially the funeral and tea party, are essentially grotesque humor as we shall see shortly. Howe is right in saying that these scenes are the finest in the book but he does not attempt to integrate them with the theme. It seems that we should credit Faulkner with more skill than an amateur who strings scenes in a novel simply for variation. Interestingly, Howe is right when he implies that the narrative needs relief and that these scenes provide it. I agree, but this is not all they do; they are the theme of the novel as well.

Among the most sensible critical views of the humor of *Sanctuary* is Hyatt Waggoner's claim that the grotesque humorous scenes are slightly integrated with the rest of the work and its theme when he says that "the 'comic relief' of the scenes at Miss Reba's is not wholly discontinuous with the rest of the work, though it is not so closely integrated as is the humor of *As I Lay Dying*."\(^{132}\) The comparison with *As I Lay Dying* is appropriate because that novel too was predominantly grotesque humor. The inverted way Waggoner makes his statement allows us to assume he is not quite convinced of its validity. We might easily convince him that the humor of the scenes is strictly grotesque and that the grotesque humor is the theme of the novel. And so, let us turn to the particular scenes in order to support this thesis.

The extended scenes concerning Red's murder begin with Temple and her unrest with Popeye and her desire for Red. Popeye has imprisoned

\(^{132}\)Waggoner, p. 100.
Temple is Miss Reba's whorehouse in order to prevent her from returning to Jefferson and testifying against him concerning Tommy's murder. Temple ought to be scandalized and outraged at this fact, but she is not. We find that she likes the degradation and illicitness of the whore's life; she even becomes a whore to the point that she gets all the new clothes and cosmetics and baubles which she desires from Popeye. She is ironically in exactly the same situation she was in before she met Popeye where her father, the judge, gave her all these frivolous things. Temple even calls Popeye "Daddy," and Popeye as a father is simply a grotesquely humorous picture. Then the picture of Temple, the chaste Southern belle who should be scandalized when she is violated but turns out to like the life, is grotesquely humorous. She actually has not changed as a person, she has simply changed her location of endeavor. But sometimes, Temple gets annoyed with her imprisonment and annoyed with Popeye's slobbering over her. When Red comes to make love to Temple, Popeye stands at the foot of the bed, moaning and slobbering over the scene. The picture is so horrible and funny at once that we do not know, at first, whether to laugh or scream. Then, when we think about it, we must laugh because none of the characters is outraged by the actions and so we assume we should not be outraged either. But then when we have a further moment to assert our own intelligence, we realize that the joke has been on us in getting us to temporarily become as corrupt as the players in the story. We laugh at our own weakness and facility in accepting the absurdly grotesque situations Faulkner gives us. All these responses
which we are subjected to by the action and its significance are character-
istics of the maneuvering of the tone and tension of grotesque humor.

When we assert our equilibrium again, Faulkner comes right back at us with more grotesque humor. When Temple is throwing her tantrum and refusing to see Popeye, Minnie, the nigger servant at Miss Reba's, chastises her for her conduct with these words. "What you want to treat him this-a-way, fer? Way he spend his money on you, you ought to be ashamed. He a right pretty little man, even is he aint no John Gilbert, and way he spendin his money (p. 220)." We might scream with laughter because we know the kind of unsavory character Popeye is and the fact that Minnie can see him as a "right pretty little man" causes us to cringe and laugh at the same time. The standard by which Minnie is judging Popeye seems to be how much money he spends on Temple which might be a respectable standard by which to judge a beau if it were coupled with other more respectable characteristics. But Popeye has absolutely no redeeming characteristics. More such grotesque humor comes from Minnie and Miss Reba when they frequently remark at how well Popeye and Temple must be getting along because of the sounds and cavortings in her room when they are together. The innocence with which they propose the statements recalls the innocence of Virgil and Fronzo over similar sounds but is in direct contrast to the facts about Popeye which the audience already knows. This kind of mistaken assumption is the stuff of stock humor but because grotesque humor here because of the extreme antics and character of Popeye. What he does and says is so extremely alien from
how we expect a person to act that Minnie's judgment of Popeye is grotesquely humorous.

When Temple finally asserts herself and attempts to see Red alone, we have some more grotesque humor in her confrontation with Popeye and her antics at the Grotto. Temple confronts Popeye with his impotence, but she does it bitingly and sarcastically rather than gently or understandably.

"He's a better man than you are!" Temple said shrilly. "You're not even a man! He knows it. Who does know it if he don't..." She began to shriek at him. "You, a man, a bold bad man, when you cant even--When you had to bring a real man in to--And you hanging over the bed, moaning and slobbering like a--You couldn't fool me but once, could you? No wonder I bled..." (p. 224)

Ironically, Temple cannot say the words she means; she skirts around the true issue with euphemisms like "real man." The picture we have of Popeye becomes more grotesque and our judgment of Temple also changes; we begin to wonder how much of this horrible circus she can take before she does something about it. Then we remember that she has done something about it in her attempt to see Red alone and the reason she has not done anything more violent or sensible is because she loves Red and likes the life Popeye has shown her. The irony of her complete exterior transformation from a chaste Southern maiden to a crude Memphis woman in love with a gangster and controlled by a moron allows us the grotesque laugh. The confrontation is complete when they arrive at the dance hall and Temple goes to the washroom to examine her face for marks where Popeye was holding her mouth in an attempt to stop her rantings. When she finds
that his fingers have not left any marks, her judgment is "Shucks," the word itself providing a grotesque laugh because of its subtle symbolism and the other scenes where we have seen corn shucks at work in devious ways. Temple is oblivious to the significance of what she says, but it is not lost on the audience since Faulkner certainly intended the grotesque laugh it gives us.

Throughout the scene with Temple, Popeye and Red at the dance hall, there are little remarks like joke punch lines which result in grotesque humor. When Temple first sees Red standing in the door, he is in a gray suit and a spotted bow tie; "he looked like a college boy (p. 228)." The comment alone might be only slightly humorous until we remember that Red actually is a gangster, and a college boy should be a quite different species. The comment shows Temple's shallowness but then it also highlights her corruption. Gowan, the last college boy we saw, is at least as guilty of folly and as much a scoundrel as Red. The single line works in so many ways that the multiple interpretations add to the grotesque humor.

The next major part of this extended sequence is the wake. Ironically, we are spared a death scene as we are not in *As I Lay Dying*. The wake is probably the high point of the entire novel. Again, the critics argue over the effect this scene has on any interpretation of the entire novel, the basic argument concerning how integrated the scene is with the theme of the novel. Backman claims that the novel has "a sense of
futility and despair which even the burlesque comedy of the drunken funeral celebration and of the yokels in the brothel does not disperse."

The comment has validity because there is a sense of hopelessness and despair throughout, but that is most linked to the character and action of Horace Benbow who has little to do with the grotesque of the novel. Instead, Horace reinforces the theme that there is no justice in the world or charity either; Horace tries his best and gets little but scorn in return. Still, the sense of futility and despair is not the sole atmosphere of the novel. One way to link the despair with the grotesque funeral party is that voiced by Cleanth Brooks when he says that:

the comic scenes are not, however, extraneous to the novel. They provide, among other things, depth and substance to the nightmare. The evil in which Temple is involved is no shadowy spectre; it has blood and bone and belly. Daylight, common sense, and humor can exorcise the nightmare.

The nightmare of the novel is the reality of evil which occurs in the world in general but appears in many forms. In case one might seek the psychological defense that these evil things happen only in novels, Faulkner makes sure we are convinced of the reality of that evil. Humor can exorcise the nightmare, as Brooks says, but it can also highlight that evil so Brooks seems to be hinting, through his notion of exorcism, that the grotesque humor of the book functions mostly as comic relief, as a change in pace from the rest of the horror. Rather than get rid of the horror the grotesque humor can make it ultra real, ultra violent,
much the way Stanley Kubrick has done visually recently with Anthony Burgess' novel *A Clockwork Orange*. Not only does the grotesque humor heighten the horror of the reality of the occurrences, in this case the death of a man, but it also may come to stand for or be the theme of the novel. Hence, if the funeral of Red becomes such a farce, such a circus, it is because Faulkner is saying that such rituals are phony and hypocritical and we might be better off acting differently in those circumstances. A thorough investigation of the scene will help develop this point and make a statement of theme easier.

The funeral scene begins with a physical description of the converted dance and game hall which has been draped in black and partially sobered for the occasion. The tables have all been draped in black and they actually become the most sedate mourners at the funeral. The coffin sits just beneath the orchestra platform which we hope is empty but which we later see is not. Special care is taken to tell us what an expensive, elaborate casket this is, as if Faulkner were saying that one can buy respectability in death, no matter what one's profession or status in life. Such a notion is slightly heretical to an ordinary audience who should be slightly scandalized if they were not earlier by the simple thought of a wake taking place in a dance hall.

The next paragraph of the scene begins to shift the mood as we see Negro waiters moving among the tables "with glasses and bottles of ginger ale (p. 235)." We begin to wonder what kind of activity this is and even return to reread the opening paragraph in hopes we misread something.
A dance hall with nigger waiters and a coffin simply do not go together and when we see some of the mourners at this wake we begin to be really upset. Faulkner tells us that they moved the room with "swaggering and decorous repression." The word choice is nice since we can just see how hard it is for these clowns to act dignified in their funeral par­lour/dance hall. "Already the scene was vivid, with a hushed, macabre air a little febrile," Faulkner says. Now, we worry for sure. Life and gusto are fine in their place, but we believe they have no place at a funeral. Faulkner is saying that life does prevail, and later he goes even further than this and becomes more graphic in his depiction of that theme.

The mourners are dressed wierdly for a wake and funeral. Granted, many are in black and gray and navy blue, all somber, appropriate colors. Yet, some of the women, "the younger ones" wore bright colors "increasing the atmosphere of macabre paradox (p. 236)." Spring is never a good time for a funeral, and although we don't know exactly what time of the year is, the women's bright clothes give the effect that this is spring and an occasion of great happiness. The spirit is one of an afternoon garden party, much like the one Belle Mitchell gives in Sartoris. We are almost lulled into that feeling and when we awaken to the reality of the situation, we laugh at ourselves and at the grotesque humor of the scene. Not only the women, but some of the gentlemen also add to the grotesque effect of the wake. The proprietor wears a "huge diamond in his black cravat" reminding us of who these people are and what their professions
are simultaneously with reminding us that this is supposed to be a funeral. The next sentence kind of ruins that because we see the bouncer, a "bullet-headed man who appeared to be on the point of bursting out of his dinner-jacket through the rear, like a cocoon." The man himself is grotesquely funny in his dinner jacket, a symbol of gay festivities. The comparison of the bouncer to a cocoon prods the reader to finish the analogy and imagine the man turning into a gayly colored butterfly and we again think of the girls in their bright dresses.

In the middle of the scene is Gene, presiding over the punch bowl. Yes, a punch bowl! That people should drink and socialize at a wake is scandalous enough but when we see the results of the activities we can only laugh. Gene yells that "It don't cost you nothing. Step up and drink." The effect is of a circus side show Barker luring patrons. If this is not enough to make you laugh, Gene voices some platitudes about the dead man. "There wasn't never a better boy walked than him." Gene does not understand the irony of what he is saying but the reader does and laughs at Gene. But there is still another device which adds to the grotesque humor. Gene pulls out a suitcase from under the table and we are puzzled until we discover the contents: Gene has the case full of booze and we laugh. Gene yells that "I aint nothing but a bootlegger, but ne never had a better friend than me (p. 237)." It is as if Gene is now feeling sorry that he was not a better friend to Red when he was alive. Gene does what all men do in the face of the death of a friend, they lament what might have been. But Gene goes a step farther than most
men do in the circumstances: Gene tries to make up to Red after he is dead by providing the booze at his wake and plenty of it at that.

Now we have a further witchery on Faulkner's part; the people cannot decide what the band should play. We only briefly wonder what a band is doing at this wake in the first place because we laugh immediately at the proposals. One man suggests playing jazz because nobody liked jazz better than Red. The proprietor vetoes this suggestion and we begin to think that things might calm down and go back to being as we expected. But we should know better than to think that might occur. "Time Gene gets them all ginned up on free whiskey, they'll start dancing. It'll look bad," the proprietor says. We speculate how good it looks already! The proprietor does not realize the significance or the humor of what he has just said, but both are apparent to the audience and result in the grotesque laughter. Another suggestion is the Blue Danube, but this is also vetoed by the proprietor. "Dont play no blues, I tell you." He mistakes the type of song humorously and then he seems to be kind of confused as to what he wants from the band and how he wants the people to react. One, the jazz, would be unseemly, while the other, the waltz, would be too blue and moody. We are amazed at how stupid and silly these people can be and wonder what else might possibly happen. The next line should give us a clue. Someone in the crowd is clever enough to realize that the Blue Danube is a waltz and identifies it as Strauss. Another man shows his stupidity for our benefit. "A wop? Like hell. Red was an American. You may not be, but he was. Dont you know anything
American? Play I Cant Give You Anything but Love. He always liked that."
The screams are now coming from the audience as well as the mourners.
Calling on patriotism to choose a song to play might be an acceptable
reaction in any other circumstance but a wake. The other alternative is
rightly the kind of song Red loved, but it is those romantic endeavors
that got him killed in the first place. Now the proprietor seems to be
acting sensibly since he says he does not want the people dancing and
that the band better start with some religious music to sober the people
up. "I might have knowed somebody'd have to turn it into a carnival.
Better start off solemn and keep it up until I give you the sign (p.
238)," he says. His sentiments are apparently well founded but then
we wonder what he meant about his sign, as if after a certain amount of
obvious seriousness and mourning, they will be free to be more jolly.
The scene reaches a partial climax when a man retorts to the proprietor
that "Red wouldn't like it solemn . . . And you know it." Again, the
apparent sentiment is noteworthy because we remember Red and tend to
agree despite the fact that Red is now dead. But the proprietor does
not seem to know or care that Red is dead. "Let him go somewheres else,
then . . . I just done this as an accommodation. I aint running no
funeral parlor." The comment causes laughter because of its content as
well as its style. If Red could move, he might go somewhere else and
just when we fear that is what Faulkner might cause to happen, the scene
pauses. The proprietor's apparent generosity is only skin deep and he
is concerned with appearances rather than reality. He only is afraid of
how things will look, and when he is getting criticized for how the show is running, he retreats into the righteousness of his indignation. He resorts to the justification that this is all voluntary on his part.

The pause in the scene consists of a few grotesque touches. There is the woman in a red dress who puts her head in the door way and shouts, "Whoopee . . . so long, Red. He'll be in hell before I could even reach Little Rock." She is right but we cannot help but laugh. Her unseemly conduct juxtaposed with the function of a wake causes the tension of the scene which results in our laughter at the grotesque. Gene continues to hawk his booze while the waiters attempt to put fruit and ice in the punch. Gene sends them away and we know that things have gotten out of hand when the people start taking the booze straight. The proprietor wants the band to continue playing. "Let's finish the musical program. It's costing us money (p. 239)." Again, the proprietor shows his true colors; he is really just concerned with money and appearances rather than his grief over Red. One man volunteers to pay for two funerals for Red in his drunken generosity. The grotesque humor of these portraits is devastating but we must admit the truth of them as well. The horrible thought that this is all occurring at a wake causes a chill which is part of the atmosphere of the grotesque.

The thought of the real purpose of the gathering also occurs to the proprietor who tries to calm the people down, reminding them "there's a bier in that room?" Someone misinterprets and wants to move the affair somewhere else, as if they simply could; that thought causes grotesque
laughter. Gene misinterprets the word bier into beer and the game is off again. He thinks somebody is trying to insult his booze and his generosity. A second side show enters the festivities; a male quartet sings Sonny Boy. This causes some of the women to weep. The lady in red returns. "'Come on, Joe' she shouted, 'open the game. Get that damn stiff out of here and open the game' (p. 240)." Her attitude and her statements can cause nothing but a chill of horror and a laugh at this grotesque.

Now the climax of the scene comes triggered by the woman in red. She attempts to take the black cloth off the crap table and gives forth with "a burst of filthy language." Someone else tries to stop her as she hurls a wreath to the floor. The proprietor and the bouncer try to restrain her while she tries to hit them with the wreath. The brawl we feared is materializing before our eyes and it gets worse before it gets better. The fight spreads to the next room where the orchestra is interrupted and thereby jumps up on its chairs in an attempt to outlive the violence. The entire group struggles and "in a whirling plunge they bore down on the bier and crashed into it . . . The coffin teetered . . . the coffin crashed heavily to the floor coming open. The corpse tumbled slowly and sedately out and came to rest with its face in the center of a wreath (p. 241)." The action is straight out of slapstick comedy but the situation is horrifyingly real. What we do not believe could happen, does and gets worse besides. It is beautifully appropriate that the corpse should roll slowly rather than swiftly; this way it contrasts to the fast and riotous motion of all the people. The proprietor tries to
repair the damage by having the band play louder to drown out the trouble. Their other attempts at repairing the damage are also feeble. When they turn over the corpse they discover that the wreath is attached to his face. His hat has fallen off and the wax plug that was used to cover the hole in Red's head has been lost. They attempt to cover the damage by pulling his cap further down on his forehead in the hopes that no one will notice.

This funeral scene has all the characteristics of grotesque and indicates Faulkner's attitude toward the South concerning certain traditions. The subject is obviously a delicate one, a funeral. Normally, a funeral is a somber affair, one of sadness. With different handling, this scene too could have increased the despair and futility which much of the book is presenting. But here, the funereral scene is exaggerated and taken to an extreme we would not believe quite possible. Everything is turned around and exaggerated: many of the mourners wear bright colors; the funeral takes place in a dance and gambling hall; an orchestra and a quartet play and sing to entertain the guests; free booze is dispensed to everyone. It is quite a good party except that there is a coffin with a dead man on display. Where we expect sobriety and dignity and grief we get bawdiness and drunkenness. The party atmosphere is enough to give us a small grotesque laugh, but then Faulkner characteristically takes the grotesque humor even a step farther so there is no doubt we will miss it or try to negate or ignore it. In a fight over whether the game tables should be opened or not, the coffin is upset and the corpse rolls sedately onto the floor. The roll of that corpse is the only sedate
thing about the entire affair. When we hope that this will be all because it is horrifyingly funny, we are again taken a step further into the grotesque. We are reminded that the corpse was a gangster and he met a violent end by the plugged hole from the bullet in his head. The wax plug has fallen out and is nowhere to be found. The corpse has also gotten a flower wreath attached to its cheek in the fruckus. The entire scene is exactly opposite of what we would expect. The tone of the scene is unbelievable, but then we know this is for real and we cannot get away from it. We are only thankful that we are not directly involved or the corpse was someone we knew. The point of the scene is not extraneous to the point of the novel: the scene demonstrates a bit more graphically the idea of hypocrisy at work. We have seen Narcissa and the town in their hypocrisy, but here we have a similar thing handled differently. These mourners are the most obvious of all hypocrites because they get drunk and brawl instead of mourn. Then, ironically we also know that in a way, these people are the most true to life. Red would not have liked a somber funeral and so he did not get one. We might almost respect the mourners for their courage, but then we remember that this was all an accident, not a planned unconventional funeral. The scene shows up to a heightened, frightening degree, the hypocrisy. We condemn these mourners just as we condemn the mob that burns Goodwin; both mobs are acting on impulse and as a result of selfishness and righteousness. The point of the scene and the theme of the novel concerns a criticism of all hypocrites and selfish, unjust people. The criticism
stands most against the Southerners depicted in the novel, but then it is also applicable to the entire South and the entire country.

The funeral scene has a type of sequel immediately following. Miss Reba and two of her cronies return to her house to do their own private grieving, but only after ditching the funeral procession before it arrives at the cemetery. In fact, Miss Reba and her friends are not the only ones to do so since when the hearse and all the flowers arrive at the cemetery, only the six hired cars with Negro drivers have stuck with the procession. The hypocrisy of the crowd eager to get away as soon as it can is highlighted, and the events give us a grotesque chuckle. Miss Reba and her friends return to the house. Immediately, the grotesque humor picks up in another vein. One of the women is genuinely weeping over Red but the sentiments she is voicing shift the entire mood and contrast with her action. "Didn't he look sweet? (p. 243)" she repeatedly wails. The separation between what she is saying and what she is doing gives the grotesque humor. The humor also comes from the tone of her remarks; she makes it sound as if Red were dressed for a dance and had been quite a success at a party. In a way, he has but the success of the funeral was an accident and allows the audience the grotesque laugh.

Now Uncle Bud, the six year old companion of one of the ladies, provides us with some of the grotesque humor. Miss Reba bends to untie her shoes but it is an immensely difficult job so Uncle Bud comes to help. Then he plays with the dogs and they nip him so he lets out
with "You bite me, you thon bitch." The profanity from a six year old is amusing, but then the woman declares "How in the world he can learn such words on an Arkansaw farm, I dont know (p. 244)." Since we have already seen the Bundren clan, we know exactly how the kid might come up with the lines. The woman's innocence when faced with the language of the child is contrasted humorously with the child's sophistication. The ladies remark how good the beer is and compliment Miss Reba on her hospitality. Then they return to the topic of the boy and Miss Myrtle comes out with an innocent line which results in grotesque humor. "Children are such a comfort to a body," she says. We roar because of her word choice and we are reminded of the body currently being buried. Children might be some comfort to some people, but we also wonder how a kid like Uncle Bud could be a comfort to anyone. The mention of the body allows us to imagine these three ladies at death and we laugh at the picture they would make. There is a remark about "them two nice young fellows" staying with Miss Reba and we remember Virgil and Fronzo. The idea that anyone might call those two nice fellows is so grotesque that we laugh also.

It is time for a refill of the glasses and Miss Myrtle declares "Reely, I'm right ashamed ... But Miss Reba has such good beer. And then we've all had a kind of upsetting afternoon (p. 245)." Her hypocrisy is immediately apparent in a grotesquely humorous light. They are all phony and need an excuse to get drunk once again. A corpse is quite a good excuse since it cannot answer back or argue the point. Uncle Bud returns to plague the ladies because he secretly sips at their beer.
They shoo Bud outside to play with the dogs, while the ladies weep again about Red and the singing of Sonny Boy.

There is more to the scene now than simple maudlin grief over Red. The ladies fall to philosophizing about why he died and their own state of affairs. This is the theme of the scene and partially of the novel. The ladies blame their state of affairs on the men saying "Men just cant seem to take us and leave us for what we are. They make us what we are, then they expect us to be different. Expect us not to never look at another man, while they come and go as they please (p. 247)." Her analysis is certainly true and seems almost to come from Faulkner as well. The double standard by which men and women may act differently is one source of the hypocrisy in the world and leads to more general double dealing. Miss Myrtle is criticizing men and using them as an excuse for her own follies while Faulkner is criticizing both men and women for their follies through Miss Myrtle's grotesquely humorous comment. Miss Reba joins in with the moral of the story by saying "A woman that wants to fool with more than one man at a time is a fool ... They're all trouble, and why do you want to double your trouble?" Superficially, she may have a valid point but it is certainly weakened by her own action which is not in accord with her statement. Miss Reba was faithful to her husband but her profession is such that it immediately counteracts her statements. Again, it is as if Faulkner is making the criticisms instead of the ladies. That we can hear both voices adds to the tension of the tone which is characteristic of grotesque humor. To make the
conversation even more grotesquely humorous, Miss Reba continues to say that Temple was foolish for playing with Red when she had a good man in Popeye, "a free-hearted spender that never give her a hour's uneasiness or a hard word." What Miss Reba says is in direct contrast to what we know has occurred. Temple has not only been uneasy because of Popeye; she has been brutally raped with a corncob. The separation between what Miss Reba knows and what the audience knows allows for the grotesque humor. Also, Miss Reba is involved in the action since it takes place in her house and therefore she is too close to truly understand it or laugh at it while the reader can both understand and laugh at the grotesque.

Now the ladies shift the blame for Red's death unto Red himself. "He ought to know better than to take a chance with Popeye's girl (p. 248)," Miss Lorraine says. Again, she does not know the significance of what she is saying nor can she appreciate its grotesque humor; the audience can see and laugh. Then they come up with probably the most grotesquely funny line about Popeye. "He goes all the way to Pensacola every summer to see his mother . . . A man that'll do that can't be all bad." We know Popeye is utterly and completely evil while the ladies see only a few appearances and false ones at that. As the ladies continue discussing Popeye's merits they say more grotesquely funny things. They speculate that he was no good as a man but believe he was not spending money on Miss Reba's girls because they believe he has some girl out in town somewhere. The special knowledge we have of Popeye allows the
grotesque laugh triggered by the ladies’ comments. They then fall to jealously gloating over the clothes and cosmetics and so forth that Popeye bought Temple. She had one Chinese robe that cost one hundred dollars, and perfume at ten dollars an ounce. One might rightly think that a girl could want little else with a man who gave her such luxury, but the price Temple has paid for this luxury is certainly not worth it in any one’s opinion. Miss Reba and the ladies do not know the state of affairs and are involved in them so they are jealous and misunderstand. The reader knows the true state of affairs and is detached from them so we can laugh at the grotesque.

The ladies proceed to the gory details of the relationship between Temple and Popeye. Miss Reba suspected something funny was going on but she did not know what it was. Minnie had added to the speculation with her comments that there were never any signs of lovemaking the mornings she cleaned up Temple’s room. They seem to sympathize slightly with Temple who had all these gorgeous new clothes but who could not wear them outside the house. The coup de grâce is when Miss Myrtle tries to explain the situation. “Maybe he went off and got fixed up with one of these glands, these monkey glands, and it quit on him (p. 250).” The reader rightly roars with grotesque laughter at this grotesque explanation. Popeye did not have any monkey glands, he is a monkey, a grotesque creature with impossible desires and bizarre actions. The ladies come to the correct explanation of Popeye’s activities because Minnie had seen the procedure. Miss Reba was insulted and told Popeye she did not want
him carrying on such activities in her house; she does not want it turned into a "French joint." So now the ladies start calling Popeye names and accuse him of stupidity but not exactly for his actions, but only his choice of men. "He'd ought to've had sense enough to got a old ugly man . . . Tempting us poor girls like that (p. 251)." We laugh because the entire situation is grotesquely funny. Where we might expect the ladies to be scandalized, they are not. They do not seem to criticize Popeye for his action as much as for his choice; they use his stupidity as an excuse for their actions. They also think Popeye should have known that Temple would be chafing at the bit and now want to stay imprisoned in the house. Temple was used to restrictions which she could circumvent at school but these new restrictions she could not and they bother her. Now that she knows what sex is like, she cannot get enough of Red. But this is not her fault, the ladies say; it is Popeye's fault for not anticipating the circumstances. When Miss Reba tells the ladies how Popeye would watch the business, Miss Lorraine volunteers that "maybe he was cheering for them (p. 252)." With a grotesquely funny line like that we would expect the scene to be concluded and it almost is. But first we get the last picture of Uncle Bud, who had been out in the kitchen drinking a whole bottle of beer. We might expect him to be quite sick but the graphic description causes the grotesque humor. Minnie shakes the boy and tries to get him to stand up but "limply he dangled, his face rigid in a slobbering grin. Then upon it came an expression of concern, consternation; Minnie swung him sharply away from her as he began to vomit."
Although the ladies' reactions are not given, we can imagine what they might be. We know our reaction, laughter at the grotesque.

The entire tea party has served several functions. It gives us laughter and part of the theme of the novel. It uses a strange tone and distances the audience from the action to succeed at the laughter. Hyatt Waggoner has a good analysis of the scene and its purposes.

The wonderful humor of the scenes . . . When Miss Reba entertains her friends after the funeral is in a sense "comic relief" from the tension of the deeper irony, but in another sense it extends that irony into another range, changing the key but not dropping the theme. In the perspective afforded by Miss Reba's place, we may see that there has been the potentiality of grotesque in Temple's misadventures all along, but of humor withheld and denied by the predominance of the pity and the horror. Now the irony moves from the tragic to the comic, is pitched differently, but is never entirely lost as irony.\(^{135}\)

Rightly, Waggoner says that the scene functions as comic relief; it begins there but goes on to other things as well. The grotesque humor changes the tone of the action from serious to more frivolous, less hurtful. The theme remains the same. Temple almost asked for what she got because of her little posings and her playing at sex. She does not have the understanding to determine when to play and when to be afraid; she taunts Popeye and thereby asks for her own fate. The theme is one concerning the shallowness of Temple's character and it remains so throughout the grotesque humor. The theme also concerns hypocrisy and the feeble appearances that people count so important. The hypocritical appearances have caused Temple her present problem and have given the ladies the opportunity

\(^{135}\) Waggoner, p. 99.
for the present conversation. The grotesque nature of the humor has continually combined the feelings of pity and horror we have for what is happening to Temple with the laughter we get because we are detached from the circumstances. For those acting in the novel, the circumstances are real and scandalous and insulting. But for the detached reader, the circumstances become funny because of the difference between how people act and what they say they will do or what they believe, their hypocrisy. The scene begins as comic relief and fulfills that function but goes on from there to point up the theme about hypocrisy. In fact, the scene is an example of that hypocrisy at work. The ladies are so concerned with appearances but there they are getting drunk and allowing Uncle Bud to act so grossly.

So we come to the other major sequence of grotesque humor, the final chapter of the novel giving Popeye's background. This chapter was reputedly added during the rewriting after Sanctuary was originally written in 1929. The chapter takes the events of the novel and attempts to justify or explain them through the most appropriate technique of grotesque humor. The chapter widens our view of Popeye and thereby points out the entirety of his grotesqueness so his figure becomes the symbol for the entire theme of the novel. As Robert Flynn says, "Popeye . . . associated with the strong-man of the comics, is a symbol of the Anti-Christ."136

The linking of Popeye with Christ, even an Anti-Christ, is grotesquely humorous. It points out the continued grotesque humor of Popeye's character. What makes Popeye a superman or an Anti-Christ are his grotesquely humorous characteristics.

The grotesque humor of Popeye's background begins with his parents who got married because the man has to pass that way in his streetcar every night any way so it does not matter if they are married or not. The direct cause of the marriage is the fact that Popeye's mother is pregnant but not yet married. Then one day the father just left her and she got a Christmas card from him in Georgia somewhere. The father has walked in and out of the mother's life with total unconcern. His actions are the direct opposite of what society or a woman might expect from a husband. The other grotesquery of the matter is that she got the Christmas card on Christmas day, the same day Popeye was born. It is heretical that Popeye should have been born on Christ's birthday but this sets Popeye up as the anti-Christ of the novel. Popeye is the antithesis of everything Christ is and one theme of the novel. We also learn that his father withdrew fourteen hundred dollars from his mother's savings account when he left. This is quite a legacy for Popeye. And, we discover, things get worse instead of better because of the crazy grandmother.

The crazy grandmother is a pyromaniac who sets her own house afire. In fact, she sets the house afire so that for a while Popeye's mother thinks that Popeye has perished as well. It almost would have been
better if he had; instead, the grandmother left Popeye in an unattended car at the grocery store where she went to get matches. She has a little grotesquely humorous conversation with a policeman outside the store who asks the grandmother where the child is and she claims she "traded it in (p. 299)." He responds with the sarcastic comment that she "ought to be in vaudeville." She asks him for matches but he says he only has one or two; she says "I never do light a fire with but one." Again, the policeman says she should be in vaudeville and that she would bring down the house. "'I am,' the woman said. 'I bring down the house.'" We know she is not in vaudeville but we are prepared for her later bringing down the house by fire. She then even tells him that she will burn the house and to watch the paper next day for the story. She adds that she hopes they get her name spelled right. The entire conversation has gone from the absurd to the grotesque, but has stayed humorous throughout. We wonder if the crazy lady will really burn down the house and hope it is not so. But Faulkner will not let us off so easily; the house is burned and the mother sometimes believes Popeye had perished "even though she held it in her arms crooning above it (p. 300)." The mother is as crazy as the grandmother and no wonder Popeye is so weird.

Faulkner says that "Popeye might well have been dead" and then we get the grotesque picture of the boy. The distortion apparent in the character of Popeye is remarked by O'Donnell when he says that "the characters are distorted, being more nearly grotesques than human beings."137

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137 O'Donnell, p. 293.
"He had no hair at all until he was five years old, by which time he was already a kind of day pupil at an institution: an undersized, weak child with a stomach so delicate that ... alcohol would kill him like strychnine ... and he will never be a man, properly speaking." Popeye is distorted for our grotesque humor. The doctor says that "he will live some time longer. But he will never be any older than he is now." So we remember the grown Popeye with the mentality of a five year old. When the lady who had found him the the car plans a birthday party for Popeye, he responds with grotesquely humorous actions. He first locks himself in the bathroom and then lets himself out the window and down a drain pipe and away. "On the floor lay a wicker cage in which two lovebirds lived; beside it lay the birds themselves, and the bloody scissors with which he had cut them up alive (p. 301)." The picture is grotesquely humorous because Popeye could have found no more graphic way to show his displeasure. Popeye has so few pleasures because of his feebleness that he must resort to cutting up animals for kicks. We also later learn that he gets arrested and sent to a home for "incorrigible children" because he "had cut up a half-grown kitten the same way." The extremity of his actions is horrible but the fact that he is not institutionalized permanently adds to the grotesque humor. The sight of Popeye as an "incorrigible" child is grossly understated. He is a moron and an animal and deserves to be destroyed.

The picture we get of Popeye in this final chapter only increases the grotesque humor of his character. What we hoped to be able to
disbelieve earlier, we know we cannot, because Popeye has been this grotesque since he was born. Slatoff says that "if we have taken the book at all seriously, this final description does complicate our response somewhat, for in it Popeye becomes partly a comic figure."138 I wonder why Slatoff only seems to think that Popeye is comic in the final chapter where we learn the most horrible things about him, his cutting up kittens and the manner of his death. Throughout, Popeye has been grotesquely humorous but we have hoped to be able to say "it's all a story, not really so." With this final chapter, that chance is taken away and we must admit that Popeye is a real grotesque. We have some type of sociological and physical explanation for this character, but that does not make him any less grotesque. We only see how he could have been no other way.

The crowning grotesquely humorous event of Popeye's life is the fact that "they arrested him for killing a man in one town and at an hour when he was in another town killing somebody else (p. 301)." It seems right and just that Popeye should be caught and prosecuted for something he did not do. He believes he will get out of the charge because he was not even near the town when the murder occurred. But as justice can sometimes go awry, this time it does so and ironically fulfills a higher justice. Popeye deserves to die for the murder of

138Slatoff, Quest for Failure, p. 211.
TommY and the rape of Temple, but he has gotten off free of these charges. Instead, he is executed for a murder he did not commit. Faulkner may be saying that justice gets to all who deserve it sooner or later but this is not enough. Justice should be fulfilled appropriately as it is deserved rather than accidentally. All Horace stands for by being a lawyer is criticized by the events of the novel. Justice is blind and hypocritical as are all the administers of justice or all the people of the world. But it and they should not be so blind is one warning of the novel which we get through the grotesque humor of the novel. Popeye's trial is a mockery of justice just as Lee Goodwin's was. What seems to bother Popeye's jury most is his attitude, his boredom with the proceedings. The jury believe he deserves to die for his mocking attitude even if not for the murder. One man says of the proceedings, "It's them thugs like that that have made justice a laughing-stock, until even when we get a conviction, everybody knows it wont hold (p. 304)." Such a line might have been spoken directly from Faulkner and the sentiments it voices are one theme of the novel.

Critics have varying explanations for the grotesque humor of the novel or for its purpose. As Robert Penn Warren says, "humor in Faulkner's work is never exploited for its own sake. The humor in itself may be striking . . . [it] is but one perspective on the materials and it is never a final perspective." 139

The grotesque humor of *Sanctuary* is certainly one perspective on the action. It is one way Faulkner might have gotten his point across; it is certainly not the only way. In this case, the grotesque humor is the theme concerning justice and hypocrisy and the grotesque humor was one way to point out the human foibles of the people in the novel and the people reading the novel. Thompson sees that grotesque humor as double purposed.

Nowhere else does he interweave such comic, ironic, satiric, sarcastic, and tragic bitterness. More than that, the mockery throughout is doublebarreled: one load is fired at the certain vulnerable foibles in human nature at large, and the other load is fired simultaneously at the low tastes of the vulgarly common reader. 140

Thompson has neatly described the tone of grotesque humor. We said in defining the term that the tone was mixed and combined horror with laughter, fear with pleasure. Thompson also differentiates between the dual purpose of the grotesque humor. One butt of the joke is the foibles of mankind both those of the characters of the novel and those of the characters who read the novel. A second butt of the joke is the low and vulgar tastes of the common reader, as Thompson says. We are forced to find ourselves in the grotesques of the novel. When we do, it is painful and so the grotesque humor allows us the detachment to say, "that's not really meant for me." Since it is only a novel, we have the excuse that it is fiction and if too painful, we can disbelieve we are the butt of the humor. Yet,

140Thompson, p. 99.
that is exactly one purpose of the humor and one of the themes Faulkner tried to communicate. He has succeeded at the communication but whether we change or not is up to us. When the horrors become too gruesome we notice the humor according to Lawrence Kubie. "It is only when the nightmare becomes a little too garish, the horrors too gruesome with a touch of the slapstick, that one notes the tongue bulging in the author's cheek."141

Finally we must interpret whether the theme is optimistic or pessimistic or existential or whatever. Adams claims that "the frequent savagery of Faulkner's humor, instead of preventing, actually enhances the optimistic outcomes."142 He also says that there is "a maximum of amusement at the hilarious incongruities of life--although Horace, who is the butt of the whole grisly joke, is not the one to laugh."143 We understand why Horace cannot appreciate the humor of the situation because he is too involved in the action of the novel. The reader can appreciate that grotesque humor because of his detachment. Horace, being the butt of the joke of the novel, is like Anse also being the butt of the cruel joke. In Horace's case, the joke concerns his belief in the righteousness and sincerity of justice and the goodness of men. Horace cannot understand why Goodwin will not allow him to mention Popeye's being on


the place at the time of the murder. Horace thinks this fact will cause true justice to be accomplished while Lee more sensibly knows that it will not matter and that Popeye would only seek revenge on him therefore. To the audience, too, the theme that justice gets the right man for the wrong reasons is obvious. Yet, through the grotesque humor, Faulkner is saying that is not right. Justice should get the right men for the right reasons; justice should get itself straightened out rather than continuing blindly blundering. The characters of *Sanctuary* are, some of them, worthy of sympathy. Horace and the Goodwins are deserving of sympathy but not necessarily of commendation; they might almost be criticized for the narrowness of their point of view which causes the troubles. Yet, Popeye and Temple and Miss Reba and Clarence Snopes are deserving of criticism. Popeye is a moron and should not be allowed to live; he should never have been born. Temple is a shallow girl who does not realize the consequences of what she does and therefore deserves what happens to her. Miss Reba is a good hearted whore but she also should not be hypocritical and so concerned with external propriety while being internally deficit. Clarence Snopes is a good example of the greedy politician who is out to win friends only so they can vote for him and give him further power and notoriety. Some of the characters, like Clarence and Popeye, are truly hateful, while others are deserving of sympathy. But none are blameless, all deserve the criticism Faulkner levels at them. The wide variety of characters widens the scope of the theme and the butt of the criticism. Firstly, these special characters deserve the criticism
communicated through the grotesque humor of the novel. Then, these characters are representative of types of people especially people of the South, who deserve similar criticism. This is one standard criticism leveled at the novel itself, that all the characters are two-dimensional and lack fullness. Two-dimensional or not, the characters stand for more than themselves. Horace signified justice, Temple cheap shallow thrills, Narcissa hypocrisy, Miss Reba corrupted good heartedness, Popeye evil and so forth. In fact, Popeye almost becomes a symbol of modern man and his concern with machines because Popeye almost is a machine. His description of his eyes and the mechanicalness of his appearance and gait add to his significance as an example of modern machinery. In such a function, Popeye adds further depth to the novel because then the source of the trouble with men and society and justice is further pinpointed as modern machinery and unconcern for fellow men. Finally, the criticism of the novel is leveled at the reader and the theme becomes a warning that men should be otherwise, that they should attempt to correct the vagaries of blind justice and hypocritical appearances. That theme comes through most appropriately with the scenes of grotesque humor. We are allowed to laugh and cry or scream with horror at what is wrong with these people, the South, the world and us.
CHAPTER VII

LIGHT IN AUGUST AND ABSALOM, ABSALOM!

Both Light in August and Absalom, Absalom! contain stock humor and grotesque humor. Rather than concentrating on one type of humor or one type of resulting theme, Faulkner began to merge both with these novels. The humor is more apparent and direct in Light in August than it is in Absalom, Absalom! where it is quite subtle. Both these major novels give us some brilliant handling of both types of humor and some of the most complex themes of all of Faulkner's novels where the humor of them should help us interpret these themes.

In Light in August, neither type of humor plays an extremely dominant part in the novel, but both types of humor are there. The structure of the humor of the novel is as two concentric circles: the story of Lena Grove and Byron Bunch and their relationship to the Reverend Hightower provides the stock humor, while the story of Joe Christmas and Joanna Burden provides the grotesque humor. The story of Lena surrounds and makes a frame for the story of Joe; the fitting together of the two stories and of the two types of humor produces the theme of the novel.

Light in August begins and ends with the picture of Lena Grove in placid search for the father of her child. Dorothy Tuck claims that the
novel uses "low comedy at the beginning and end." In this way, this "low stock humor provides the frame of the novel in the same way the story of Lena provides structure throughout the book. After Lena and her symbolic mate Byron are introduced, the story turns to Joe and his past. The link between the two stories is provided by Byron who works in the mill with Joe. Then, throughout the story of Joe and his relationship with Joanna Burden, Faulkner returns to Lena and her imminent "blessed event." Lena's search for her lover parallels Joe's search for identity. The crises of both stories occur nearly simultaneously: Joe is murdered and Burch and Lena are reunited within hours of each other. Finally, Faulkner returns to Lena's continued search as a final frame for the events of the novel.

Lena Grove is the stock "Earth Mother" figure; in this case, she is a comic figure as well. Lena is also somewhat of a comic Blessed Virgin mother figure. Lena travels in her sunbonnet and her blue shapeless dress, carrying her shoes usually. The color and simplicity of her apparel as well as her untouched virginity despite her preganancy are elements of her character which parallel Lena with the Virgin. The significance of this comparison makes the reader more aware of the fact that Lena is a good person and should be commended and imitated. Lena's simplicity is one of her most noteworthy and stock characteristics; she does not think very hard about anything and accepts whatever life provides for her. When she wants to walk into town rather than ride on the wagon when she is a

144 Tuck, p. 85.
young girl, she believes it is because she will not be recognized by the town's people as a country girl. She displays innocence and naivety here as she does often throughout the story when she is continually surprised and delighted by the events she finds herself in. The opening lines of the novel depict Lena sitting beside the road, thinking what a far way she has come from Alabama in such a short time. Immediately, we laugh because her point of view is so different from our own; Alabama and Mississippi are close together and might be joined quickly in a car on the road, but Lena has been walking and hitch-hiking for four weeks to get as far as she has. This surprises and delights her and makes the audience laugh at her innocence.

More of Lena's innocence is apparent in her explanation of why she got pregnant so quickly. We learn that Lena lived with her brother and his wife who have many children. "For almost half of every year the sister-in-law was either lying in or recovering (p. 5)." Therefore, Lena does most of the housework and cares for the children. "Later she told herself, 'I reckon that's why I got one so quick myself.'" Her tone as well as what she says are amusing to the audience since her logic is faulty but that provides the stock laugh. This same innocence and acceptance of her fate is apparent in her travels when logic would dictate that Lena should be at home with someone to help care for her. Her innocent faith in her lover prods her to walk for a month in search of him, believing that he has sent for her even if she never got a verbal or written notice to that effect. She is nine months pregnant and the difficulties she should encounter are staggering to contemplate; yet, her judgment on
affairs is a simple statement, "travelling is getting right bothersome (p. 25)," and "my, my. A body does get around (p. 26)." Her innocence and placid acceptance of events provide much of the humor for the audience because we expect all sorts of complications where Lena refuses to admit any.

Her primitive desires are apparent continually. She wants a husband for her child and does not consider herself a fallen woman because she does not get him before the child's birth. She also believes that no one else would possibly consider her a fallen woman either. When she talks with Mrs. Armstid, Lena first claims she is Mrs. Burch but then admits she is not yet married but does not consider this any reason for guilt or condemnation. Mrs. Armstid provides even more direct stock humor from her comments on the occasion saying "she expects to find him there. Waiting. With the house all furnished and all (p. 14)." The concept of a house all furnished is stockily humorous in many ways in the scene. Lena has not come from a nicely furnished house, but from a lean-to shack; she does not expect a nicely furnished house from Burch but only shelter. What she gets in Jefferson is little more than shelter although Byron does attempt to fix the shack so that it is at least comfortable. In Mrs. Armstid's nicely furnished farmhouse, Lena finds herself impressed but also discovers that she has the characteristics to deal with such comparative luxury. Lena prides herself on the fact that she ate the food Mrs. Armstid offered with manners and in a ladylike way, rather than in a country way or with obvious relish. Lena believes that no one will recognize her as a country girl by her manners while that is her most apparent
characteristic to the reader, providing much of the stock humor of her character.

Lena continues undefiled throughout the novel despite her pregnancy. In the scene with Burch which Byron arranges, Lena treats Burch as an accepted mate. She accepts his excuses and explanations for his conduct, not needing to forgive him for his conduct because she does not think there was anything wrong with that conduct. She herself is beyond sin and guilt and therefore believes Burch to be blameless as well. In the final scenes with Byron back on the road, Lena continues to hold herself separate from and pure of any defilement or even any relationship. She has accepted Byron's efforts to provide a shelter and comfort for her. She has even accepted the fact that Byron has quit his job and is going with her ostensibly in search of her mate. The contrast between her placid acceptance of events and the reader's questioning of those events results in some stock humor. Where we expect Lena to be upset or outraged by Burch's leaving her, she accepts the fact and simply continues her pursuit of him. All she has to say in the circumstances when Burch deserts her a second time is "Now I got to get up again (p. 379)." She remains unflustered by her destiny and manages only "to sigh once, profoundly." The difference between what we expect and what we see provides the stock humor of the concluding scenes.

The stock humor of the concluding scene comes from a few other sources as well, one of which is the tone of the truck driver who retells the story to his wife. The tone of this last chapter is much more bawdy and lusty than any of the other humor of the story so the effect is purely stock
comedy. "The novel ends in a mood of comic simplicity . . . their [Lena's and Byron's] behavior is reported in lusty, comic tones, by the truck driver who had helped them along the way." 145 This truck driver periodically breaks the story to comment to his wife and his comments and his treatment of his wife provide more of the stock comedy of lines and retorts. More of the humor of the scene comes from the driver's misconception that Byron and Lena are married; since we know they are not, his assumption gives the reader laughter. When the driver realizes that they are not married, his comments provide more of the stock humor when he says that now, after Byron has left in embarrassment, Lena is hunting "for her husband. Or both husbands now (p. 442)." The fact that he seems to accept Lena's having a baby and no husband or one lost one or even two husbands gives the audience the humor. The novel concludes with the driver's telling his wife and the audience Lena's comments which echo the opening lines of the novel. "Here we aint been coming from Alabama but two months, and now it's already Tennessee (p. 444)." Again, the difference between the way Lena sees the events and the way the audience sees the events results in some of the scene's stock humor.

In these final scenes, Byron Bunch also functions as the stock humorous character he is. Byron has shown himself to be a bungling expectant father and an innocent rejected lover, but in the inverse order. That reversing of the order of events itself provides humor, but much more laughter comes from Byron's actions. The driver tells his wife how he "was

145 Hoffman, Twayne series, p. 73.
pulling for the little cuss (p. 440)." The audience seems to do the
same despite the fact we wonder what attracts us to Byron. Byron is an
attractive and commendable character because he is only treated with
gentle stock humor and because Faulkner intends the reader to see these as
praiseworthy attributes and commend and imitate them. In the last scenes,
Byron finally screws up his courage to go to Lena and attempt to make love
to her; when Lena rejects him, the humor is complete. The driver des-
cribes the scene.

. . . then I heard one kind of astonished sound she made when she
woke up, like she was just surprised and then a little put out
without being scared at all, and she says, not loud neither: "Why
Mr. Bunch. Aint you ashamed. You might have woke the baby, too." Then
he come out the back door of the truck. Not fast, and not
climbing down on his own legs at all. I be dog if I dont believe
she picked him up and set him back outside on the ground like she
would that baby if it had been about six years old . . . (p. 441)
Byron's attitude and his actions result in the stock humor. He believes
himself capable of loving and caring for Lena and when he attempts to
physically show her his affection, she treats him like the innocent child
he is. We wonder why he had not attempted something of this sort sooner
as might be reasonable, barring her pregancy. Then we remember the char-
acter of Byron and we have the answer to that question since Byron is as
innocent as Lena in many ways. He does not know how to act when he finds
himself in love with Lena; his exaggerated sense of duty and propriety
results in humorous incidents. The difference between how Byron sees him-
self and how we see him results in the humor of the character.

In the earlier scenes we see Byron as the bungling expectant father
and the knight defending his lady. When Byron is in the midst of the
events of the baby's birth, he seems to see himself outside himself, and remarks about his actions.

'Byron Bunch borning a baby. If I could have seen myself now two weeks ago, I would not have believed my own eyes. I would have told them that they lied.' (p. 344)

If the reader could have seen Byron now a hundred pages ago, we too would not have believed it possible. This initial disbelief with the truth of what we are reading is part of the humor of the scene. Then there are Byron's continued half-completed, bungling actions as he hurries to Hightower's to enlist his aid in borning the baby. Byron says he must remember to tell Hightower to bring the medical book with directions which helped the last time Hightower delivered a baby. That Byron can think that clearly is funny in light of the events, but in direct contrast to the rest of his unorganized actions. Byron wakes Hightower and proceeds on to town to get the doctor. When he is at the doctor's Byron must argue the doctor into coming and then prod him along in his preparations, since the doctor is quite fastidious in his dressing. When Byron returns with the doctor, they are too late, "the professional having lost again to the amateur (p. 347)." Hightower has delivered the baby while Byron was running in search of the doctor and chastising himself for not having made arrangements for the doctor much sooner. Throughout, Byron has acted like a worried expectant father while denying the reality of Lena's condition.

A short time later when Byron defends Lena in his fight with Burch he again plays the stock comic figure of a defending knight. Byron has attempted to reunite Burch and Lena in the mistaken belief that they belong together as a family and in the belief that Burch will accept the
family notion. After the marshall has pushed Burch into the shack where Lena and the child await him, Byron goes off mounted on a mule. By the time Byron makes it to a rise of the hill, he can see Burch running from the cabin. Byron spurs the mule to chase Burch in the humorous belief that he can get him to go back and accept responsibility for Lena and the child. During the chase, Byron thinks about all he has done for Lena and what he will do now. His self-analysis is humorous to the reader.

I took care of his woman for him and I borne his child for him. And now there is one more thing I can do for him. I cant marry them, because I aint a minister. And I may not can catch him, because he's got a start on me. And I may not can whip him if I do, because he is bigger than me. But I can try it. I can try to do it. (p. 373)

All of Byron's overly romantic notions about love and families have provided stock humor in the novel. In this passage, Byron still seems to think that the fact of marriage would make some difference in the actuality of events. He cannot marry Lena and Burch because he is not a minister, but Byron can do better than that by marrying Lena himself. He does marry her symbolically when he goes off with her rather than leave her to her own search after he quit his job in a romantic belief that he must protect Lena and the child. In the fight that follows, Byron gets badly beaten in the belief that he must try to stop Burch from deserting Lena a second time. The fight itself, we are told, "lasted less than two minutes (p. 385)." Only after all this violent activity can Byron be still and contemplate his situation. Instead of doing something sensible like taking care of his wounds and then going back to work, he returns to Lena and determines to travel with her. The extremity of his romantic notions and motivations makes Byron the stock bungling father, lover, knight character
that he is. As Backman states, "portrayed with humor and affection, Byron is the novel's lover." 146

Lena and Byron together provide the novel with some comic relief, but this is not their sole purpose in the novel. As O'Connor says, "Lena Grove and Byron Bunch are not merely the comic subplot, the relief from the terrible anguish of the lynching. They are a part of the complexity of the community." 147 Hence, as we have noticed before with Faulkner's stock humor, it functions as more than simple comic relief. Byron and Lena are tied to the theme of community and human isolation. Byron is a good man, he protects womankind and acts unselfishly. His character might be laughable, but it is also commendable. We feel a little sorry for Byron because people might take advantage of him; we laugh at him because his actions are extreme, but we respect and admire him because his motives are pure and his responses unselfish. The characteristics which Byron displays are traits which Faulkner might suggest more men should have and act upon. Byron is in direct contrast with such villains as Burch who act only in their self-interest rather than for anyone else. Byron may be romantic and innocent, but these attributes help him respond with goodness and sincerity to Lena's plight. Lena also represents forces of goodness and innocence in the novel. She remains undefiled and uncorrupted throughout her ordeal. She is never selfish and is always afraid she might be beholden to people, so she does all she can to avoid such debts. She attempts to do for herself as long as she can, and in her simple faith

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146 Backman, Major Years, p. 84.
147 O'Connor, Tangled Fire, p. 82.
in the world and people, she succeeds. She displays a type of courage and stamina in her trek across the states. Her characteristics, too, are ones which Faulkner might suggest the audience emulate. Her characteristics and Byron's are ones which result in stock humor, but they are also attributes which are standardly accepted as good and worthwhile. Lena's placidity and Byron's romanticism especially are characteristics which Faulkner knew the South to possess; they are also characteristics which can be praised and commended in the South. The force for goodness and life which exists in Byron and Lena provides the theme of the novel in Faulkner's suggestion that goodness, and innocence, and romanticism are undeniable necessities of life. No true person or society can function properly without the characteristics Byron and Lena display. Granted, these attributes get the characters into stock comic situations for the delight and pleasure and comic relief of the audience, but those attributes are ones commended by Faulkner wherever they occur.

Hightower is another stock comic character who provides more than just simple relief in the novel. Hightower provides stock humor from the things he says, the way he acts, and the things he believes in, but is also a spokesman for and critic of religion in the novel and the world. All those sources of his humorous character place him as a stock comic preacher while linking him to the theme of religion which runs throughout the novel.

Possibly the funniest, most ironic thing about Hightower is his name and his situation, including his wife. A preacher is normally a tower of strength to his parishioners and to the community. In Jefferson, Hightower
is a kind of jack-of-all trades as announced by the sign in front of his house: "Art Lessons, Handpainted Xmas and Anniversary Cards, Photographs Developed (p. 50)." The sign is in direct contrast to what we might expect of a minister or preacher and so provides stock humor through the reversal of our expectations and in the extremity of the situation to which the reverend is reduced. The rest of Hightower's situation is equally as funny: Faulkner announces that "his wife went bad on him. She would slip off to Memphis now and then and have a good time." The understated tone of the announcement adds to the stock humor because again we do not expect the circumstances to be as they are. There is also the humorous situation where the wife goes off to a sanitarium temporarily, and when she returns, the town is satisfied because she is more the women they expected. She attends services, pays social calls and does all the other standardly accepted actions so some of the townspeople even forgive her for her former rash actions. The circumstances are resolved with a clever proverb from the town ladies.

[The town] believed that bad women can be fooled by badness, since they have to spend some of their time being suspicious. But that no good woman can be fooled by it, by being good herself, she does not need to worry any more about hers or anybody else's goodness; hence she has plenty of time to smell out sin. (p. 57)

The apparent piety of the women provides stock humor in light of the reality of the circumstances.

The crowning humor of Hightower's situation with his wife is the summary statement that "then one Saturday night she got killed, in a house or something in Memphis (p. 51)." The situation itself is not funny, nor ostensibly is Hightower's reaction; he refuses to resign from the
church because of the scandal. What does make the circumstances funny is the reaction of the townspeople who want to get rid of Hightower and so generously take up a collection for him as a going away present; they assumed he would leave the town. Instead, Hightower refuses to leave the town but accepts the donation. When the townspeople realize that he is not leaving, they feel abused because they felt he accepted the money "under false pretenses (p. 60)." Now, Hightower's actions become humorous because he leaves the room only to return with the donation in the exact denominations they had given to him. The exaggeration of the circumstances that the town prompts is more of the source of the stock humor of Hightower's situation.

Hightower never seems to act as the town expects him to and therefore provides stock humor of mistaken conceptions and expectations. When the town is sure Hightower should and will resign his post, he refuses. When Mrs. Hines and Byron request Hightower provide Joe with an alibi for the night of the murder, again Hightower refuses. Ironically and humorously, when the final confrontation comes, Joe runs to Hightowers' and Hightower at the last possible second tries to stop Percy Grimm from killing Joe by claiming that Joe was visiting with him the night of Joanna's murder. But now it is too late to save Joe and Joe's earlier action of flinging Hightower out of the way in the desperation of his flight provides ironic humor to Hightower's generous lies for Joe's sake. When Byron announces his friendship with Lena to Hightower, Hightower reacts with fear and almost horror and disbelief while the reader laughs at his antics. The reverend wants to remain isolated from the town and wants Byron to
basically stay the same, therefore, Hightower fears Byron's impending responsibility for Lena. Hightower is upset when Byron says he is not going to conduct the religious services this Saturday night because he is clever enough to realize the implications of what Byron is saying while Byron himself remains innocent and the reader is amused. Finally, when Byron asks Hightower to assist Lena with the birth of the baby, Hightower is at first scandalized and insulted. He is also sarcastic when Byron does not leave him the mule to help him home and he must walk the long way as the dawn approaches. Humorously, after the ordeal Hightower believes he "ought to feel worse than I do," but he must "admit that he does not (p. 354)."

Again, there is humor in the way he says things, in what he does, and in what we expect from him.

One of the earliest pictures we see of Hightower which imprints him as a stock preacher figure is his arrival in Jefferson straight out of the seminary. We are told that Hightower refused to accept any other call; at first this sounds like a devout preacher who knows and believes in his calling. But then we are also told that Hightower pulled every string he could to be sent to Jefferson; now, he almost sounds like a politician who maneuvers to get what he wants. We begin to question Hightower's devotion or the sincerity of his profession and become aware of the humor of his character from the inverted expectations. When Hightower spreads his glee with the assignment throughout the town, the people judge his actions. "To the people of the town it sounded like a horsetrader's glee over an advantageous trade (p. 52)." The remark itself is funny in the visual picture of the horsetrader and his business but when we analyze the content of the
remark, the stock humor is reinforced because we become aware of the separation between the two professions of horsetrader and preacher. Finally, the town determines that what is wrong with Hightower is that "it was as if he couldn’t get religion and that galloping cavalry and his dead grandfather shot from the galloping horse untangled from each other, even in the pulpit (p. 53)." The picture of a raving preacher is a stock comic picture, we almost believe in the reality of Hightower's stance and his actions. Then we recognize the trouble he has distinguishing the reality of the present from the memory of the glorious past and the separation between the earthly reality and the spiritual existence. Hightower's image of himself also adds to the stock humor of his character. Where we expect a minister to be calm and devout and sure in his beliefs, Hightower has everything all mixed up together. The townspeople say they cannot tell if Hightower even believed what he told them from the pulpit. When his wife goes more insane and begins screaming during a service when Hightower is preaching, the town says they did not know "whether she was shaking her hands at him or at God." Here Hightower is compared almost directly with God and we think this is a reasonable comparison for a clergyman. But then we realize the picture of the raving man in the pulpit and laugh at the picture because of the twisted expectations.

Hightower is a spokesman for and critic of religion. especially later when Byron suggests his talking with Mrs. Hines, Joe’s grandmother. Hightower remains a stock comic figure but through it all, he is more than that, he is part of the theme of religion and what organized religion is capable of doing to people and making them do to other people. High-
tower says "so why should not their religion drive them to crucifixion of
themselves and one another? (p. 322)." The question is answered with
the action of the book religion does drive men to crucify one another.
Rightower continues to speculate that the people will "do it gladly"
referring to the murder of Joe. The explanation of their being glad about
the action is important. "Since to pity him would be to admit selfdoubt
and to hope for and need pity themselves. They will do it gladly. gladly.
That's why it is so terrible.' In one sense, Rightower is speaking about
Christmas's murder and we accept his premonition as just analysis from a
pious man. Then, the comment becomes more than just relevant to the ac-
tion of the novel; it becomes appropriate to the entire world. Rightower
is talking about all of us and all of religion, as though he is speaking
for Faulkner. In this and other such scenes, Rightower becomes a spokes-
man for religion and for Faulkner on religion. Before Byron and Mrs. Hines
ask Rightower to lie for Christmas Rightower wonders what they want him
to do now. He continually asks "What are they asking of me now (p. 340)."
The question is reminiscent of one who sacrifices self for others and we
almost expect Rightower to act accordingly. Rather, he refuses and demon-
strates the limits of religious devotion. In a rage, Rightower throws
Byron and Mrs. Hines out, refusing to do as they have asked. In the final,
analysis, however, Rightower does attempt to defend Christmas but unsuc-
cessfully. The full irony of Joe's murder is that it takes place in Right-
tower's house and he is unable to prevent the slaughter. His religion
has prompted Rightower to do the right thing at the last minute so he is
not successful. The scenes demonstrate the theme that religion must be
tempered with kindness and true belief to be successful or beneficial rather than raging and superficial as it so much more often is.

Hightower's position as a preacher provides part of the theme of the novel concerning religion. Hightower is a symbol for the demonstration of strength which failed. Hightower does not have enough strength or the right kind to fulfill his destiny. He contrasts with the other ministers and preachers in the novel and with their types of action and belief. Together, all these figures of Hightower, McEachern, Doc Hines and Byron demonstrate types of religious belief and action and the success or acceptability of those beliefs according to Faulkner.

Where Hightower is failed strength, McEachern, Joe's adopted father, is inflexible and puritanical. McEachern tries to get Joe to memorize his catechism and Joe resists so McEachern whips Joe and gives him another hour to memorize the passage; for some unknown reason, Joe continues to refuse the memorization throughout the entire day. McEachern also is totally stubborn in his demands and continues to whip the boy repeatedly. Later, when Joe is older, McEachern cautions Joe against frivolity and lechery. On one trip to town with Joe, McEachern gives Joe a dime and tells him not to be frivolous with it but Joe goes to the restaurant where he had first seen Bobby when there earlier with his father. Immediately, Joe makes a beeline for the places and desires which his foster father has attempted repeatedly to denounce. McEachern's demands are extreme and sometimes even funny, as when he gives Joe the cow and wonders where it has gotten to since Joe will not go look for it. Joe has sold the cow to buy a suit which he wears when he sneaks out of the house at night.
McEachern's persistance in wanting to know where the cow is and to help Joe look for the lost animal provides some funny remarks and antics, especially when we know there is no longer a cow around. McEachern's stubbornness can show up to demonstrate religious belief which we know to be noneffective or it can show up in a comic light. McEachern, like Hightower, is one aspect of religion which Faulkner is showing us, through humor and action, is unsuccessful and not to be adhered to or practiced.

Doc Hines represents another aspect or religion, also unsuccessful. Doc Hines is unthinking and emotive, so he is somewhat similar to the picture of Hightower when raging from the pulpit. But Doc Hines takes his religious beliefs much more seriously; he practices what he preaches to the point of being directly responsible for his daughter's death, the murder of her lover and the indirect murder of his grandson. Hines' characteristic line is "Bitchery and abomination!" We smile at the image knowing there may be some truth to the statement; but whatever truth it had, we find it negated by Hines' own actions. Hines is the one who is most guilty of abomination in his actions. The irony of the line serves as comic relief to the fierce emotionalism of the man as well as critical commentary from Faulkner on men like Hines and their religions in general. Hines is externally pious and righteous but his emotionalism and superiority lead him to direct and indirect murder repeatedly. For such actions, he is to be criticized and his religious judgments discounted.

Byron Bunch is the only character of the men who represents any sensible stand toward religion despite the fact that he is not an ordained clergyman. For Byron, religion is an active matter; he goes thirty miles
each Saturday to conduct services in another town. Unlike Hightower, who does not act, or McEachern, who is extremely stubborn, or Hines, who is extremely emotional, Byron demonstrates some balance and common sense in his beliefs and his actions. Those beliefs and actions certainly put Byron in some humorous circumstances since he is the only one to aid and care for Lena until he can prod Hightower to assist at the baby's birth. Byron is a force for positive good and understanding in the novel. If any religion or beliefs are to be commended or recommended, Byron's deserve such. All the other preacher characters only apprehend their religion and their actions according to formulated phrases which are hollow or false. Byron, on the other hand, acts and is motivated by true goodness and kindness. Byron is the most successful at his actions, despite his amorous rejection by Lena which only serves to underline the purity of Byron's responses. Byron is to be commended for his actions and his motivations as a true Christian in contrast to the other pictures of pious but hollow superficial good men.

Joe Christmas and Joanna Burden are not normally believed to be comic characters; they are traditionally interpreted as tragic people damned by their own personalities and destinies and worthy of sympathy. They are essential to the interpretation of the novel's theme in the analysis of the forces which cause their two murders. They are certainly these things, but they are also a source of grotesque humor and thematic criticism in the novel. The conflicts and situations between Joe and Joanna are the main source of that grotesque humor rather than their characters or their speeches. From early childhood and background to present actions, these two people give us some grotesquely humorous scenes.
When Joe is in the orphanage as a child he discovers the delights of toothpaste. We learn that Joe has repeatedly entered the dietitian's room to squeeze a coil of pink toothpaste onto his finger and eat it. He has done this many times but has been careful to take only one fingerful at a time. The picture of the boy eating toothpaste might almost be stockily humorous until we have this more intensive and hurtful scene of grotesque humor. Joe has entered the dietitian's room once again wanting only another taste of toothpaste, but he is surprised in the act. When he hears the girl coming down the hall, he hides behind a curtain which screens one corner of the room. "Here he squatted among delicate shoes and suspended soft woman-garments (p. 105)" we are told. The picture of the boy is funny until we add the pink toothpaste which he continues to eat in large gobs, when the scene becomes grotesquely funny. Joe knows he is becoming sick and that he should not eat any more of the toothpaste but his anxiety at being caught and the dietitian's prolonged stay in the room add to his troubles. Joe takes a last fingerful of toothpaste which will not go down and so he retches up the whole business. The woman drags Joe out of his vomit and he seems to hang in her grasp, glassy eyed, limp and pale. The picture itself is grotesquely funny because of the extremity of Joe's action and its ridiculous results.

Yet, the grotesque humor of the scene is heightened when we realize the rest of it. While Joe has been crouched behind the curtain eating toothpaste, the dietitian has been making love with an intern. The sounds of their love-making which punctuate the description of Joe crouching with the toothpaste give an absurd feeling to the scene. The extreme circumstances
themselves provide some of the grotesque humor. If this were all there was to the scene, we might justly wonder how the grotesque humor served the purpose of criticism from Faulkner posited earlier. But the scene is continued many ways over the next few days at the orphanage, what began as one grotesquely funny picture extends to a more prolonged action of several days.

Now, a dual misconception serves to continue the grotesque humor. Joe wonders why the dietitian has not told his transgression while she wonders why Joe has not revealed her sin. The grotesque humor comes from the reader's knowledge, through Faulkner's craft, of the reality of the circumstances. Joe is too young to understand what the girl had been doing and she is too stupid to realize that Joe does not know or want to tell her sin. They both become increasingly desperate. Finally, she confronts Joe and he believes he will get his deserved punishment; instead, she asks him if he will tell on her and the boy is bewildered. He believes she is asking him to tell on himself since he does not know of her trouble and wonders how she can be so silly. The audience knows and sympathizes with her plight but also is amused by her stupidity. To increase the tension and the grotesque humor of the scene, the dietitian gives Joe a shiny silver dollar in the hopes he will not tell on her. "You can buy a lot with this (p. 109)" she tells him. We laugh because she thinks he might want to buy more toothpaste to eat and she is providing him with source money. Joe, on the other hand, now loathes toothpaste and only wants the coin "as he would have wanted the bright cap from a beer bottle." The humor is temporarily complete in this resolution to the action.
In her desperation, the dietitian acts unknowingly to change and mold Joe's destiny. She tries to place him with foster parents so that he will get out of the way. This act itself might not be so bad or so funny if it were not for the preceding attempts to discredit Joe. She goes to the head of the orphanage and announces that Joe is a nigger; they now do not know what to do with him since he cannot continue to be raised in the lily white Southern tradition. The janitor at the school, who turns out to be old Doc Hines, takes Joe away from the school in an abortive kidnapping attempt, they are found by the authorities only days later. When the dietitian makes her shocking announcement, the school administrator immediately accepts its veracity. "I don't see how we failed to see it as long as we did. You can look at his face now, his eyes and hair. Of course it's terrible (p. 118)." The assumed piety of the statement in light of such little evidence provides for the misconception which results in some of the grotesque humor of the scene. One characteristic of Faulkner's use of grotesque is that the humor or the hurt are never negated or pacified, but rather intensified which is so in this incident with Joe. Rather than having some innocuous conclusion to the confrontation and battle between Joe and the girl, we have a result which results in changing Joe's destiny, partially for the worse. The hurt of his circumstances is intensified rather than alleviated by the grotesque humor of the incidents. Joe now goes to the McEachern where he is in for increased strict and almost cruel treatment. Now, too, the true point of the grotesquely humorous scene comes to light as Faulkner is using the grotesque humor to criticize the pious platitudes and the hollow respectability of the misanthropic orphanage personnel. He
is also criticizing the immediate and obvious differences in Joe's treatment when people think he is part Negro. Faulkner seems to be questioning the treatment of Negroes throughout the South and pointing up the lack of sense or veracity in that treatment. The scene is grotesquely humorous, but it is also one theme of the book concerning the hypocrisy of the supposedly enlightened personnel and school system of the South.

Joanna Burden too describes scenes of grotesque humor from her childhood or family background. When she is telling Joe the story of her family, she mentions her grandfather's and her brother's hidden graves which she attempts to explain by saying "They hated us here. We were Yankees. Foreigners. Worse than foreigners: enemies... Stirring up the Negroes to murder and rape, they called it. Threatening white supremacy (p. 218)."

Here we have the moral point of the scene even before we have its grotesque humor. Joanna also gives us that when she says the graves were buried so that the people would not dig them up and butcher the bodies. The humor comes only when we realize that that is to be exactly Joe's fate; the extremity of the irony and premonition heighten the chill of the laughter. Joanna continues with sarcasm when she says that Colonel Sartoris was "a town hero because he killed with two shots from the same pistol an old onearmed man and a boy who had never even cast his first vote. Maybe they were right."

Her tone is bitter and arouses tension in the reader simultaneously as we laugh at the figure of Colonel Sartoris with his bluster against a nearly helpless enemy. The extreme reaction of the Colonel in the face of a very small threat adds to the humor; the hurtful result of his action makes the humor grotesque and the audience cringe as well as laugh. Christmas also
adds the further point of the scene and its sarcastic grotesque humor when he asks, "Just when do men that have different blood in them stop hating one another?" The answer is probably never as demonstrated by Joe's own murder for exactly that reason. The point of the scene is also one major theme of the novel which comes through the grotesque humor.

Joanna also tells how her father got his second wife by mail order. When the prospective bride arrives, they are married the same day. "That was quick marrying, for him. The other time it took him over twelve years to get married (p. 219)." Again, the line is funny but the reality is hurtful, resulting in grotesque humor. Also, the line is part of the theme of the book in its implied criticism of hollow rituals such as marriage. It is preferable for people to live in harmony and comparative happiness as Byron and Lena do than to demand too unquestioningly the rituals which might legalize but negate the happiness, or add to the scandal of the situation. Motivation according to one's own heart and goodness are preferable to tacit adherence to forms which one does not believe in or cannot live according to.

Ironically, this same shifting of motivations and results occurs in the actions of the town which lead to Joe's grotesque murder. When they discover that Joe is partially nigger, all the stops to their actions have been removed. Joanna, who had previously been scorned as a nigger lover, now becomes the pure white Southern maiden who was wronged. Joe, who was accepted as white and lived among them becomes the hated black villian. Through this shift, the community shifts the blame from itself and absolves itself from the guilt of Joe's murder. They see themselves as right and
justified in murdering Joe since it is deserved punishment for murdering Joanna Burden. The actions and motivations of the town are continually questioned through the action and the theme of the novel.

There is one important scene which shows Joanna Burden as a grotesquely comic character: her second phase of development. During this period, the days remain the same between Joanna and Joe: he works and she deals with her correspondence with the Negro schools. But, during the night, Joanna seems to turn into some strange, grotesque creature. Faulkner claims that she passed through "every avatar of a woman in love (p. 226)," and Joe does not know what to do with her. She becomes concerned with intrigue to the point that she insists on having a place where they can leave secret notes for each other, so Joanna leaves notes for Joe in the hollow fence post which is their secret place. Also, Joanna begins to display absurd concern with games and rituals so she hides in the house or around the grounds and makes Joe search her out. In the wildness of her passion, Joanna ceases to be human and becomes quite animalistic. Her hair and her hands in the throes of her passion "seem to come alive like octopus tentacles (p. 227)," and she rails at Joe "Negro! Negro! Negro!" They both become entirely corrupted with their passion. Joanna's love letters and her wild extreme antics provide the grotesque humor of the scenes. The difference between what Joanna is by day and the way the town sees her with what she acts like by night heightens the grotesque humor of her character and motivations in these scenes. The crowning grotesque humor of the entire sequence of scenes is when Joanna announces that she is pregnant. The realization that she is serious and the horror that it might be so combine with
the ridiculousness of the possibility to result in the grotesque humor of the statement. Only after we are believing that she is pregnant and remember how Lena handles such a situation does Faulkner comes down on us with the truth of her circumstance. She is not pregnant unless we might consider a hysterical pregnancy a possibility. This announcement prompts Joe to leave but he too must participate in the grotesque humor of the scene since he cannot seem to get up enough courage or energy to leave Joanna; so he stays on and circumstances return to some semblance of normalcy. These scenes of grotesque humor are only resolved with Joe's murder of her after he goes through the third of her periods, the time when she tries to get him to pray with her. Throughout the actions, Joanna has functioned as some sort of hysterical, almost insane lady. She has done and said silly things which result in the reader's laughing at her actions while being horrified at the thought that they actually occurred. Her actions become the indirect cause of Joe's death and part of the theme of responsibility and hypocrisy of the novel.

The most extreme example of grotesque humor in the entire novel is the scene where the stranger coming into town discovers Joanna Burden's dead body. First, the man and his wife remark about the smoke pouring from the house by saying "how it was a right smart of smoke coming out of that kitchen (p. 78)." The contrast of the calmness of the man and his country dialect with the reality of the burning house and the imminence of danger provides for the grotesque humor of this opening picture. Then the man, the wagon and the wife all pause and watch the fire for a while. This appears ridiculous to the audience but is preparation for the more grotesque
humor to come. The pause to watch causes the wife to realize that the people in the house might not know it is afire since there is no activity around the house. Where we thought these country folks were at first plain stupid or lazy, they now become more intelligent and perceptive. Yet, when we stop to analyze the business, the country folk return to being stupid and lazy because the man gets out of the wagon and stands hollering "Hello" for a while. Rather than going on to call the fire department, or sending the woman on with the wagon for that purpose, or going to the house to determine if there was actually any one in danger, the man stands calling. The scene might be stock humor if it were not for the reality of danger and the premonition of disaster. When the man finally goes into the house, he meets Brown who is drunk and is trying to convince the man there is no one upstairs and no need to go there. The man is cleverly suspicious and goes up any way, only to find Joanna Burden dead. At first we might expect her to be dead from the fire or smoke inhalation or something of that nature but then we find she has been cruelly murdered. The description of her body is quite grotesque since she has had her throat cut. Not only that, but "her head had been cut pretty near off (p. 79)," which is not yet grotesquely funny, but only grotesquely horrible. Then the man was "afraid to try to pick her up and carry her out because her head might come clean off (pp. 79-80)." The realization is genuine and the situation is horrible yet the telling of it with detachment and almost journalistic objectivity allows the detachment necessary for grotesque humor and results in that humor.

Now, the man is shocked into activity, although only grotesquely humor-
ous activity. He runs and tells his wife to telephone for help and then begins to draw a bucket of water from the well to fight the fire. The absurdity of fighting and raging fire through large parts of the house with one man and one bucket of water is humorous; the scene becomes grotesque humor from the reality of the situation and the extremity of the circumstances and the danger. Then, the man returns to the house to retrieve Joanna's body. He takes a cover off the bed and rolls her body onto it and "caught up the corners and swung it onto his back like a sack of meal (p. 80)." The description is funny because of the likeness of the dead body with a sack of meal. The situation becomes grotesquely funny because of its delicate subject, death, the extremity of the action, the reality of the danger, and the resulting tension in the audience. All the necessary characteristics of grotesque humor are here and we almost expect the scene to be resolved with the saving of Joanna's body. But, since we are getting used to Faulkner's technique of heightening the grotesque humor whenever we think it might be resolved, we wonder how the incident will develop and we are not disappointed. Byron tells us that "what he was scared of happened. Because the cover fell open and she was laying on her side, facing one way, and her head was turned clean around like she was looking behind her (p. 80)." The picture is horrible and might not be grotesque humor if not for the comments from the country man. He believes that "if she could just have done that when she was alive, she might not have been doing it now." What we too have dreaded has occurred but we are allowed the release of a laugh even if that laugh is caused by the grotesque and ultimately increases the tension of the scene.
Both the stock humor and the grotesque humor are linked in *Light in August* to give the theme of the novel. The stock humor is characteristic-ally linked to the theme of religion as we have already seen while the grotesque humor highlights the theme concerning hypocrisy and the difference between those who act on genuinely good motivations and those who act according to hollow systems based on formulated phrases. A few critics do see the novel as humorous. Cleanth Brooks has a good analysis and explanation for the two types of humor of the novel.

I believe, the mode is that of comedy. To say so in the light of some of the terrible episodes may seem perverse. But Faulkner's comedy is frequently a makeweight to the terrible. The tender-minded reader may feel that Faulkner frequently uses a savage humor; but his is never a cynical and nihilistic humor. Its function is to maintain sanity and human perspective in a scene of brutality and horror. Brook's reaction that his seeing comedy despite the horror as a perverse thing is also one of the first reactions to grotesque humor. We wonder why we laugh at such a horrible scene or statement or reality. Brooks is also right in saying that Faulkner's humor is never cynical or savage; rather it is there to maintain sanity in an insane or brutal position. In the novels the grotesque humor also functions as the theme of the work. Adams also has a statement of relevance.

We need only look at the whole structure to see that the book is not a tragedy with an inappropriate bit of farce tacked on at the end, but a comedy which contains a tragedy and assimilates it, as life assimilates disease and death. Adams, too, is right in saying that the predominant mode of the novel is comedy rather than tragedy. Both kinds of humor have been secondary in

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148 Brooks, p. 71.  
149 Adams, pp. 93-94.
the novel and not as prominent as in *The Sound and the Fury* or *Sanctuary*. Here, both the humors are secondary to other activities of the novel, but both fulfill the functions as set out originally. The stock humor in Hightower and Lena and Byron reflects Faulkner's commendation of the attributes and guiding motivations of these characters. The grotesque humor reflects Faulkner's criticism with the hypocrisy of a supposedly white society and the immunity with which it can murder a nigger, even when the actuality of the man's being a nigger is in question. The grotesque humor of the orphanage scene especially points up Faulkner's criticism of the educational systems of the South and the further hypocrisy of administrators and people in powerful positions. The themes of hypocrisy and religion are merged in the relationship of Joanna and Joe and the ways in which the public deals with these two people. The causes which resulted in the murders of both people are to be criticized and disavowed wherever they occur while the forces for goodness and kindness which protect Lena and motivate Byron are characteristics which are to be commended and fostered, again wherever they occur, whether in individuals, societies, religions, the South or the world.

*Absalom, Absalom!* has been traditionally viewed as a tragic novel, devoid of humor. Even Campbell and Foster, who dealt primarily with humor, claim that *Absalom, Absalom!* lacks all traces of this frontier humor, and "therein lies one of its major flaws." Simply because obvious frontier humor is lacking in the novel is no reason to criticize it; rather, it

150Campbell and Foster, p. 109.
would be reason to search more carefully to find whatever subtle traces of humor are there but which the hasty reader might have missed. On close reading, there is humor in Absalom, Absalom!: and both stock and grotesque humor. Both types of humor are quite subtle and unobvious but function just as importantly as in the earlier or more obvious examples studied. The stock humor comes from the band of wild niggers which Stupen has hired, and the French architect who oversees their labors, Wash Jones, the figure of Rosa Coldfield and her determination, and partially from the figure of Sutpen himself. In fact, the entire story of Sutpen and probably therefore the entire novel has been viewed as a parody of the Horatio Alger myth. The grotesque humor comes from still other elements of Sutpen's actions, and Shreve's final horrible joke which is the theme of the novel. We do not have to look far for the humor of Absalom, Absalom!: we only have to look carefully.

The legend of Sutpen's wild band of niggers began slowly, we are told early in the novel. Correspondingly, we get the story of these niggers in pieces spaced throughout the novel which build slowly. The story of these wild men is brought to town by the men who go out to Sutpen's place to check out what is going on. The sight that greets them is one of stock humor: these men can speak no English, only French. This fact alone is humorous in the way it is interpreted by the town who believes Sutpen speaks to these men in some language of magic. Ironically, the result of their actions seems to appear as if by magic out of the swamp. Sutpen has set up a kiln and a saw and the band of black men work them via orders in French from Sutpen. The men are hitched to the tools like animals or "as if the
negroes actually were wild men (p. 37)." Eventually, their handiwork, Sutpen's house, rises, "carried plank by plank and brick by brick out of the swamp." The impossibility and grandeur of the plan cause the town and the reader to laugh when the plan becomes fact, vision. These wild men work nearly naked except that they are clad in mud to keep away the mosquitoes. They become some kind of walking apparitions, hulking and jabbering in a mysterious tongue, and plastered in mud as if their skin of the same color had developed some exotic disease or growth. The man have nowhere to sleep but the ground and did not even have blankets to use. Consequently, we have another stockily humorous incident with the coon-hunter Akers who "claimed to have walked one of them out of the absolute mud like a sleep-alligator and screamed just in time (p. 36)." The picture of the man as a muddied alligator is what provides for the stock humor in the comparison of a man and an animal. Still another way these wild niggers become stockily humorous is when they are further described as a pack of hounds. Sutpen uses the men like a pack of hounds to drive the swamp in a hunt so that Sutpen can get his game and also provide sustenance for a lot of them. These wild negroes become less than human with all the work and demeaning functions they fulfill. They are described as being "like beasts half tamed to walk upright like men, in attitudes wild and reposed (p. 8)." The picture of them, their language, their actions and their functions all make them a small source of stock humor in the novel.

The French architect, too, is a minor source of the stock humor of Absalom, Absalom! The picture of the man is stockily humorous in the incongruity of his clothes and appearance, especially in comparison to Sutpen
or the band of negroes. Here is the full description in all its glory.

a small, alertly resigned man with a grim, harried Latin face, in a frock coat and a flowered waist-coat and a hat which would have created no furore on a Paris boulevard, all of which he was to wear constantly for the next two years--the somberly theatrical clothing and the expression of fatalistic and amazed determination . . . (p. 35)

The architect is small and foreign, adding to his uniqueness. His clothes are particularly out of place and in contrast with the niggers clad in mud. The fact that this architect wears the exact same costume for two years straight and his expression of "fatalistic and amazed determination" also adds to the humor of the stock character. He is a man apart, a foreigner and an intellect of sorts reduced to overseeing a band of primitives and tempering the grandiose plans of the wild man Sutpen. What's more, the architect is credited with being an artist as well, a fact which further sets him off in the wilds of his neighbors and this country. "Only an artist could have borne Sutpen's ruthlessness and hurry and still managed to curb the dream of grim and castlelike magnificence at which Sutpen obviously aimed (p. 36)." This architect is certainly a strange creature, and humorous for his strangeness.

The French architect and the band of wild niggers participate in one of the funniest of the stock scenes of the novel. The frame device for much of the novel is the night when Mr. Compson and Sutpen are searching the woods for the runaway architect. Throughout the night, the reader gets much of Sutpen's story except we get it from Quentin who got it from his father the previous September evening when Quentin was waiting to escort Miss Rosa to the old Sutpen place. Yet, this frame device provides a story of its own, and a humorous one at that. The architect has run
away but we never know the reason; we can imagine it is because he is simply frustrated at the circumstances and the fact that he has not been paid. Sutpen forms a posse to help search for the man. Mr. Compson, the closest thing Sutpen has to a friend, and the town men and the wild niggers set out to search out the architect. With the men are the dogs which are to smell out the man and which are a mixed blessing. They search for the man and believe they have him "treed;" their smell tells them the man must be in the tree since the trail ends there. But the architect is obviously not in the tree and the explanation provides the stock humor. The architect has used architecture and physics and "what he knows best in a crises (p. 239)" to elude the men and the dogs.

He had chosen that tree and hauled that pole up after him and calculated stress and distance and trajectory and had crossed a gap to the next nearest tree that a flying squirrel could not have crossed and traveled from there on from tree to tree for almost half a mile before he put foot on the ground again. It was three hours before one of the wild niggers (the dogs wouldn't leave the tree; they said he was in it) found where he had come down. (p. 239)

The antics of the architect remind the reader of a monkey in progress; the visualization of the man in his elaborate clothes swinging through the trees provides the humor. In the mean time, the wild niggers continue the search and a portion of them return to the house for grub and whiskey. Still later, more of the niggers return to the house for blankets and pine knots to burn for light as the darkness increases. The logic of such a search is nearly nonexistent and therefore provides for more of the stock humor of exaggerated circumstances.

After spending the night in which Sutpen drinks much whiskey and tells much of his history, the men finally catch up with the architect later the
following afternoon, "and then only because he had hurt his leg trying to architect himself across the river (p. 256)." The language here provides the humor in the making of a noun into a verb and giving a picture of some strange type of action. The niggers are overjoyed to have caught the man and are anxious to deal with him feeling that the architect had "voluntarily surrendered his status as interdict meat . . . and that now they would be allowed to cook and eat him (p. 256)." Again the picture of the man as an animal to be cooked and eaten, and the niggers as cannibals to do the eating provides the humor of the scene through exaggeration. The picture of the architect is a sorry one: his clothes are splattered with water and mud from his fall in the river; he even has a sleeve missing from his coat since he used it to patch his hurt leg. Unfortunately, his stylish hat is completely lost. The rest of the scene is as funny as the picture of the architect.

the niggers whooping and hollering with deadly and merry anticipation, like they were under the impression that since the race had lasted more than twenty-four hours the rules would be automatically abrogated and they would not have to wait to cook him until Sutpen waded in with a short stick and beat niggers and dogs all away, leaving the architect standing there. (p. 257)

The sight of the niggers' anticipation reminds us of their primitiveness and causes the laughter. But even this scene is taken a step farther with its humor. The architect is making them all a speech in his rapid French which they cannot possibly all understand and then Sutpen offers the man a drink of whiskey. The architect's actions in accepting the drink add to the humor. "He took the bottle in one of his little dirty coon-like hands and raised the other hand and even fumbled about his head for a sec-
ond before he remembered that the hat was gone, then flung the hand up in a gesture that Grandfather said you simply could not describe." The entire scene itself is funny, the architect is cornered. Sutpen offers whiskey; the niggers anticipate eating their victim. The town men wonder at the entire situation with the Frenchman's speech and the wild whooping and antics of the niggers. The reader laughs at the entire situation because of the exaggeration in its incidents and elements and because of the visual pictures the scene provides.

Although the wild niggers and the French architect are stock comic figures and provide stock humor to the novel, they are also tied to the theme of the novel concerning Sutpen and his design for acceptance. The niggers and the man are important in the working out of the Sutpen design; without them, Sutpen would get nowhere with his plan. Altogether, the niggers and the architect remind the reader of the type of man Sutpen is; he is a man who will use whatever is necessary to carry out his design. Since the story of Sutpen is in a sense the story of the South, the niggers and the architect are instrumental in shaping the destiny of Sutpen and the South. They are important in molding the form of the thing even if they are not important in molding the substance.

Hash Jones is a minor stereotyped comic Negro type although he is not black. He is the personal servant of Sutpen and the caretaker of the place when Sutpen goes off to war. His continual refrain that "They mought have whupped us but they aint kilt us yit, air they? (p. 280)" provides laughter at strategic points in the story. But, like the wild niggers and the French architect, Wash is more than just a source of stock humor; he is
the instrument of Sutpen's death, the important necessity of the action. When Sutpen goes to war, Wash makes himself the caretaker of the place and suffers ridicule because of it. The neighboring Negroes want to know why he has not gone to war and seem to accuse him of cowardice. Wash retorts in the only way he knows how and almost the only way possible; he yells "git outen my road, niggers! (p. 281)." The irony of the statement provides its humor. First, it is not Wash's road at all but the path to Sutpen's place. Second, his retort, "niggers" only causes laughter because in some ways Wash is less than those he is calling nigger without being black himself. Wash rushes at the people feebly with a stick and they just play with him by evading his thrusts only marginally. The most ironic part of the scene comes when Wash brings the vegetables and groceries to the door. Clytie will not even let him enter the kitchen and stops him with "Stop right there, white man. ... You aint never crossed this door while Colonel was here and you aint going to cross it now (p. 281)." There is laughter in the reversal of roles which causes Wash the discomfort; Clytie, part Negro, is higher in Sutpen status than Wash, the white trash. What redeems Wash from being a totally minor, stock comic servant figure is the fact that he kills Sutpen. This fact makes Wash most important to the structure and plot of the novel, a position of importance not necessarily assigned to such a minor figure. When Sutpen has a child by Milly in his last aged attempt to beget a male heir, both Sutpen and Wash are disappointed when the child is a girl. Sutpen rejects Milly and the child and Wash resents his action enough to kill him. Later, when the sheriff comes for Wash, he evades the law by killing his daughter, the child and himself
as well. In these last violent actions, Wash has become much more than a stock comic figure; he is the instrument of the Sutpen fate.

Miss Rosa is a source of more quite subtle stock humor; she is the figure of the dried up, prune faced old maid who alone haunts the decrepit house. She is extremely amusing in the contrast of her petite size to the immensity of her spirit and determination. The first picture we have of her provides the outline of her character and its humor where she is described as "a crucified child (p. 8)" and around her lingers "the rank smell of female old flesh long embattled in virginity." Rosa's activities throughout the novel show both her persistence and her foolishness. When Ellen announces Judith's premature engagement, Rosa sets out to make Judith's wedding present. "She set about secretly making garments for Judith's trousseau (p. 77)." The secrecy of the procedure adds to the humor of the situation. The fact that Rosa steals the material for the gift from her father's store because she could not have gotten it anywhere else also adds to the humor of her activities. Then, the garments are described as "those intimate young girl garments which were to be for her own vicarious bridal--and you can imagine too what Miss Rosa's notion of such garments would be, let along what her notion of them would look like when she had finished them unassisted." The language of the description adds to its humor and the thought of the finished ridiculous, and as we know useless, garments. Ironically, Rosa hits on this gift for Judith because she has no other talent with which to work but her acquired skill for making clothes. This skill was necessitated by her aunt's running away one night and leaving Rosa only her old, too large clothes which Rosa
must learn to cut down and fit for herself. Finally, even these refit clothes wear out completely until Rosa has only the same old single dress, with "triangle of lace at wrists and throat (p. 8)," a symbol of her deteriorated state and her virginity.

Miss Rosa and her feeble skills is a representative Southern gentlewoman. Lest we forget her status, Quentin continually tells us through Shreve to call her Miss Rosa rather than Aunt Rosa. The title of miss pinpoints her function in the novel; she is the eternal virgin, a mirror image of the younger Judith. The title of miss is also more factually correct since she is not Quentin's aunt despite the fact that Quentin's grandfather was the closest thing Sutpen had to a friend but throughout some contortions of logic, this is the reason Miss Rosa chooses Quentin to tell her story to and to help her discover the mystery of what is living at the old Sutpen place. A similar indication of her title and her function as gentlewoman is when she steals vegetables from neighboring gardens but when she refuses to reach farther than her own arms length; she will not even use a stick to help her reach the vegetable, or ask for assistance which would be provided. The town cares for her indirectly by leaving on her porch a basket of food which she consumes, returning the dishes to the basket unwashed and the basket to the porch. This way, she need not admit the charity which would grate her conscience and counteract her gentlewoman status.

Miss Rosa is the intensified figure of a scared, helpless woman, the humorous stock figure of a maiden in distress, when she goes with Quentin to the old Sutpen place in the dead of night. Her costume is the only
one she has but it heightens her humorous appearance and reminds us of her function of Southern gentlewoman. She wears her "fusty camphor-reeking shawl (p. 362)" which Quentin can smell as she sits in the seat of the wagon beside him. She also carries her "airless black cotton umbrella." We rightly wonder what she might do with an umbrella in the situation but under duress, we find several plausible but humorous explanations. She might use the umbrella to defend herself against attackers or unknown dangers which she might meet on this mysterious adventure. Or, the umbrella is simply a symbol of her decayed Southern gentility which she cannot discard whatever the conditions. She might feel herself naked or undressed without all the accouterments of a Southern gentlewoman. When we get the actual explanation it is funnier than anything we might have imagined. Inside her umbrella, Miss Rosa has hidden a flashlight and a hatchet! The flashlight we might understand and condone although we might question why she had not carried it openly. But the hatchet! what a ridiculous and humorous thing for the Southern gentlewoman to carry and secrete.

This hatchet plays a part in adding to the humor of the scene shortly thereafter. Miss Rosa gets increasingly afraid of what she might meet or of what Clytie has hidden out there. She even fears an attack or a rape although she does not say so outright. Finally, she asks Quentin "you didn't even bring a pistol. Did you? (p. 364)." Quentin admits he did not bring a pistol and we laugh at the exaggeration of the scene. Yet, we can understand the tension of it for the characters involved in it because it is the climax of a day full of tension and anticipation. The tension of the scene is also increased for the audience, but, the characters persist
in acting out their parts. Quentin and Rosa continue toward the house on foot since Miss Rosa insists they hitch the wagon at the gate, a half mile from the house, so as to arrive in total secrecy. The walk toward the house increases the tension of the scene and then resolves the tension with a humorous pause. Miss Rosa stumbles but does not fall since Quentin reaches for her and catches her. She submits to the necessity of taking his arm in an apologetic, childish way. She whimpers as a child might and remarks again that "you haven't even got a pistol (p. 365)." At this point she seems to remember the hatchet in her umbrella and brings it forth. The fact that she offers it is alone funny because it is in such stark contrast to her function as a Southern gentlewoman. They should not posses much less use such weapons. When Quentin realizes what it is she is offering him, he describes it for us and we realize more humor in the state of the hatchet. "It was a hatchet . . . a hatchet with a heavy worn handle and a heavy gapped rust-dulled blade." The hatchet will hardly be useful as a weapon because it is so old. It is worn and rusted where we might have expected a shiny, threatening object. Miss Rosa offers the hatchet with an apology and an explanation hissed at Quentin. "You didn't bring a pistol. It's something." Both the people are acting out their parts as Southerners. Miss Rosa is the gentlewoman threatened. She is afraid although later we find it is not fear but triumph which is motivating her. Quentin is the cavalier knight who will defend his lady against hostile forces and fight for her to the death.

The hatchet is useful in the scene because Quentin uses it to pry open the shutters on the window of the house. He finds the window without any
glass in it, thereby providing the reader with a surprise and a laugh. When Quentin goes inside to open the door for Miss Rosa, Clytie appears and scares Quentin. Clytie does not recognize him but opens the door and recognizes Miss Rosa. Now the pace of the scene increases because Clytie tries to prevent Rosa's going upstairs to find the mystery. Rosa abandons her function as Southern gentlewoman temporarily to provide us with almost slapstick humor in the scene. Rosa "struck Clytie to the floor with a full-armed blow like a man would have, and turned and went on up the stairs (p. 369)." The contrast of the description with the reality gives us the humor. Miss Rosa is a tiny delicate, feeble woman who is able to knock Clytie down with a single blow. That Rosa resorts to force in the situation also adds to the humor and incongruity of the circumstances. When Miss Rosa discovers the mystery upstairs, she leaves in a hurry and returns to the wagon. The nigger Jim Bond goes with her; she persists in walking in the most difficult spots although he tells her where it is easier walking. In her haste and excitement and difficulty, Miss Rosa stumbles and falls, and the nigger ignores her. Her retorts to him are the height of the stock humor of the scene. "You, nigger! . . . Help me up! You aint any Sutpen! You do not have to leave me lying in the dirt! (p. 371)." The twisted duplication of irony in what she says is unapparent to her but causes the laughter for the audience. Jim Bond is truly the last of the Sutpen brood and the most feeble. The implication of the line is that the Sutpens all step on Miss Rosa and abuse her. She is remembering the hurt she personally suffered from Sutpen's proposal and the way he destroyed her sister Ellen. In a way, she is summarizing the theme of the novel with the line
about the impersonality and lack of humanity in the Sutpen design. The scene provides humor as well as theme in the novel.

Finally, the scene concludes when Quentin returns Miss Rosa to her house in town. She says she is all right and good night; she does not even say thank you, as Quentin remarks to Shreve. Her apparent unmannered attitude is again in contrast to her function as gentlewoman and therefore provides more laughter for the reader. Yet, when we look again, she is actually playing her part of Southern gentlewoman to perfection since she believes herself worthy of such service. She need not condescend to say thank you since the service is expected and deserved; it is not a favor Quentin is granting Miss Rosa. Miss Rosa has continually fulfilled her part as a stock comic Southern gentlewoman in the line of characters which includes Mrs. Compson, Joanna Burden and others. Miss Rosa has provided us with some humorous actions and has also been significant to the theme of the novel. She is an example of how Sutpen works and lives; she was accepted and used and when she was no longer cooperative or useful, discarded. Miss Rosa is almost a symbol for the gentility of the South and how it has been misused and discarded; yet, the qualities which she personifies are commendable qualities wherever or whenever they occur.

Thomas Sutpen is the central figure of the novel in many ways, and a puzzling figure he is. He is often a stock comic figure; he is the cause or butt of some grotesque humor as well. Sutpen's desire for respectability bought at whatever price, his appearance, his actions and so forth, place him as a stock comic figure, a cross between a foreigner, a miser, a villain and a god. Concurrently, Sutpen provides scenes of grotesque humor
in his first marriage to Ellen, the tombstones he imports from Italy and his death. In fulfilling both functions as a stock and a grotesque comic character, Sutpen personifies and exemplifies the theme of the novel that the South is degenerating.

Sutpen is quite a character; he has been likened to a Greek god or hero who "embodies the characteristics of his time and his nation." Sutpen is courageous, strong and independent just as the first American pioneers must have been. He is an example of and is identified with the rugged individualists of the early American scene since he possesses ambition, self-assurance, a strong will, and the ability to endure hardships of all types. He had little schooling and taught himself most of what he knows. He departs for the West Indies and succeeds in living there through courage and daring and guts. Sutpen designs a plan whereby he will negate and repudiate his simple beginnings; he vows to buy respectability at whatever cost. He believes he might gain some with the possession of a good wife, so he married the native girl and gives her a son. When he discovers that she has Negro blood rather than Spanish as he has been told, he renounces her and has the marriage annulled. His only reaction is that this development has put back his plans for a couple of years; he is some time behind schedule. This is the first chink in the character which inevitably leads to his downfall. He has miscalculated how much time it will take him to succeed at his plan. This is the incident which indirectly leads him to marry Ellen Coldfield and propose belatedly to Rosa. Through-

151 Volpe, p. 195.
out, Sutpen acts on his plan and that is the only truly motivating force he admits.

Sutpen and his story, and indirectly the entire novel therefore, has been seen as a parody of the Horatio Alger myth. The story of the immigrant who becomes wealthy and accepted is played out by Sutpen. His entire life has been lived and motivated by his intention to repudiate his lowly birth. Yet, Sutpen is also a representative of and encompasses many traits of the Southern tradition. He has partaken of all levels of Southern society. He was born amongst poor white trash and he bitterly remembers the time he was turned away at the plantation door as a child because of his status and by a Negro to boot. Through his actions, Sutpen begets miscegenated children, both in wedlock and out of law. He thereby bridges the races and causes himself to be occasionally unacceptable to either. Also, he ultimately earns the wealth and respectability of the aristocratic class. He ekes out the Sutpen Hundred with its magnificent plantation and then bargains with Mr. Coldfield for the hand of his daughter. The determination with which we have seen him act throughout the novel adds to his stature as a character and gives us some of the extremity which results in the occasional humor of his character.

In his retorts, Sutpen is like other stock comic characters of Faulkner. Sutpen comes up with probably the best humorous line when he reacts to Milly's newborn child; he contrasts the child with the new colt his mare has just also delivered. "Well, Milly; too bad you're not a mare too. Then I could give you a decent stall in the stable (p. 286)." His apparent unconcern with her as a person shows his crass character but
also provides us with the humorous line. Another similar line is his proposal to Miss Rosa when he proposes that they try making a child and if it is a boy and lives he will marry her. The proposal goes against everything she stands for as a Southern gentlewoman and we can understand how she might be insulted by it. The proposal also epitomizes Sutpen's motivations for his entire life: he wants a male heir for his grandeur, even though it is reduced to one square mile rather than a hundred. Although both characters are epitomized by the proposal, it provides the audience with some stock humor in the attitudes it displays counter to our expectations.

Sutpen's actions too characterize him and provide stock humor. He buys a wife rather than earn one with love. As Faulkner says, "he had now come to town to find a wife exactly as he would have gone to the Memphis market to buy livestock or slaves (p. 42)." The line is funny but carries more meaning than is apparent on first response. The comparison of a wife with a slave or livestock is an appropriate one because that was a matter of accepted fact at the time. Sutpen succeeds in gaining his wife only by besieging Mr. Coldfield, as he might besiege an enemy in battle. Sutpen also seeks respectability by coming to church. Yet, characteristically, he races his carriage on the way and scandalizes the town because of his lack of decorum. Finally, the minister asks him not to come to church and he does not although he allows Ellen and the children to go as a symbol of his acceptance into the society. Sutpen's persistence is apparent not only throughout his life but also when the town speculates how things might be after his death. They speculate that Sutpen
will leave a mark on the place even after he is dead; he will still be
"watching the fine grandsons and greatgrandsons springing as far as eye
could reach (p. 271)." This line is comic in light of the true progeny of
the family as we discover in the final pages of the novel.

Sutpen is an example of the Southern gentleman but he is a home grown
variety. He is also the inversion of everything the tradition stands for
in some of his strange rash actions, or his lack of ostentatious honor.

Everett gives this excellent summary of his character.

Sutpen was a perversion of the Southern tradition. He wanted the
outward appearance of the Southern culture, but he did not appre­
ciate the humanizing elements of the society. He was hardly more
than a savage clothed in the external trappings of the Southern
heritage. He was shrewd and brave, but he was possessed of an in­
nate innocence compounded with a rough logic and a primitive sense
of morality. He fails because he is naive enough to suppose that
people act logically . . . The achievement of his dream is voided
by his failure to account for the human element in conflict with his
design.152

Sutpen's concern with the external trappings of the Southern gentility is
apparent, and especially so in his choice of furnishings and finishings
to his house. But, internally, he does not have the birth or breeding to
deserve the title or notice as gentleman. His being shrewd and brave can
go two ways in interpretation. The characteristics could make him the
Southern gentleman who fought valiantly for his country and his honor.

Yet, the characteristics also almost place Sutpen as the wily but corrupt
foreigner of whom all are suspicious. Sutpen buys and bargains for his

152 Everett, p. 5.
gentlemanly trappings rather than being born with them or inheriting them. Sutpen's design demands that he do only and all that will fulfill that design. Because of the plan, Sutpen has a very simple sense of morality rather than the highly developed and intricately distinguished system of morality of the South. His design also causes him to act crassly with Ellen and Rosa rather than as the Southern chivalrous gentleman which Quentin is.

In many ways, Sutpen is the theme of the story in the sense that his story is a mirror for the history of the South. The failure of Sutpen's design echoes the failure of the South. Sutpen's artificially purchased place in society is lost as was the truly noteworthy place of the south with the loss of the war. The complexity of the theme is increased, however, with the scenes of grotesque humor which Sutpen fosters or causes. One such incident of grotesque humor is the story concerning his and his wife's tombstones. Sutpen has imported these stones from Italy during the height of the war as Quentin learns from his father as they view the stones in the graveyard one day. Sutpen ordered the stones when he heard that his wife is dead; he has hers inscribed with her name and the dates of her birth and death. As Quentin remarks, there is no flowery insignia or sentiment such as "beloved wife of." Ironically, the humor is heightened when we notice that Sutpen's own stone was ordered with the distinguishing note about his colonelcy. Even in death, Sutpen must flaunt his position to the rest of the world; death does not seem to bother him since even there he will have distinctions as a gentleman and a soldier. There is an extremely long sentence in which Quentin speculates on the trip of
the tombstones form Italy during the war. He imagines the man, bedraggled and shoeless, seeing the ship with its heavy cargo, not of ammunition or even food, but with "that much bombastic and inert carven rock (p. 189)."
The language and the exaggerated romanticism of the notion provides the humor which becomes grotesque when we realize that Quentin was not that far from wrong and that there was true suffering caused by these inert and bombastic stones. We recall another such comment on the bombastic eulogies on tombstones from Miss Jenny in *Sartoris* and the humor is increased despite the truth and the hurt. Quentin further imagines the trip of the stones from the ship to Mississippi, with the soldiers "sweating and cursing them through bog and morass like a piece of artillery." The picture is pitiful and we almost react with sadness. But then we recall the bombastic and selfish cause of the trouble and we become enraged. Finally, we are told that the tombstones are referred to as "Colonel" and "Mrs. Colonel" and we laugh at the grotesque humor of the names. The stones are truly named and designated but that results in their almost taking on a life of their own and becoming real people. The imagined possibility adds to the grotesque humor. In the end, we realize the criticism of Sutpen and all the South which is implied through the grotesque humor. We speculate that if Southern gentlemen had been more concerned with the fight and their real jobs than with such frivolous and foolish and selfish endeavours as this one, they might not have lost the war. We will never know the validity of the possibility but the grotesque humor has made us aware of the real criticism deserved by the Southern tradition.
Supten's death is directly caused by Wash but grotesquely humorously commented upon by Faulkner. In the thoughts of Quentin while talking to Shreve, Quentin describes the burial of Sutpen.

so he rode fast toward church as far as he went, in his homemade coffin, in his regimentals and saber and embroidered gauntlets, until the young mules bolted and turned the wagon over and tumbled him, saber plumes and all, into a ditch from which the daughter extricated him and fetched him back to the cedar grove and read the service herself (p. 186).

The passage at first tricks us into believing that maybe the man is still alive in the way Judith "fetched him back to the cedar grove," as if Sutpen decided he was not ready to be buried yet and went off for a walk from which Judith had to retrieve him. Also, the speed and motion of the wagon and the mules is in direct contrast to the normal somber motion of a funeral procession. The fact that Sutpen is buried in his uniform with his saber also adds to the grotesque humor when he comes tumbling out of his coffin into the dust. Faulkner is saying "remember ye mortal that you are dust and lest you forget, taste some on your way to death." We are reminded of our own mortality and encouraged in it through the contrast with Sutpen. Also, the tradition which necessitates a state funeral for dignitaries is mocked with the impossibility of Sutpen's dignity being accepted and quietly laid to rest. The entire ritual of burial is mocked in a similar but much less noticeable way than the grotesque humor of burial in Addie's funeral journey or Red's burial procession and wake.

The scene here is of similar significance although it is much more understated and almost goes unnoticed amidst the description of the grown woman Judith which is the substance of the current story when these events are related by the way in Quentin's telling of them.
The most grotesquely humorous scene with Sutpen in the entire novel is his wedding to Ellen Coldfield. The way in which he has bargained with Mr. Coldfield for the hand of Ellen has provided us with some humor but that humor is grotesquely climaxed in the events of the wedding itself. As the scene unfolds, the humor and the criticism increase. First, we are told that the aunt has badgered Mr. Coldfield into allowing Ellen to wear powder for the occasion. We wonder at the man who will not allow his daughter to wear makeup and then feel sorry for Ellen. We expect that the powder will aid her appearance and enhance her beauty on this most memorable day. But instead, we learn that "the powder was to hide the marks of tears (pp. 48-49)." Our surprise causes us to laugh and then to wonder why she might be crying. Then, we remember that weddings are very happy occasions and people often cry with joy at them. Only later do we get the real explanation for why Ellen is crying which will provide further grotesque humor to the scene. When we later see Ellen we are told that the powder has become so tear-stained and caked that it detracts from her appearance rather than enhancing it. The picture of the poor girl destined to marry the strange man gives us some grotesque laughter.

Then, we get more explanation for the tears in the fact that there were discussions over whether the wedding should be large or small. Mr. Coldfield determines that it is not to be a large wedding; we believe he might even be ashamed of the proceedings. Ironically, it is Sutpen who wants a big wedding, "the full church and all the ritual (p. 49)." This is in keeping with Sutpen's concern for exterior appearances. He wants
to be sure the town knows he has married this respectability. The trouble over a big or small wedding is resolved with these lines. "Maybe women are even less complex than that and to them any wedding is better than no wedding and a big wedding with a villain preferable to a small one with a saint (p. 52)." The truth is not at once apparent but when we know Sutpen we know how funny and true the remark is at the same time. Finally, Ellen's tears win and her father allows her and the aunt to send a hundred invitations which one of Sutpen's wild niggers delivers by hand.

Now the wedding scene pauses and we expect the rest to be the normal wedding festivities. Instead, the scene is complicated with more grotesque humor. There were personal invitations sent for the rehearsal but no one showed up. Ellen goes through with the rehearsal but the aunt is vehement in her reaction. Unknown to Ellen or the father, the next day, the aunt goes throughout the town personally demanding the people attend the festivities. The picture of the woman is a grotesquely humorous one; she goes with the guest list in her hand, a shawl around her shoulders and her housedress obvious, accompanied by one of the Coldfield Negro servants. Mr. Compson tells Quentin of his mother's reaction to the incident when the aunt comes to the Compson household. Mrs. Compson is so startled and bothered by the incident that no one quite knows what happened except that she tells "about the mad woman whom she had never seen before, who came bursting into the house, not to invite her to a wedding but to dare her not to come, and then rushed out again (p. 54)." The events of the festivities seem to be getting out of hand somewhat as the events of Red's wake develop in Sanctuary.
We should be forewarned and we are not disappointed. Even the circumstances of the wedding itself are grotesquely humorous. The ceremony takes place at night and Sutpen's band of wild niggers are set outside the church with burning pine knots in their upraised palms. "This is where the tears stopped, because now the street before the church was lined with carriages and buggies (p. 55)" we are told. We breathe a sigh of a type of relief, expecting the circumstances to proceed unmolested by further grotesque humor. But we are fooled into temporary relaxation and then brought more hurtfully back to the harshness of the grotesquely humorous scene. None of the carriages are before the church or empty as one might expect if the people were in the church as expected. Instead, the carriages are parked across the street and full of people, as if come to see a side show. When the ceremony is concluded for the very few guests, Ellen seems impervious to circumstances and departs from the church. As she leaves the church someone yells and she sees an object go flying past her. The situation quickly degenerates. The couple are pelted with garbage and dirt; Sutpen shelters the aunt and Ellen from the refuse and keeps his wild band in check since they are ready to fight. The irony and the tone of the scene add to its grotesque humor. We are told that the crowd charitably "threw nothing which could actually injure: it was only clods of dirt and vegetable refuse (p. 57)." We laugh at the back handed excuse for their conduct. We might almost be expected to excuse their conduct because it was not genuinely hurtful so we laugh and again are aware of the criticism of hollow ritual which resounds throughout Faulkner's
grotesque humor. Then we sympathize with Ellen who is a real girl on her wedding day, insulted and disappointed with the events. We feel sorry for her and that is what makes the humor grotesque rather than strictly a stock humorous incident of a slapstick nature. The extremity of the contrast between the normal wedding and this strange one also adds to the grotesque humor. The scene should be a warning to us and to Ellen of what will come. Rather, we just take the scene for its grotesque humor. We laugh and then we tie it to the theme. Faulkner is throwing garbage at the hollow rituals which persist in being practiced despite the fact that they are hollow and unnecessary. We wonder if some of this same feeling was not what prompted Faulkner to almost not go to Sweden to accept his Nobel prize because he was afraid it might only be another hollow ritual. Happily, true sense won out with Faulkner in that case and we hope some of the necessity for his valid criticism was alleviated by his experience.

A final incident or remark of grotesque humor concludes the novel. After Quentin has completed the story to Shreve, Shreve served judgment on the tale.

So it takes two niggers to get rid of one Sutpen, dont it? ... You've got one nigger left. One nigger Sutpen left. Of course you can't catch him and you don't even always see him and you never will be able to use him. But you've got him there still. You still hear him at night sometimes. Don't you?

The question is being asked by a Northerner, a Canadian, of a Southerner. Throughout the tale, the boys have noticed the difference in their upbringing and their notions. Shreve even remarks at one point that the
"South is fine, isn't it. It's better than the theatre, isn't it. It's better than Ben Hur, isn't it (p. 217)." Shreve's remarks are true, ironic and grotesquely humorous. They ought to prepare us for his final verdict but somehow they do not. We hear the real criticism implied in the comparison of the South with the theatre and such overly lavish and trick movies such as Ben Hur. What might be a pious and religious movie can be turned into an experience of wonder with magic rather than impressing us with its seriousness. Some of the same thing happens with the reader in this novel. What we think might edify our consciousness only serves to bother our consciences and cause us grotesque laughter. Shreve finally gives his judgment on the South; "I think in time the Jim Bonds are going to conquer the western hemisphere. Of course it won't quite be in our time and of course as they spread toward the poles they will bleach out again like the rabbits and the birds do, so they won't show up so sharp against the snow. But it will still be Jim Bond (p. 378)." We certainly hear Faulkner's voice in the lines as well. The sarcastic tone of them only serves to heighten the grotesquely humorous picture of the mad, hulking nigger, Jim Bond. That men like him might inherit the earth seems impossible and we are temporarily lulled into relief rather than fear. Then, we realize the truth of the possibility based on the incidents of the novel alone and we become afraid. Finally, we know and are convinced of the fact that this is not a possibility but an actuality. Faulkner is criticizing the South, the country and the world. Right now. Not tomorrow. We are now guilty of the madness and inhumanity that are apparent in
Jim Bond. Sutpen's story has come to a fitting close in the final figure of the mad nigger. The story of the South which Sutpen's story stands for has also been appropriately climaxed. Also, our story and our future have been fittingly prophesied with this final picture.

The theme of *Absalom, Absalom!* is often found in Quentin's attitude toward the South. Quentin, and Faulkner as well, loves the South because it is a part of him. He cannot separate himself from the country or the people. He is fated to act according to certain principles. When those principles and those actions are commendable or possibly positively helpful, Faulkner supports and commends them through the stock humor of such scenes where Quentin plays cavalier to Miss Rosa in her search. On the other hand, Quentin, and Faulkner too, hates the South for the guilt it has forced on him. That guilt is personal for Quentin in his failed attempts to protect Caddy's virtue which we witnessed in *The Sound and the Fury*. That guilt is also sectional and caused by the madness which inhabits the South. The novel is a history of the South and it points up the good points and bad points of the South. The guilt Quentin feels comes from the fact that the sins of the fathers are delivered unto the heads of the children. Sutpen passes on his faults to his children and they end in the picture of the mad Jim Bond. Also, importantly it is the sin of miscegenation rather than incest which finally triggers Henry's murder of Bon. Quentin has identified himself strongly throughout the novel with Henry and we believe the two are much alike. Hence, the guilt Quentin feels comes from his own failures as well as the failures of those who
have gone before him. The love/guilt complex Quentin has toward the South is apparent in this novel. It is also apparent that Faulkner suffers the same love/hate complex himself. Faulkner voices his dilemma through his works. This is one of the first of the novels which puts both stock and grotesque humor together in one place. Granted, both of the types of humor are very subtle here. By the time we get to the The Town and that trilogy, we will see that the duality of Faulkner's feeling for the South has become more strong or at least more openly voiced.
CHAPTER VIII


The Snopes trilogy is Faulkner's most totally extended comic effort. Together, the three novels encompass more humorous scenes than any of the earlier works. Both stock humor and grotesque humor abound throughout these novels. The Hamlet, along with The Reivers, is possibly Faulkner's most humorous novel, merging stock humorous scenes and characters with grotesque humorous ones for a totally humorous novel. The Town and The Mansion are more serious and less apparently humorous. There are still funny scenes in both novels but there are fewer of them and they are less obvious.

In The Hamlet, as in The Reivers, everything is humorous. The characters are all stock comic types; even Ratliff, who is often considered the moral standard of the novel, is a comic figure of a peddler. The action of the novel often occurs in the past; we receive it in tall tale form from one of the characters. The conflicts are absurd love affairs and wily trade deals. The four part structure of The Hamlet is a stringing together of several tall tales. The moral of the novel is humorous as well: if life is a joke as the theme might demonstrate, then we laugh and the process is complete.
Somewhat like *Sanctuary* or *As I Lay Dying*, every line and page of *The Hamlet* would need investigation to fully analyze the workings of the humor. There are some rather good and comparatively complete articles dealing with the humor of the novel. Volumes could and have been written on the humor of *The Hamlet*, so here we will be limited to investigation of a few of the stock comic characters: Ratliff, Eula and the Snopes clan. Also, we will investigate only some of the humorous incidents of the novel to see how these demonstrate the thesis that the type of humor Faulkner uses reflects his dual attitude toward the South.

Most critics say *The Hamlet* is one of the most humorous of Faulkner's novels and mean the folk type, tall tale humor which is certainly apparent in the novel; but grotesque humor also abounds especially in the incidents with Ike Snopes and his love for the cow. *The Hamlet* is not only obviously humorous but also its humor is often subtle. There is so much humor in the novels that critics are overwhelmed with its scope.

Critics claim that many of the incidents of *The Hamlet* are taken directly from tall tale humor. "At least three major scenes in *The Hamlet*--the story of the horse swapping, Flem Snopes' outwitting the devil, and the wild charging of a horse through a house--are borrowed from the tall-tale tradition." Flem's outwitting the devil is in the

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154 O'Connor, W. F., *The Hamlet*, p. 34.
vein of the "Devil and Daniel Webster" stories where men lose their souls to the devil for material comfort. With Flem, the devil loses and gives him Paradise just to be rid of Flem. The incident with the horse in Mrs. Littlejohn's house is certainly like tall tale humor, but it also merges with the grotesque in the final developments of the attempted law suits. The horse swapping incident with Pat Stamper is the most obvious of the standard tall tale humor incidents. O'Connor in another place also says that

The Hamlet is a folk comedy, making ample use of the tall tale and farcical actions . . . the central intention is comedy in the old sense: man survives his own greed, inanities, foolishness, and stupidities. There are wonderfully funny scenes in many of Faulkner's books but The Hamlet is the only novel, with the very doubtful exception of Sanctuary that is comic in intention and in theme.155

I would certainly add The Reivers, also one of the most comic novels in intention and theme. The reason O'Connor seems reluctant to accept Sanctuary as a comic novel is because of the nature of the comedy; as we saw, the humor was predominantly grotesque humor and because of its touchy subject and alternations in tone, a humor much more difficult to accept. Also, as we will see more specifically in the "Spotted Horses" incident, some of the characters do not quite survive their own greed, inanities and so forth. Armstid does not survive his stupidities: he is embroiled in them most permanently. The intention of The Hamlet might be predominantly comic, but only as we note that some of that humor is of the grotesque

155O'Connor, Tangled Fire, p. 162.
type and the purpose of grotesque humor is to criticize and mold through laughter.

The stock humorous characters voice or act out or demonstrate humor as a defense mechanism. "Within the novel, humor is the means by which the characters find it possible to face the terror and pain of living."\textsuperscript{156} And just as they use humor as a safety valve, the humor of the novel functions at least partially that way for the audience as well. Ratliff combines these functions: he provides humor for us which is a relief while he posits the moral standards of the world of Frenchman's Bend. Ultimately and humorously Ratliff becomes for the reader the moral standard even when he is caught in someone else's joke, so he is more than just a stock comic character; he provides much of the theme of the novel and the moral standard for action.

This dual function of Ratliff is demonstrated in the extremity of his characteristics. Firstly, Ratliff is the stock comic figure of the Yankee peddler, the itinerant sewing machine salesman. He is the clever dealer who should not get bested in any deal, although he is caught in the end of the novel. If we remember the details of Bourke's Yankee peddler figure, we will be immediately reminded of Ratliff and now easily he fits the type casting. T. Y. Greet discusses the matter this way.

That these details are so readily applicable to Ratliff makes him one with such classic American humorists as Sam Slick.

\textsuperscript{156}Viola Hopkins, "William Faulkner's The Hamlet: A Study in Meaning and Form," \textit{Accent} XV (1955), p. 141.
Seba Smith, and Sut Lovingood. Critics have found him influenced chiefly by G. W. Harris' *Sut* and Augustus B. Longstreet's *Georgia Scenes*. Investigation of both these sources shows, however, that the influences are only general and suggest that attention might best be given to the nature rather than the genesis of Ratliff's humor... his forte, the humorous narrative.157

Ratliff, after all, is responsible for much of the narrative of the entire first section. He relates to Jody and Varner the tales and history of the Snopes clan and especially Ab's reputation for reputed barn burning. Ratliff himself has the characteristics of the peddler: he sells sewing machines on credit to any one who will buy one and even to some who do not want them. He seems to exert some kind of power over his potential customers which causes them to forgo all else and purchase his machine.

In one section of the story, Ratliff gets himself in quite a mess because he owes more to his distributor than he can manage to collect from his customers. Rather than go under or give up, Ratliff almost overextends himself further but this time it all works out. He makes a killing in his market by going out of his normal territory to Columbia, Tennessee. The story of his maneuverings almost reads like a tall tale due to what we first believe is exaggeration but then realize is only the wiliness of his character.

He sold a machine to the man whom he asked the whereabouts of his cousin, he went with the kinsman to pass the night at the home of the kinsman's wife's cousin ten miles from

Columbia and sold a machine there. He sold three in the first four days; he remained a month and sold eight in all, and reached home at gathering-time with $2.53 in cash and full title to the twelve twenty-dollar notes which would be paid as the cotton was ginned and sold. (p. 56)

The story of Ratliff's success is another kind of parody on the Horatio Alger myth as well as being a typical success summary of a Yankee peddler.

Ratliff's tone and attitude add to his stock character. He continually has a sarcastic or cutting remark until near the end of the novel one of the men remarks that he thought something was wrong all day at the horse auction because "Ratliff wasn't there to give nobody advice (p. 304)." It seems even the townspeople have come to accept Ratliff's advice or at least expect it. They note when it is missing and wonder why which is solved with the final scenes but now the speculation only adds to the suspense of the climax. "As is so often the case with Ratliff when he is affected by outraged indignation, his insights take the form of ironic country humor."158 In this way, Ratliff is in direct contrast with Armstid since he lacks any humor at all, and we can see again how humor is necessary both to the characters and to the audience for them to retain a balance in what they view. This links humor back to the function of comic relief since it serves to keep characters in check. Without humor, man is damned to madness, apparently.

Ratliff is also differentiated from the rest of the characters in the novel by other of his characteristics. He is more intelligent and perceptive than they are demonstrating his importance as the moral standard of the novel. The true irony of the situation becomes apparent only at the end when Ratliff is also taken in by one of the Snopes' schemes. "In contrast to most of Faulkner's comic heroes, Ratliff is emotionally flexible, mentally quick, consciously witty and affectionate rather than hostile . . . because he accepts his humiliation with good humor, he is not inglorious in his fall."159 Ratliff's sense of humor is taken to the point where he can even laugh at himself. Rather than Ratliff being upset or annoyed or seeking revenge, he laughs at himself for being taken in by Snopes just as we laugh at him. We can also see Ratliff's affectionate nature when he gives Mrs. Littlejohn the money he feels rightly belongs to the idiot Ike Snopes. Granted, even this generous gesture results in later humor when Mrs. Littlejohn uses the money to buy Ike's beloved cow for him, but that does not detract from the sincerity of the gesture. Ratliff is truly more important that most stock comic characters. Longley also describes Ratliff and summarizes him for us.

Ratliff, the most able and most adroit of the Faulkner comic heroes simply because he is the most intelligent, the most perceptive, the least deceived and self-deceived of all . . . each of the comic heroes commits himself to a struggle of some sort; for the major figures it is usually a protracted and continuing struggle to protect the innocent and helpless from the powers of evil.160

159Allen, p. 64.  
Actually, although Ratliff is more intelligent than the other people in the novel, he is still a humorous character. In fact, his intelligence adds to the humor the audience sees in him because we believe that he should have known better than to have been taken in by the Snopeses. Granted, Ratliff is the least self-deceived of the characters, but he is still deceived by the Snopeses because of his mistaken belief that he is getting the best of them. He cannot quite realize that the Snopeses are so that leads to Ratliff's being the butt of the final joke. Ratliff does attempt to protect the people from corruption when they are looking at Ike cavorting with his love. Ratliff seems to have some type of moral code which is scandalized by the incident and he attempts to stop the business. Ratliff's struggle, caused by Faulkner, is actually with the Snopeses for the amusement of the audience rather than for himself or to protect his fellow men from evil.

The Snopeses too become more than just stock comic figures; they become symbols for the disease of greed, selfishness, stupidity, corruption, and evil which is inundating the entire South and the entire world. The Snopeses symbolize all that is nasty and undesirable and offensive in the South and the world. When Flem Snopes returns with the spotted horses, he is described as some kind of horrid gaudy circus man and the creatures which accompany him are not quite alive, but are pure corruption.

Ab Snopes is the first of the clan we see in The Hamlet. He is soured on the world and we wonder why until Ratliff tells the story and
Ab becomes the cause of much of the tall tale kind of humor of the first sections of the novel. Varner sees Ab as a threat because of his reputation as a barn burner and so attempts to protect himself by catering to Ab. When Varner is upset, he calls Ab that "durn little clubfooted murderer (p. 20)." We laugh but know the picture is true. We also see the evil of the man since we wonder with Varner what can possess such a man to burn barns because he does not get his way. Ab, too, comes out with some humorous lines, not that he thinks they are funny but we know they are. For instance, when Varner wants to feel Ab out concerning how he got along with previous landlords in order to prevent his doing Varner any damage, Ab replies. "I can get along with anybody ... I been getting along with fifteen or twenty different landlords since I started farming. When I can't get along with them, I leave (p. 21)." Ab does not realize how Varner will take his comment and so does not see the humor of it. Varner, too, is involved in the action so cannot see the humor; rather, he feels threatened. The audience, however, is detached from the circumstances and can therefore see the humor of the man and of the confrontation.

Flem is probably the most important of the Snopes clan in this novel and somehow causes most of the comic action. He is characterized by his appearance: "he had a broad flat face. His eyes were the color of stagnant water. He was soft in appearance ... in a soiled white shirt and cheap gray trousers (p. 22)." His white shirt even becomes his trademark and the cause of some humor when we see him clerking in the
store with zebra stripes of yellowed material on his shirts. As Flem gains in affluence, he adds the skinny black knotted ties which further become his trademark. Flem is most adept at insinuating himself into other people's lives and homes and we can see his rise to fame mirrored in the places he lives. He starts out living with his father in Varner's rented shack, moves into town and stays at a boarding house, and then becomes so indispensible to Varner that he moves into Varner's own home so that he is underfoot when Eula turns up pregnant and Varner hits on the idea of getting rid of both of them at once. Flem insinuates himself not only into Varner's home but into his family as well. Flem is also the instrument of Tull and Armistid's troubles when he brings the wild horses into town but denies ownership of them. Finally, Flem is the reason Ratliff is taken into the scheme to buy the old Frenchman place since Ratliff sees Flem digging on the place and believes Flem would not be doing that if he did not think it would be profitable. Flem never does anything he does not think would be profitable and that is true even in this last case, but it is simply that Ratliff does not know how profitable this venture will be for Flem. Flem persists until at the conclusion of the trilogy, he becomes the wealthy owner of the Jefferson bank.

I.O. Snopes might be the most stock comic figure of them all. He does not know how to talk; he simply parrots proverbs every time he opens his mouth which marks him as an educated man in the narrow eyes of many of the townspeople. He is a minor character in the action of the novel but every time he appears there is humor because of what he says. One
instance of his manner of speech will serve to demonstrate his character without further doubt.

Well, gentlemen, off with the old and on with the new. Competition is the life of trade, and though a chain aint no stronger than its weakest link, I dont think you'll find the boy yonder no weak reed to have to lean on once he catches onto it. It's the old shop, the old stand; it's just a new broom in it and maybe you cant teach a old dog new tricks but you can teach a new young willing one anything. Just give him time; a penny on the waters pays interest when the flood turns. Well, well; all pleasure and no work, as the fellow says, might make Jack so sharp he might cut his self. I bid you good morning, gentlemen. (pp. 65-66)

There is illusion of sense here but no genuine meaning to the speech. We get the feeling that I.O. is trying to apologize for Eck's ineptitude, introduce himself and Eck to the crowd, gain their favor and impress them with his wisdom all at once. Obviously, he fails at all those things since he cannot state anything directly. Nothing makes sense because I.O. jumbles the sense with nonsensical proverbs, some of which remain incomplete or are finished with a new different proverb. How any one could come out with so many of these silly statements in one breath is staggering; it adds to the humor of his character.

The last most important Snopeses in The Hamlet are Mink and Ike. Mink is the source of the major grotesque comic incidents of the novel in his attempt to rid himself of the body of Houston after he has murdered him. Ike, too triggers the other most grotesquely humorous incident in the novel with his attempts to make love to Houston's cow. Mink is, like his name, an animal and a crafty, cunning, sneaky little animal at that. Pushed to desperation, Mink murders Flem as well in The Mansion. When
Ratliff cannot remember Mink's name, he remembers the name's likeness to an animal description "Fox? cat? oh yes, mink (p. 91)" Ratliff thinks. Any of those names might be appropriate because they all designate a type of predatory animal. Yet, Mink is the most appropriate because of its implication of potential riches and luxury. Issac, called Ike, causes much consternation and fun in the novel. He is an idiot, truly and we wonder how the others of the clan escaped his affliction. This gibbering child can hardly pronounce his name and yet can truly feel affection for another animal if not for any of his semi-human fellow creatures.

The last most comic stock character of The Hamlet is the figure of Eula Varner, a direct descendant of Jenny from Mosquitoes and Lena from Light in August. Eula rarely talks but only functions; she moves from chair to chair and refuses to ever walk anywhere. Eula is certainly the "comically exaggerated fertility goddess," and all her actions, or rather her lack of them, demonstrate the comedy of her character. She goes to school but never learns anything; she never even needs to refuse to learn anything. She is "incorrigibly lazy (p. 95)," and part of the explanation is given. "It was not that she insisted upon being carried when she went anywhere. It was rather as though, even in infancy, she already knew there was nowhere she wanted to go, nothing new or novel.

at the end of any progression, one place like another anywhere and everywhere (p. 95)." In her dream-like fecundity, Eula attracts the males and is even unaware that she does so. As she rides to school each day behind her brother on his horse, her skirt rides up and shows her thighs. She does not seem to care although Jody is incensed. The difference in their reactions adds to the humor of her character.

When Eula becomes most alive, we are provided with an almost grotesquely humorous scene. Labove is the school teacher who has coveted Eula's love for years although never displaying signs of it to the external world. Eventually, he demonstrates his affection rather strangely. After school when Eula has left the room and her desk, Labove goes to her bench and lays his hand on "the wooden plank still warm from the impact of her sitting or [He would] even kneel and lay his face to the plank, wallowing his face against it, embracing the hard unsentient wood, until the heat was gone (p. 120)." His actions are extreme and provide for the first humor of the scene. One day, Eula returns to the classroom because Jody is late in coming to pick her up and she discovers Labove grovelling at her seat. In her simplicity, she asks him what he is doing there and the audience laughs at her attitude and his grotesque position. When he "attacks" her, she remains unafraid. They cavort violently like two dancing bears and when she finally frees herself from his embrace, she stands over him and says her most complete sentence of the novel. "Stop pawing me . . . You old headless horseman Ichabod Crane (p. 122)." The taunt is childish and plays up Eula's stupidity and slowness in contrast with the apparent allure which has entrapped Labove.
The major incidents of the novel give it an episodic kind of structure, almost as if the novel were a group of loosely strung together tall tales. Another way to see the structure of the novel is that voiced by Dorothy Tuck when she says

The Hamlet is composed of four sections, each dominated by one of four different but closely related modes: comedy, myth, romance, and what might be called nightmare-comedy, or the grotesque. The tone of the book as a whole, however, is one of carefully controlled comic realism. This results largely from two devices: the contrast between events and the reactions they elicit from their observers ... the detached, wry comments of Ratliff, whose colloquial speech and dispassionate observation transform realism into comedy and often, even further, into irony. 162

We have discussed Ratliff's function earlier and Tuck simply reminds us of it here. She also reminds us of the need for distance in effective comedy and mentions the other stock characteristic of all types of comedy, the contrast between events and their interpretation, where much comedy arises from exaggeration and misinterpretation. I agree with the designations of the opening and closing sections of the novel but I am not sure of the middle two. Romance certainly appears much too light a word for the description of the antics of Ike and his cow just as myth is not extremely obvious in the section titled "Eula." Eula is a type of myth herself and she functions as another Earth Mother mythical figure but the word itself does not give any indication of the humor which accompanies the character or takes place in the section. Comedy of manners might

162Tuck, p. 74.
describe both these sections while pointing up the absurdity of them. The structure of the novel almost progresses from the more gentle stock humor, through the grotesque but abortive antics of Labove, to the truly hurtful grotesque humor of Ike and his cow and the spotted horses incident.

The entire first section of the novel is concerned with Ab's antics and consists of the explanation for Ab's souring on the world, his bad trade with Pat Stamper including Ab's history and reputation for barn burning in the story of De Spain's ruined rug. The incidents are truly stock humor especially in that they fit the tall tale mode. Ratliff is the more sophisticated figure who forms the frame for the tales and who tells them via dialect of the actors in the tales. During the tales, listeners occasionally need authority for the extreme things Ratliff is telling them and so stop the story to ask how he knows these things. These pauses add to the tension and suspense of the pace of the stories and give time for Ratliff to establish himself as a worthy story teller. Ratliff says he witnessed some of these incidents first hand.

The novel begins with the minor tale about Ab dealing with De Spain. In some kind of rage, Ab goes to De Spain's house and tracks horse manure on one of De Spain's expensive rugs. Ab acts exactly as we might expect a country bumpkin to act in the sight of luxury and elegance; he ignores it and flaunts his own personal grossness. When De Spain confronts Ab with the dirtied rug, Ab again flaunts his country stupidity by saying "If I had thought that much of a rug I dont know as I would keep it where folks coming in would have to tromp on it (p. 15)." Ab's narrowminded
attitude shows up the contrast between himself and De Spain and sets his character for the rest of the novel. The story gets Faulkner's own twist to events when Ab condescends to clean the rug but then returns it in worse shape. De Spain is reduced to threatening to withhold twenty bushels of corn for ruining the rug. Eventually, Ab turns out to be suing De Spain and succeeds in getting the fine reduced to ten bushels of corn. The incident is resolved humorously but surprisingly as well: neither of the men quite win the contest where we would have expected and hoped De Spain might triumph. The fact that he does not is an ominously humorous warning of what the rest of the novel has in store for us.

The horse trading incident with Pat Stamper has all the elements of the standard tall tale. Again, Ratliff plays the more sophisticated narrator who is a good liar but believable as well. Some of the characters remain the same in that we have Ab again, but this time he seems at least partially overcome by events and his own wife. The conflict of the trade is known even before the specifics of the story are given since all the listeners know Pat Stamper. "He was a legend (p. 30)" we are told. We are also told the conclusion of the trade at the outset although we do not realize it. Pat is "assisted by a Negro hostler who was an artist as a sculptor is an artist, who could take any piece of horseflesh which still had life in it and retire to whatever closed building or shed was empty and handy and then, with a quality of actual legerdemain, reappear with something which the beast's own dam would not recognize, let alone its recent owner (p. 30)." This is exactly the trap Ab falls for although
we do not know it yet; still, we should be prepared but somehow even this preparation does not ruin the effect of the story.

Ab sets out to town to buy his wife a separator, with her scrupulously saved pennies tied in a rag, and to trade his broken down horse for something preferrable. Ab does not win but "he come out exactly even" since he gets his own team back but only after some wild cavorting. Ab is first afraid that the horse will not make it to town and that he will have to sneak the animal into town on the back roads, but he lights upon a scheme to enliven the dying animal by imbedding a fish hood under the horse’s skin so that he can annoy the horse into action by dropping the reins. With the fish hook and some saltpeter rubbed into the horse’s gums, the horse breaks out into a sweat and becomes almost lively and pretty. When Ab thinks he might be playing it cool and admits he wants to be rid of the horse because it is so lively, Stamper gets the best of him. Ab's eagerness causes Stamper to say he will not sell a mule except in a matched pair, so Ab gives in and trades his horse and mule for the matched set of mules from Stamper. The mules barely get to town before they begin to show the fact that they cannot possibly get all the way home without dying. So Ab is incensed and vows to get his own mule back from Stamper who claims he has already gotten rid of Ab's horse and included the mule in a deal with a different horse. Under pressure Ab gives in and again trades with Stamper: the matched set of mules for a horse and mule. We think that Ab seems to be back where he started and we do not realize the truth
of that insight. On the way home, it begins to rain and the horse begins to change colors. Now Ab begins to realize how much Stamper has actually done. The horse turns out to be Ab's old horse which the nigger painted and blew up with a bicycle pump to make look healthy and fat. The nigger did not even bother to take out the fish hook which Ab had put under the horse's skin and that is the reason the horse appeared so lively. The picture of the fat horse is humorously contrasted with the picture of the horse changing colors in the rain.

That's just exactly how it was fat: not like a horse is fat but like a hog: fat right up to its ears and looking tight as a drum; it was so fat it couldn't hardly walk, putting its feet down like they didn't have no weight nor feeling in them at all. (p. 44)

Besides losing the color, the horse deflates as well and Ab is left without a horse at all. "Then there was a sound like a nail jabbed into a big bicycle tire. It went wishhnnnhnn and then the rest of that sniny fat horse we had got from Pat Stamper vanished (p. 44)."

Ike's love for Houston's cow results in one of the most grotesque sequences of all of Faulkner's novels. The entire business is grotesquely funny although with different handling, it would not be. There is a structural need for the circumstances to come where they do. Hoffman claims that "the conquest of Eula is followed by one of the most elaborate parodies in literature of the romantic view of nature's bounty and beauty. This section of the novel is alternately exaggerated by comic and profound." 163 Hoffman hit on some important things about the sequence. Its

163 Hoffman, Twayne Series, p. 91.
placement balances Labove's affair with Eula but takes the notion of love and romance to such an extreme that the result is grotesque humor. Eula and the cow are quite alike in their existence, but somehow we can accept Eula as a love object while we are scandalized by the thought of a cow as a love object. Or rather, we might accept the notion of the cow being loved the way a boy might love a pet or his dog, all in proper relation. But, we resist accepting Ike's passion for the cow because of its unnaturalness which is just what makes the humor of the sequence grotesque rather than stock. Also, Hoffman notes the exaggeration throughout the scenes which causes grotesque humor.

Ike's passion for the cow fits the other requirements for grotesque humor as well. "An essential aspect of surrealist humor consists in the yoking of one element which is conventionally the object of reverence to another incongruous element in a manner which radically alters the feeling we normally have toward both."164 A boy's love for a pet, even a cow, is a notion which we can accept as we might even revere the notion of love. Yet, when Ike and the cow are put together, the result is what Cross calls surrealist humor. Where we might have felt sorry for Ike's condition or sympathetic with his lack of affection, when we learn of his antics with the cow, we only feel scandalized or insulted or amused instead. Every time the profundity of a passage or the verbose style of it causes us to begin to accept the situation, Faulkner shifts to some comic, extreme

incident to remind us that the entire matter is grotesque and, as we always have the excuse, not to be taken seriously. Such a reversal in tone and our response occurs when Ike saves the cow from the burning barn. At that point we are willing to believe that Ike's passion as resulted in some decent actions. But then, Faulkner takes the scene to the extreme we did not expect in having the cow in its fear relieve its full bowels all over Ike who has fallen under the cow in the scuffle. Then when Houston arrives, he gives Ike a coin for saving the cow. We are again about to accept the motivation and actions of the boy as human and real when we are reminded of the excrement clinging to Ike's overalls by Houston who, like us, is upset and scandalized by the boy's action. This continual preparation for acceptance followed by some extreme grotesque humor being foisted on the audience is part of the characteristic tone of grotesque humor. The ordinary taken to an extreme with a twist results in the grotesque humor of the sequence.

The real and hurtful element of grotesque humor is apparent too because Faulkner does not let us sympathize or accept. Instead, we laugh at the grotesque and realize the criticism involved. Ike is genuinely hurt in the fire; his face is singed and scorched. Instead of feeling sorry for him, we must laugh at him because his actions are so extreme. Faulkner is criticizing first the town and the people who have not given Ike the affection and attention he needs to make him feel loved; instead, their ignoring his needs forces Ike into his grotesquely humorous actions.
Then, Faulkner is criticizing the town, and especially people like Ike's Snopes relatives, who attempt to exploit the boy's antics for profit. The townspeople come to look through a crack in the barn wall at Ike and the cow; Ratliff scorns their actions and wonders if they were charged to peek. The scene is extremely funny because it is so grotesque as well as being important to the theme of the novel. The Snopeses and people like them solely concerned with profit to the point where even their own scandalous actions can be sold to curiosity seekers are to be condemned. We realize the condemnation because of their handling in the sequence, because of the grotesque humor. Hillgate has this analysis of the circumstances:

It would be ridiculous to speak of Ike's passion for the cow as being endorsed by Faulkner, ... [despite] the heightened language, the mythological allusions ... its absolute sincerity and generosity; what finally appears as more grotesque and perverted than Ike's own role are the attempts of his relatives to exploit his love and, Ratliff suspects, to turn it to profit.165

The tone of grotesque allows us to be fooled into nearly accepting the situation previous to our rejection of it and realization of the criticism involved. The extremely flowery language of the sequence adds to the grotesque humor because it is so apparently out of place. The language is also part of what lulls us into near acceptance before Faulkner springs the criticism. The sincerity and generosity of the tone also do a similar thing. We begin to feel sympathy for Ike until we come to nearly hate and actively oppose the exploitation of his relatives. The Snopeses show

165 Hillgate, p. 187.
their evil greedy nature here in a grotesquely funny way, so we see the fun Faulkner is poking at Ike as well as the genuine and deserved criticism he is proposing for the Snopes clan. Also, we must remember that the incidents are funny to us because we are detached from them while they are bothersome and scandalous to the people involved. Houston is annoyed and Ratliff is upset at the antics of Ike, but we are amused by the grotesque humor.

An incident similar to the one with Ike and his cow is the one with Nink and his attempts to rid himself of Houston's body. In fact, the grotesque humor is even more hurtful and ridiculous in this incident than it was with the cow. Here, the subject of the scene is murder instead of love and we have a "sensible" man rather than an idiot boy who might be excused for his actions. Also, the greedy nature of the Snopeses, comes out in grotesquely humorous ways: to gain profit now, they must wake the dead, so to speak, as opposed to simply capitalizing on the living. The tone of this scene is more heightened and hurtful than the tone of the previous one although the theme is similar. Vickery says that "as the comedy grows darker, the idyllic is overshadowed by the grotesque, the macabre, and the demonic, producing the complex tonal quality of The Hamlet."186 The point and the criticism of the scene is that the Snopes and all people like them are to be criticized and scorned and hopefully annihilated. Unfortunately, the rest of the theme of the novel and the

186 Vickery, p. 198.
scene is that the Snopeses will inundate the world; rather than be destroyed, they multiply and take over. The scene and the novel are a caution and a warning to fight that possibility.

The fact that Mink has killed Houston and attempts to be rid of the body does not make the scene grotesquely numerous since what achieves that is Flem's attempts to find the body and recover the fifty dollars he thinks Houston had in his pocket. Mink refuses to show Flem where the body is and Flem prohibits Mink's attempting to get all the fifty dollars for himself. Things seem to be at a stalemate. Flem says:

"Just try to look at this thing like two reasonable people. There's that fifty dollars laying out there, not belonging to nobody. And you can't go and get it without taking me, because I ain't going to let you. And I can't go get it without taking you, because I don't know where it's at... It's just a matter of pure and simple principle." (p. 249).

The absurdity of all Flem has said results in the grotesque humor of the lines. Neither of them are "reasonable people" despite their attempts to be. The money belongs to Houston, dead or alive, but Flem seems to think that Houston's being dead makes the money belong to nobody. The fact that he thinks it is a matter of principle causes us to laugh and then wonder exactly what principle he is using for his defense, the right to rob the dead?

When Mink gets to the tree in which Houston's body is imprisoned, he attempts to free the body from its coffin with the ax and is attacked by Houston's old dog. Eventually, he succeeds in hacking the body out of the tree and the scene of Mink, the body, and the dog all tumbling together
when the body finally comes loose from the tree is grotesquely funny.

Hink does not even make an attempt to retrieve the money from the body; at this point we think that might be the funniest thing about the scene, but we are in for better because Faulkner characteristically heightens the grotesque humor. As Hink flings the body into the river, he almost follows it with the momentum, "seeing at the instant of its vanishing the sluggish sprawl of three limbs where there should have been four (p. 259)," resulting in grotesque laughter. Hink gets caught by the deputies and is prosecuted for his crime. The only response we get from him is that "I was all right ... until it started coming to pieces ... But the son of a bitch started coming to pieces on me (p. 263)." His judgment is correct in a sense but the voicing of it is so out of place that the audience gets the grotesque laughter. The moral of the scene is similar to the moral of the previous scene or the final joke with Ratliff and the buried treasure story where Ratliff says "Just look at what even the money a man aint got yet will do to him (p. 349)." Faulkner is also saying that money is the root of all evil since money is a deciding factor in the evil nature of the Snopes clan.

The final scene to be discussed, the "spotted horses" sequence, has been handled so many times that it might suffice to give it a rather cursory investigation here. The sequence is a combination of stock and grotesque humor. Hopkins claims that "underlying the humor, and inextricably a part of it, are the violence, pain and injustice which are the inevitable results
of a completely successful 'practical' joke.\textsuperscript{167} The violence and the pain are what make the scene more grotesquely humorous than stockily humorous at points. The injustice of the following events and the attempted prosecutions are the theme of the sequence as well as one theme of the novel. Because of the Shopeses' cleverness and greed, Armstid and Tull are hurt and abused. Their wives attempt recompence through justice, but justice goes astray quite easily as we see in the courtroom scenes. We laugh at the grotesque humor because we are detached from the occurrences but Armstid and Tull and their wives are genuinely inconvenienced and hurt. The moral of the story and partially of the novel is the criticism of justice involved in the sequence. The criticism reflects Faulkner's judgment that such injustice was partially what was wrong with the South. Actually, it is one explanation for what is wrong with the world. What starts out as genuine pain for the characters involved in the grotesquely humorous antics with the wild horses, moves through our laughter at their plight because we are detached and uninvolved with the incidents. Then, we realize the criticism implied and extenuate that to an attitude of Faulkner toward the South. Ultimately we can further extenuate the theme until it applies to the entire world and not just the South. The linking of hurt and laughter results in the tension of the tone, moving the reader to the realization of the criticism of the theme of the scene and partially of the book.

\footnote{167 Hopkin, p. 137.}
The stock humor of the scene is in the stereotyped characters and the practical joke of the action. Allen sees the scene as especially frontier humor and voices it this way.

In this story one finds a clever use of universal types, and a sly juxtaposition of incongruities. Especially fetching is the use of frontier humor: the exploitation of the horrible absurdity, the trick situation, the humor of folklore, the opposition of informal and colloquial language, of understatement and burlesque, of dialect, etc.\(^{168}\)

We know and notice how all these elements are apparent in the scene. Interestingly, the "horrible absurdity" is a characteristic of some frontier, folk type humor but it is also the link to the grotesque humor of the scene. The merging of the two kinds of humor is voiced another way by Backman when he says

\begin{quote}
An earthly, fantastic comic spirit was taking over, transforming distress into laughter and bringing everything down to earth. . . Yet the comic spirit . . . could not fully prevail . . . a tense, pathetic quality that breaks with the mood of comedy . . . Brilliantly transforming his preoccupation through his comic genius and bringing to life the people for whom he had such a special regard and understanding, he created his own kind of tragicomedy.\(^{169}\)
\end{quote}

The fantastic and the extreme is one link to grotesque humor as is the distress which precedes or accompanies the grotesque humor. The tension and the pathetic quality are characteristics of grotesque humor. Although Backman calls this "tragicomedy," it might just as well be called grotesque humor. It results in this case from Faulkner's criticism of injustice and stupidity. Men are men and act the "fool about a horse," and when

\(^{168}\)Allen, p. 65.  \(^{169}\)Backman, \textit{Major Years}, pp. 181-182.
they are hurt or abused, they turn to the law for solace. Humorously, the law certainly does not give them that comfort; rather, it picks at the hurt. Mrs. Tull is granted the dead body of Eck's horse as compensation for the hurt and trouble the horse caused when alive! That the carcass is of absolutely no use to her is never taken into consideration by the judge who is solely concerned with the lettered execution of the law. Mrs. Tull who is concerned with a superior spirit of true justice is hurt and flaunted by the law. The fact that there is injustice and that it comes from foolish people and foolish judges is the criticism implied in the theme of the grotesque humor of this "Spotted Horses" sequence of *The Hamlet*.

*The Town* is the middle novel of the Snopes trilogy. Unlike *The Hamlet*, *The Town* is not as extremely or as obviously humorous. The humor is somewhat more low keyed and slower paced than the overpoweringly funny scenes in *The Hamlet*. Cleanth Brooks summarizes this way.

> Some of the comedy in *The Town* is almost macabre; some of it is of a cartoon-like exaggeration, especially in the episodes told by Ratliff; some of it is a variety of social comedy, . . . Indeed, a special requisite for reading this novel is an ability to appreciate the different kinds of comedy in their relation to one another, not mistaking this or that comic element as "the serious" matter which the other comic elements serve as foils.\(^{170}\)

In fact, some of the comedy is certainly grotesque rather than "almost" so. The "cartoon-like exaggeration" is apparent in the stock comic character

\(^{170}\)Brooks, p. 216.
types, and the social comedy comes from Flem's continued climb to success. This so called social comedy may be either stock or grotesque since the point of social comedy is to show up the foibles of man, and such foibles are fair subject for either stock or grotesque humor, depending on the handling. Brooks is right in noting the way in which the two types of comedy serve as foils for each other and play off against each other. The stock comedy may relieve the previous tension which might come from some serious or tragic point or which might come from the previous more hurtful grotesque humor.

The stock humor in The Town comes partially from the same stock comic characters we have in The Hamlet. Ratliff especially provides humor again in his stories and anecdotes and Flem, I.O., Montgomery Ward, and all the Snopeses continue to provide stock humor; Eula Varner Snopes also fulfills a similar function. As Vickery says, "in a series of highly comic scenes, Jefferson watches spellbound as Gavin and De Spain, the county attorney and the mayor, play sophomoric tricks on each other." The tricks are predominantly concerned with the motorcar De Spain buys and runs noisily past Gavin's house. The series of incidents reads almost like a tale of a trade wherein each man tries to best the other in the deal. Here, the object of the trade is nothing as obvious or sensible as a horse; rather, it is the principle itself, the fact that no one likes to be made fun of or be bested in a silly contest.

171Vickery, p. 189.
In addition, The Town adds two new stock characters. Gavin Stevens is the typical figure of a county lawyer. Often, he is called Lawyer, named according to his function rather than to his individual personality. Gavin has the expected office, which comically gets used for strange purposes. He is quite concerned with how everything he does will look to the people of the town which is especially apparent when he finds himself enamored of Linda Snopes. Gavin maneuvers to meet or avoid her continually and wonders what the town will think about his antics. In such scenes, Gavin also fulfills characteristics of the stock comic bachelor. At one point, he wants to propose to and marry Linda; shortly thereafter, when Eula tells him to marry Linda, Gavin does an about-face and finds he cannot marry her. He fulfills the typical bachelor characteristics especially when faced with marriage; he gets cold feet and reneges. Often, Gavin chats with Ratliff and thereby gives us much humor in the way the two men play off against each other. We alternate in our responses to Gavin because he himself humorously vacillates. Sometimes we feel sorry for him and wonder why he does not take more initiative; then we laugh when he does and fails such as when he fights De Spain at the Christmas Ball even though he does not know how to fight. When Gavin fails in endeavors, we laugh and that laughter alternates with the pity we might feel for him in other circumstances. In the Christmas Ball scene where all the ladies are inundated with corsages, Gavin and De Spain both are intimately involved in the action and therefore do not find the whole thing amusing. They are troubled by the mechanics of getting Eula a
corsage without insulting each other, their spouses, mates, friends, the town, and so forth. But to the audience who is more detached, the scenes are quite funny in a stock, exaggerated way, as if one lady made one magic wish for a flower and was swamped with bouquets. The humor of the scene falls short of grotesque because there is little hurt or damage. The entire incident is equitably resolved and the town has an issue to talk about for a while. The reader has the laughter resulting from the sheer ridiculousness of the many flowers. When Chick Mallison approaches the dance hall the night of the Christmas Ball, he says "you could smell all the corsages even before you began to climb the stairs and that when you got inside the ballroom it looked like you should have been able to see the smell from them too like mist in a swamp on a cold morning (pp. 72-73)."

The words of the description play up the extremity of the scene and cause the laughter from the audience.

More of the stock humor of that Ball scene, and others in the novel, comes from the character of Charles Mallison, who is another new stock comic figure. He is a type of straight man for the remarks and stories of Gavin and Ratliff since the humor of his character often comes from the simple fact of his age and his innocence. Gwynn and Blotner quote Faulkner on this topic.

I thought it would be more amusing as told through the innocence of a child that knew what he was seeing but had no particular judgment about it. That something told by someone that don't know he is telling something funny is sometimes much more amusing than when it's
told by a professional wit who is hunting around for laughs.172

We run into this kind of stock humorous reaction every time the circumstances are told from Chick's point of view. Especially good are the tales of the attempts to give De Spain a flat tire, or Chick's attempts to get a dollar or a quarter out of Gavin for the errands Chick runs between Gavin and Linda. Also, the tales of Flem's brass monument are most humorous because Chick does not know the more subtle level of sexual maneuvers which underlie the stealing of the brass. The humor even becomes grotesque when Chick tells the story of Eck Snopes' death. When Eck was stupid enough to put a lighted lantern into the town oil tank, he gets blown up. All they can ever find of the body is the twisted and broken neck brace which Eck used to wear. In a wayward attempt at decorum, they bury the neck brace in a full coffin with all the honors.

Besides, he was a Mason too. He has been a Mason such a long time that he was a good one even if he wasn't very high up in it. So they buried the neck-brace anyway, in a coffin all regular, with the Masons in charge of the funeral, and more people than you would have thought sent flowers, even the oil company too . . . (p. 110)

The use of such childish dialect as "all regular" increases the humor. Chick does not seem to think there is anything strange about burying a neck-brace. However, the audience notices the strangeness and realizes that it is the extremity of the situation which causes the grotesque humor even if Chick is unaware of what he is saying.

172Gwynn and Blotner, p. 116.
Chick also comments upon the town, Gavin, the Snopeses and so forth. Chick may be a child but he is perceptive enough to peg Gavin. Or possibly his innocence allows him to see the town without involvement which would cause prejudice. The stock humor and grotesque humor become more than just fun or relief; they are tied to the theme or become the theme itself. Gavin as a stock comic figure merges with the voice of Faulkner, an immediate demonstration that stock comic figures are used for more than simple humor or comic relief. This is especially noticeable when the commentary is about Flem Snopes' need, not for material gain as in The Hamlet, but for respectability, and the town's frantic actions in attempting to understand and forestall Flem's gains. Chick serves as a kind of town chorus, as he early announces. "So when I say 'we' and 'we thought' what I mean is Jefferson and what Jefferson thought (p. 3)." None of the narrators alone, Chick, Gavin or Ratliff, stand as a voice for Faulkner; but together they give a complete enough judgment that we get the impression of echoes of Faulkner.

Structurally, The Town is like The Hamlet is that it is a kind of stringing together of tall tales but unlike The Hamlet, The Town is somewhat unorganized and disunified in the stringing of the tales. They are all linked by their relation to Flem's search for respectability, but they also develop other themes as well. These tales are the major source of the stock humor of the novel. If we look briefly at one, Old Het's besting the Snopeses, we can see how stock humor is linked to theme.
The best stock humorous incident in the novel is this tale of how Old Het bests the Snopeses, a story written and published as "Mule in the Yard" in 1934 in Scribner's Magazine. The story itself is delightful but its incorporation into this novel has often been criticized because of the lack of integration. Yet, the incident shows how desperately Flem is willing to fight for respectibility. He goes to the extreme of ridding Jefferson of Montgomery Ward and I.O. Flem originally brought these relatives to Jefferson in his striving for material wealth and gain; once he has that, Flem has no compunction against buying them out again and banishing them forever from Jefferson. The tale of Old Het and I.O.'s runaway mule reads like a stock tall tale. The incidents seem so exaggerated that we wonder if we could be expected to believe all this. Then, when we remember how insidious and fatal the Snopeses are, we realize that the tale, although quite humorous, is true and carries a thematic significance.

The story begins immediately: "Miss Manie! Mule in the yard! (p. 231)." We have the title, the action summary and the theme in one breath. Ironically, when we expect a response to this frantic announcement, the story is suspended while we get the background of Old Het. No one knows exactly how old she really is but her own claims would make her "around a hundred and, as Ratliff said, at least triplets." We are reminded that the story is being told by Ratliff to Gavin and now, once again indirectly, to us by Chick who got it from Gavin. Besides being quite old, Old Het is quite persistent in her visiting and alms seeking. The town ladies got
so that to avoid Het, they would lock themselves in the bathroom.

But even this did no good unless they had remembered first to lock the front and back doors of the house itself. Because sooner or later they would have to come out and there she would be, tall, lean, of a dark chocolate color, voluble, cheerful, in tennis shoes and the long rat-colored coat trimmed with what forty or fifty years ago had been fur, and the purple toque that old Mrs. Compson had given her fifty years ago . . . set on the exact top of her headrag. (p. 231)

The description alone makes Het a stock comic Negro, slightly bedraggled. After this character description we are returned briefly to the action as we see Old Het carrying the shopping bag and running into the kitchen yelling about the mule.

Then the action pauses again to get background on Mrs. Hait. Her husband and five mules were killed by a train and the railroad company made a settlement with her. She got eight thousand five hundred dollars which she took in cash and "put the money into a salt sack under her apron and departed (p. 233)." This is after De Spain has attempted to explain to her about bonds, and savings accounts, and checking accounts. Mrs. Hait persists in keeping the cash on hand so that later we see her with the balance of funds in a glass jar. Mrs. Hait, too, is a stock comic figure. She wears the sweater her husband had on when he died which miraculously survived the accident. She also wears his old felt hat and "men's shoes which buttoned, with toes like small tulip bulbs, of an archaic and obsolete pattern which . . . [were] ordered especially for her once a year (pp. 233-234)."
Now the action begins again and very briefly picks up speed. Mrs. Hait and Old Het run into the yard into the fog. Mrs. Hait also slips and loses balance and is still carrying the "scuttle of live ashes" so we should be prepared for much of what follows. But somehow, our premonitions never quite reach the comic expectations of the story itself. Again, the action pauses while we get background on I.O. Snopes' ill-fated mule business. It seems that I.O. has had quite a few mules killed on the same section of railroad track but it is only after Mr. Hait's death that the town connects Hait with the Snopeses. There are humorous comments thrown into the narrative such as the one about someone sending I.O. a train schedule and Katliff's denying that he did it. We now get indirect action and action within the action. We learn the conflict between I.O. and Mrs. Hait in settling with the railroad company. I.O. seemed to think that he owned the mules and was therefore deserving of half the settlement. Mrs. Hait staunchly contends that her husband was the sole owner of the five mules. In frustrated revenge, I.O. takes enjoyment in the fact that his mules occasionally break out of their pen and devastate Mrs. Hait's yard. Snopes even thinks he has paid for the paint which adorns Mrs. Hait's house and so he is extremely frustrated and makes himself a nuisance.

Once again we are returned to the main action of the story. The picture of the animal itself provides some stock humor in the incongruity of an animal being where it is not expected or should not be.
When they saw it, the mule was running too, its head high too in a strange place it had never seen before, so that coming suddenly out of the fog and all, it probably looked taller than a giraffe rushing down at Mrs. Hait and old Het with the halter-rope whipping about its ears. (p. 237).

Now, the action is complicated as Mrs. Hait and the mule run toward the barn where the cow pokes out its head because it is frightened by the proceedings and "snatched her face back inside the shed like a match going out and made a sound inside the shed, old Het didn't know what sound (p. 237)." Now the cow has been introduced and will later add to the humor. At this point, Mrs. Hait finally sets the scuttle of ashes down outside the cellar door. Again we should be prepared for later actions but the humor deceives us so that we forget details easily only to be reawakened by them in later more humorous circumstances. As Mrs. Hait chases the mule with a broom stick; the ballet of action reaches one humorous conjunction.

... the mule coincide[d] with a rooster and eight white-leghorn hens coming out from under the house ... the mule that came out of the fog to begin with like a hant or a goblin, now kind of soaring back into the fog again borne on a cloud of little winged ones. (p. 238).

The picture is compared to one in the Bible or out of "some kind of hoodoo witches' Bible," adding to the humor of the scene.

Now there are more mules and I.O. Snopes joins the chase, screaming "Where's my money? Where's my half of it? (p. 239)" His greed is apparent even in this extreme situation and provides the reader with quite a laugh. We recall his entire character and see how is serves to add another dimension to the scene. Mrs. Hait yells at Snopes to get a rope to catch
"that big son of a bitch" while I.O. continues his demands for his part of the money. It is a type of blackmail situation: if Mrs. Hait pays I.O. his half of the money he will take his mules and go quietly away. We almost wish it would happen so we could be rid of the pest too, but the rest of the story only makes it worse and makes us laugh harder. The mule has got around to the back of the yard again after colliding with the chickens who had gone under the house and out the other side. At the back, the mule is "fixing to misuse the cow." The successive tableaus have picked up speed and everything moves again. The parade goes around a corner of the house, I.O., the cow, the mule, Mrs. Hait and Old Het.

By the next corner the order has changed.

. . . there was nobody there but Snopes. He was lying flat on his face, the tail of his coat flung forward over his head by the impetus of his fall, and Old Het swore there was the print of the cow's split foot and the mule's hoof too in the middle of his white shirt (p. 240).

We laugh uproariously and believe that I.O. has finally gotten what he deserves. We delight in the picture of him brought literally low and abused, but there is better yet to come.

Now the climax comes. The cow whirls on the mule, the mule trips over the scuttle in the cellar doorway, continues on around the house so that it "overtook them from behind," and disappears into the fog. With the disappearance of the mule, Old Het prepares to relax and announces that she has had quite a day. We also are prepared for the conclusion and feel a sort of lessening of the tension and a humorous relief. But then, almost immediately, the story picks up again because the characters
realize the house has caught fire. With the realization, Old Het yells at Mrs. Hait to "run in the house and get your money! (p.241)." Not only do we realize that the action is further complicated, but also we realize part of the moral of the story, the desire for and conflict over money. We remember the proverb that "money is the root of all evil" and actually begin to believe it from the circumstances here.

The pace of the story and its construction now change. Where we had a brief action alternating with humorous background and the alternation becoming more frequent, we now have large time jumps with pieces of humorous summary. "That was about nine o'clock. By noon the house had burned to the ground." The tone of the summary adds to the humor of the story. Also, the figure of Mrs. Hait rocking on a neighbor's porch and watching the activity contrasts with the riot of activity caused by the town and the fire fighters and so forth. Now, I.O. becomes a sort of fugitive because the town people have become interested enough in the proceedings to "hunt up I.O. and keep him posted (p. 242)." I.O. characteristically tries to shift the blame for the fire by saying that it was Mrs. Hait who set the scuttle of ashes where it might get knocked over. Although it was I.O. who opened the cellar door, that was only at the request of Mrs. Hait and so again the fire would be her own fault. Finally, Ratliff brings the ultimate accusation: "to catch your mule, that was trespassing on her yard . . . You can't get out of it this time. There ain't a jury in the county that won't find for her." Again, we should be slightly prepared for the conclusion but we are humorously misled to make the final revelations even more humorous in contrast.
How the entire action has become more complicated and shifts gears. There is a deal going between I.O. and Mrs. Hait. We get considerably more tall tale bargaining than we bargained for. Mrs. Hait offers to buy the mule from I.O. but he demands the extreme price of one hundred and fifty dollars. Again, there is a large time jump. "That was about one o'clock. Then it was four o'clock (p. 244)." More characters are added since Mrs. Hait sends Old Het to Gavin with money as a retainer and the story of her buying the mule from I.O. for ten dollars. Directly as Old Het leaves after arranging with Gavin to be at Mrs. Hait's lot at sundown, I.O. enters and asks Gavin to take a case for him. Gavin now appears to be between the devil and the deep blue sea and his plight causes the audience's laughter and speculation about what will occur now. Gavin announces he is on the other side but I.O. persists in paying him solely to be a witness, not even a lawyer.

When Gavin and I.O. go to Mrs. Hait's, Flem is already there and the stage is set for another comic sequence. Mrs. Hait is cooking ham over a fire with a few brand new utensils including a new tin milking bucket. I.O. goes into a state of shock and launches into a long discourse about the eight thousand dollars and who got how much of it. No one seems to listen to him although the reader laughs at the contortions of logic necessary to disperse the money justly according to I.O. Old Het has the proper retort.

"Lord, honey," old Het said. "If you talking at me. Don't you mind me. I done already had so much troubles myself that listening to other folks even kind of rests me. You
I.O. is frustrated and attempts to bargain with Mrs. Hait over the mule. He contends that she took the mule while she says she paid him for it. Now the dickering concerns the price for the mule and we are reminded of the tall tale trade format. Yet, interspersed with the dealings are pieces of important information. For instance, Mrs. Hait announces that all she knows about the price of mules is the sixty dollars the railroad used to pay Hait until he "finally lost all his senses and tied himself to that track too (p. 251)." Now we know the story has much more substance to it that we first imagined. What began as an innocent tall tale without relevance but with much humor, has become another more humorous tall tale but integrally linked to the plot of the novel and the character of the Snopeses. I.O.'s true part in the death of Hait has been brought to light and Flem continues the bargaining with Mrs. Hait. Flem gives Mrs. Hait the mortgage to the burned house so she can burn it and thereby make clear profit from the insurance deal. Flem also buys all of I.O.'s mules for the one hundred and fifty dollars a head. Characteristically, I.O. tries to return the money to Mrs. Hait and sell that mule for the greater profit to Flem. Flem eventually admits he will buy the last mule when I.O. produces it, so I.O. is off in pursuit of the last mule. Mrs. Hait has all her money back and Flem has the promise that I.O. will never return to Jefferson. We are prepared for this as the final resolution of the story but we should know better.
Shortly, I.O. returns to Mrs. Hait and says "I reckon I'll take that ten dollars (p. 255)." We wonder what drastic thing must have occurred for I.O. to come down in price from one hundred and fifty dollars, but we don't know immediately. First, Mrs. Hait must give I.O. a hard time about the ten dollars since she refuses to admit she knows anything about the ten dollars. Part of the resolution comes when I.O. gives his spiel about the history of his mule business and why he deserves the money from the original insurance claim and how Mrs. Hait never did anything to deserve the money. The fact that gauls I.O. most of all is the realization that she "not didn't jest beat me out of another hundred and forty dollars, but out of a entire another hundred and fifty (p. 255)." Again, we wonder what has brought on I.O.'s outburst but only after another page do we learn. I.O. claims he wants justice while Mrs. Hait claims he got his mule back. The resolution finally comes when we discover that Mrs. Hait shot the mule. Old Het summarizes and justifies the scene. "Well . . . the mule burnt the house and you shot the mule. That's what I calls more than justice: that's what I calls tit for tat (p. 256)." Again, we expect such a moral to be the conclusion of the story but Faulkner takes the tale one final step further when old Het says "aint we had a day." The degree of understatement is so extreme that it arouses laughter in the audience. Throughout the story, the laughter has been blinding us to the true necessity and the theme of the incidents. We see the degree to which Flem will go to buy respectability for himself. The story does fit
with the theme and structure of the entire novel. It does more than just entertain; it scares us with the realization that the Snopeses are winning despite this single personal loss for I.O. at the hands of Mrs. Hait. We side with her but realize it might be a losing battle against Flem.

Grotesque humor is much less apparent in The Town but is there nonetheless. One or two incidents particularly bring the grotesque humor to light. Along with our fear and annoyance and laughter caused by the Snopeses, there is the realization that they cause Gavin's frustrations and Eula's suicide and so forth. Those causes include man's inhumanity to man. The uncharitable way people treat each other is deserving of criticism and that, along with the resulting hypocrisy, becomes one theme of the novel.

A single small grotesquely humorous incident summarizes the novel. Flem will not allow Linda to leave Jefferson until he has erected a monument to Eula. The monument is grotesquely funny, an elaborate affair, brought especially all the way from Italy. It has an enlarged and stylized picture of Eula in a medallion mounted on the stone. Engraved on the stone are the most grotesquely funny lines of the novel. "A Virtuous Wife/Is a Crown to Her Husband/Her Children Rise and Call Her Blessed (p. 355)." We wonder what could have possessed Flem to construe such a monstrosity of a eulogy and then we realize how grotesque he is and find his action humorously characteristic. The complete irony of the inscription is only apparent on careful investigation. Eula is hardly the
virtuous wife she is called; ironically, it is not her fault since Flem is impotent. The grotesque humor of that fact alone adds to our awareness of what is going on in the novel. Eula is not a crown to Flem; she is a purchased possession. He has bought her in his efforts to buy material wealth rather than possessing her by right or merit as a true king might. Eula has only one child and so the "children" of the inscription actually makes the eulogy a direct lie. We might excuse it for style's sake or the idealism of the message until we again remember the specifics. Linda is at the grave site but refuses to even look at the grave or the monument. All she wants is to fulfill the necessary rituals so that she can get away. We remember the other most grotesquely humorous graveside in As I Lay Dying. Here, as there, the characters use the death as a means to some personal selfishness. Flem wants only the respectability which he gets from this ostentatious monument. De Spain stands apart mourning, possibly genuinely, but the town sees him as only mourning for the wife of his vice-president. Gavin is there to hurry the proceedings and help Linda get away in his misguided efforts to save her from Jefferson. All the town has turned out just from curiosity, to see the monument. The grotesque humor is the point of the novel here. Death only becomes the opportunity for continued hypocrisy on the part of the townspeople, and the criticism of that hypocrisy, and of the elements which are the Snopeses, is apparent in the grotesque humor.
Finally, there are the grotesquely humorous incidents with Byron Snopes' unreal children who arrive for only about the final twenty pages of the novel but the fact that they are given that prominent place is important. The first description we have of the children shows them to be grotesquely humorous.

Then four things got off. I mean, they were children. The tallest was a girl though we never did know whether she was the oldest or just the tallest, then two boys, all three in overalls, and then a little one in a single garment down to its heels like a man's shirt made out of a flour- or meal-sack or maybe a scrap of an old tent. Wired to the front of each one of them was a shipping tag written in pencil:

From: Byron Snopes, . . . To: Mr. Flem Snopes . . . (p. 359)

At first, we think maybe Chick is being malicious or extreme in his description as children might often be so. But then when we almost criticize Chick instead of the Snopes crew, Chick gives us further description and now we switch allegiance.

... they didn't look like people. They looked like snakes. Or maybe that's too strong too. Anyway, they didn't look like children, if there was one thing in the world they didn't look like it was children, with kind of dark pasty faces and black hair that looked like somebody had put a bowl on top of their heads and then cut their hair up to the rim of the bowl with a dull knife, and perfectly black perfectly still eyes that nobody in Jefferson (Yoknopatawpha County either) ever afterward claimed they saw blink (p. 360).

The picture of these inhuman children is grotesquely humorous. We cannot feel sorry for them because they are so extremely ugly and hateful. Also, we are detached from the immediate action and therefore can find the proceedings much more humorous than the people involved in the action. The
town is scandalized by these creatures and proceeds to shuffle them around amongst the Snopeses. We are also given the immediate piece of information that one of them has a six inch blade which should warn and prepare us for later scenes.

These four grotesque children proceed to wreck havoc in Jefferson. They are seen on the streets of town at any time of the day and night. When the marshall tries to ask Dink to keep them in at night, Dink replies that he has tried and there is nothing he can do with them and that any one else who wants to is welcome to try handling them. The children break into the Coca-Cola bottling plant and drink the syrup; the evidence dribbles down the front of the littlest one. There is an expensive little dog in town that rides in a Cadillac and sneers at everyone. One day the dog is gone and the little kid appears with the dog's gold collar around his neck. Later we find that the children ate the dog and left his bones thrown in the cave where they spend quite a lot of time. Flem, again in his efforts to buy respectability, pays the owners for the dog. Then he attempts to get the children out of town and sends them on to Frenchman's Bend to some of the relatives who agreed to take them in exchange for a dollar a head a week. That might sound like a reasonable deal until we get the rest of the information.

DeWitt Binford has quite a time with the children. They will not stay in bed at night; they sleep on the floor all rolled in a blanket. The children are grotesquely uncanny because they never make a noise and
they never seem to blink their eyes. Dewitt becomes obsessed with the idea that they never close their eyes so he borrows Vernon Tull's flashlight and sneaks a look at them one night. The children are so quick that he never got the chance to turn the flashlight on. He only feels the pain of two quick slashes down the sides of his face. One of the children has slashed Dewitt's cheeks from eye to jaw and he runs bleeding out of the room. He attempts to barricade himself and his wife in their bedroom until morning as protection. In the morning the children are patiently waiting in the yard to be fed.

Doris Snopes also tries his hand at handling the children; he even lights on the idea of training "them to hunt in a pack; they would be better than any jest pack of dogs because sooner or later dogs always quit and went home, while it didn't matter to them where they was (p. 368)." Doris tries to train them by filling candy wrappers with mud or soda bottles with muddy water to deceive them. We recall the grotesquely humorous and cruel things Popeye did to animals and we see a parallel in Doris' actions with these creatures. In their effort to retaliate, the children tie Doris to stakes and start a fire around him. We cannot believe what we have read is true! Faulkner cannot be seriously expecting us to believe that such creatures exist. Then, we realize with a chill of horror that this is exactly what Faulkner expects and he is right. These children are not disembodied spirits out of some Gothic horror tale; they are quite real and horrifying all the while they are doing such grotesquely funny things.
In the end, Flem sends the children back to Byron. They get on the train while the town gathers but not too closely to watch. When the townspeople try to give the children provisions for the trip, they reach fruit to the children from a distance so as not to get hurt or attacked, much as one would feed dangerous animals. The final lines of the novel concern description of these grotesquely humorous children and the fact that the town did not ever know what the littlest child's garment really was. The comment is characteristic and important. The town certainly does not know what to do with these or any other of the Snopeses. Most normal treatments prove futile in handling this special breed of creature named Snopes.

The moral of the novel is a warning against all such rapacious creatures as the Snopeses. It is also a warning against allowing any such as Flem to buy their way to respectability. The Snopes are entirely hateful and many of them are grotesquely amusing as well. They are a symbol of modernity encroaching on the serenity of the South. The characteristics of the Snopeses are characteristics of the South after the Civil War which Faulkner criticized and fought against. The Town portrays a small world in Jefferson; it comes to symbolize the entire South and eventually the entire country. What is wrong with Jefferson, selfishness, hypocrisy, purchased respectability, and so forth, is also wrong with the South and the world. Gavin and Ratliff fight a losing battle against the Snopeses as portrayed by the sequence while Gavin is in Heidelberg and away at
war. No matter how you try to defend the right and proper against the influx of corruption, the Snopeses breed faster than one can clean up the mess. The trouble with Jefferson and therefore with the world is that they do not see until too late or realize the significance of what the Snopeses are doing to them. Like The Hamlet where the Snopeses attempt to gain material wealth, The Town further shows Flem attempting to buy respectability and acceptance. Those qualities are to be earned, not purchased, and The Town is a warning of the consequences if we sell our souls to the figurative devils of hypocrisy and assumed, false respectability.

The humor of The Mansion, like the humor of The Town, is in a much lower key than the humor of The Hamlet. However, unlike the humor of the second novel, the humor of this third Snopes novel is predominantly stock humor, although a few scenes might be considered almost grotesque humor of a very subdued type. Like the earlier two novels of the trilogy, the humor of The Mansion arises from the stock comic character types and some tall tale plot formats. Like the earlier novels as well, this stock humor does not function solely as comic relief but rather is integrated with the theme of the novel.

For the purpose of developing this thesis, there is a critical problem in handling The Mansion. Traditionally, most critics have seen the novel as a kind of reaffirmation of life, a softened, less harshly critical view of Jefferson and the Snopeses. While this is probably
true, the critics continue the argument that by the time we know the Snopeses as well as we do in this novel, we have realized that the Snopeses have some redeeming qualities and therefore deserve our sympathy. We are to believe that the Snopeses have been accepted into man's common humanity and are supposed to have developed a sympathy for them, especially Mink. "We had to alter our image of Mink as an 'out-and-out' mean Snopes, and we have learned that the purveyor of pornography, Montgomery Ward, has a sensitive conscience." Hence we come, according to the critics, to the realization of the theme, the fact that we are all "poor sons of bitches" but that life goes on nonetheless. We should also realize that "There aren't any morals . . . People just do the best they can (p. 429)" as Stevens says at the conclusion of The Mansion.

The other problematical critical assumption concerning this novel is the assumption that there is humor in it but that most of that humor is unrelated to the theme and serves mostly as comic relief. However, both these critical problems need further investigation and can be answered or argued in the following discussion. Granted, the "comic scenes are relatively few and, in a sense, anachronistic. Actually, of course, the comedy both here and in The Town has been transposed to a minor key from the major one it occupied in The Hamlet." Yet, despite the lower key, the comedy is not unrelated to the theme of the novel. The

173Everett, p. 341. 174Vickery, p. 199.
comic scenes often give us actual demonstration of the theme that we are all sons of bitches and poor at that. Also, the sympathy supposedly aroused for Mink is debatable. If our sympathy were so aroused for him, we would be unable to appreciate the comedy of his problems just out of prison and his plans for killing Flem. Granted, we condone Mink's murder of Flem but not because we are sympathetic with Mink. Rather, we cheer Mink on in the murder because we know the villain Flem actually is and we feel he deserves to be murdered. We cheer and laugh because of the victory against Snopesism which is another theme of the novel is a sense: Snopesism is delivered quite a blow and we feel relieved, at least temporarily. However, Faulkner cleverly counteracts that relief subtly when we, as Ratliff, notice some new obvious but unknown Snopes faces at Flem's funeral. Faulkner seems to be saying that the power of Snopesism is undying and there is a kind of delight in the realization. The theme concerns the fact that what is wrong with the world is its hypocrisy and artificiality and selfishness which are the characteristics of Snopesism. Rather than sympathy for the Snopes, or Mink or Linda in particular, we laugh at the clan's endeavors and lament our own plight as poor sons of bitches. What makes us so unfortunate is the control and power and inevitability of the Snopeses' characteristics.

The humor of the novel is predominantly stock humor but a few times scenes almost become grotesque. With slightly different emphasis, they could assuredly be completely grotesque, especially when Mink and the
rest of the Snopeses are around. The four grotesque children of Byron's from *The Town* are only briefly alluded to here but similar responses occur triggered by others of the Snopes clan. The audience has the "capacity to . . . see something just plain funny in the grotesque and yet thoroughly human members of the Snopes clan . . . [while] underneath the laughter, underneath the comedy, there is a very serious employment of comic and ironic elements for satirical purposes."\(^{175}\) Again we note that the comedy is not used solely for comic relief but is also used for thematic and critical purposes. It is as though Faulkner has turned to a sarcasm which is critical but which is more gentle than pure grotesque humor. The element of criticism, however, remains the same and exists in the comedy as an additional purpose to comic relief.

There are little vignettes of comedy in *The Mansion* which are so brief that we hardly notice them or become aware of them as linked to the theme. One such vignette is the incident with Ratliff's Allanonva ties. Ratliff gets the two ties in New York for seventy five dollars each when he visits the city with Gavin for Linda's wedding. Later, Charles is at Ratliff's home and sees one tie enshrined.

. . . and the waxed table in the center of the room on which, on a rack under a glass bell, rested the Allanonva necktie--a rich not-quite-scarlet, not-quite-burgundy ground patterned with tiny yellow sunflowers each with a tiny blue center of almost the exact faded blue of his shirts . . . and beside it, the piece of sculpture that

\(^{175}\)Thompson, p. 133.
Barton Kohl had bequeathed him... All it needs is that gold cigarette lighter she gave him... The Linda Snopes room... no... the Eula Varner room. (pp. 231-232)

The description of the shrine is humorous because of the incongruity of the elements. It becomes increasingly funny when we realize that Ratliff takes the shrine entirely seriously. He even says that is ought to have more in it but "maybe this will do" and explains himself by saying that when a town is lucky enough to have a Eula Varner "to pick it out to do her breathing in" the least the town can do, and therefore Ratliff as the town representative and spokesman, is to set up such a shrine. The audience laughs because we are detached from the circumstance. We might admit the symbolical necessity for such a shrine but never allow the actuality, whereas, Ratliff is unconcerned with the symbolism and only concerned with the actuality, the living. This incongruity of what we expect and what we get from Faulkner contributes to the humor. In the scene, Ratliff is a demonstration of the theme that we are all poor sons of bitches and this arouses new sympathy in us for him. We trust Ratliff more as a spokesman because we see his human frailties demonstrated in the incongruity of his being able to purchase a seventy-five dollar tie but then not being able to bring himself to wear it.

A similar but more developed scene is the one where Clarence Snopes loses his race for the House of Representatives which almost takes the form of a tall tale and gets its humorous effect from the simplicity of the solution. The incident is introduced with background descriptions
of Clarence and his opponent which places both characters as stock comic
types: Clarence is the unsavory, corrupt Southern politician opposed
in his fight for election by a clean, righteous war veteran, medal
winner, and family man. Ratliff analyzes the situation and voices
Faulkner's conclusion. One of the foundations of our national character
Ratliff says, is

the premise that politics and political office are not and
never have been the method and means by which we can govern
ourselves in peace and dignity and honor and security,
but instead are our national refuge for our incompetents
who have failed at every other occupation by means of which
they might make a living for themselves and their families
... The surest way to be elected to office in America is to
have fathered seven or eight children and then lost your arm
or leg in a sawmill accident: both of which--the reckless
optimism which begot seven or eight children with nothing to
feed them by but a sawmill, and the incredible ineptitude
which would put an arm or a leg in range of a moving saw--
should already have damned you from any form of public
trust. (p. 310)

Ratliff is right in his analysis and speaks for Faulkner and many of us.
Yet, it is our own stupidity which causes the laughter resulting from
the scene. Clarence in his coniving and insidious way, turns the cam-
paign around so that the war hero becomes "a nigger lover who had actually
been decorated by the Yankee government for it (p. 313)." This is ex-
actly what the town expected of Clarence but they could not decide how he
would be able to maneuver circumstances his way. When they discover
Clarence's tactic, the town and especially Ratliff, laments. Ratliff and
Gavin conspire to thwart Clarence. Charles asks Ratliff to "tell us just
exactly what did happen out there that day (p. 315) just as we voice the
identical sentiment to Faulkner. The stage is set at old Varner's annual July picnic and the characters have taken their places, just as a stock comic scene might be played.

The resulting action is humorous in a stock comic way while being slightly more critical than expected. With somewhat different handling, the identical occurrences might be made into grotesque humor. However, grotesque humor is not necessary here because the criticism comes through the stock humor and comes through more gently. The point too, is less crucial and therefore does not deserve the more harsh grotesque humor.

Ratliff begins to tell the story and we begin to suspect him as the culprit from such comments as "whoever this anonymous underhanded feller was (p. 317)." Then, here is what happened. Someone cuts some switches from a "dog way-station" and lightly brushes them across Clarence's trousers which is funny but the resulting action is even more hysterical.

\[
\ldots \text{apparently Clarence nor nobody else even noticed the first six or eight dogs until maybe Clarence felt his britches legs getting damp or maybe jest cool, and looked over his shoulder to see the waiting line-up of his political fate with one eye while already breaking for the nearest automobile or pickup you could roll the windows up in with the other, with them augmenting standing-room-only customers strung out behind him like the knots in a kite's tail \ldots \text{them frustrated dogs circling round and round the automobile \ldots travelling on three legs, being already loaded and cocked and aimed you might say. (pp. 317-318)}
\]

And so ends Clarence's political career. The audience laughs because of the immediate incidents of the story. Then, also, we laugh
because Faulkner has actually caused to be real that which we might often have wished and fantasized for someone else. At first we might disbelieve that what we read actually happened and think that maybe this is speculation about what Ratliff might enjoy seeing. But then we know without doubt that the occurrence has been real and intended, thereby adding to the humor. The scene is a stock practical joke with Clarence as the butt of the joke. No real damage is done and Clarence deserves his fate, so the joke is not cruel or hurtful as it might be if handled as grotesque humor. The stock humor is nonetheless tied to the theme of the incident which Ratliff enunciated and already quoted. From there, it is only a step to the theme of the novel that we are all poor sons of bitches. We saw Ratliff as a poor son of a bitch and now we see the more mighty and powerful Clarence also brought low. Contrary to Aristotle, the plight of a high man brought low might also be a humorous rather than tragic story. But then one could argue that Clarence is not really a high man as Aristotle might hold after all, gratefully. In any case, the audience is entertained with laughter while Faulkner uses the scene to further the theme of _The Mansion_.

The incident with Meadowfill and the hogs is a stock comic scene that is often remarked but which is criticized as unrelated to the main purpose of the novel.

Orestes Snopes has not appeared in other novels of the Snopes saga, and his altercation with Mr. Meadowfill seems not especially related to the primary plot of the novel. He is just another Snopes to be combatted, and this time Gavin is
successful in opposing snopesism. This digression also adds a well-done touch of comedy to the novel which has so many dark overtones.176

Everett seems to imply that the scene functions as comic relief which is not entirely true since all humor, whether stock or grotesque, is linked to the theme of the novel. The significance of the incident and its importance to the theme comes when Gavin says that "It's hopeless. Even when you get rid of one Snopes, there's already another one behind you even before you can turn around (p. 349)." While this is true, and linked to the theme against Snopesism, it is not all there is. Ratliff answers Gavin with the remark that "That's right . . . as soon as you look, you see right away it aint nothing but jest another Snopes." Ratliff minimizes the threat from the Snopes while acknowledging it. Gavin is the one who voices the hopelessness of the situation while Ratliff attempts to counter that sentiment for himself, the town and the world. Faulkner seems to imply that humor is a valid way to combat Snopesism. Gavin takes the world and himself so seriously that he is strictly concerned with the morals and the legality and ethics of situations. Ratliff, on the other hand, is a more objective participant in the situations and can find the more valid evaluation of them. Ultimately, Faulkner knows best and he communicates his suggestions to the audience through humor. Humor, whether stock or grotesque, takes some degree of detachment to be effective and we must never forget that criticism can be both positive and

176Everett, p. 53.
negative evaluation. Gavin and Ratliff give valid although emphatically
different evaluations of the threat of snopesism. Therefore, the success
of the humor is increased because it can appeal to people of both Ratliff
and Gavin's inclinations. When we take the characters and the scenes a
step further, they come to symbolize not only Jefferson and the South
but all the world.

Finally, the incidents depicting Mink Snopes out of prison are stan-
dard stock humor. Mink himself is a stock comic character; he is the
feeble old, crotchety man with one driving motivation. His dogged pursuit
of his personal satisfaction provides much of the humor of the scene.
Other humor comes from the difficulties Mink has adjusting to society after
thirty-eight years in prison, isolated from that society.

Mink is extremely funny in his attitude toward money and in his being
continually thwarted by money. When he is released from prison, he has a
ten dollar bill pinned to the fob pocket of his overalls and a few dollars
of assorted change and bills in his pocket. He intends to buy a pistol
with the ten dollars and obtain sustenance and transport to Jefferson with
the remainder. But he is thwarted and frustrated at every turn, providing
humor for the audience. When Mink first enters a store for food, he in-
tends to buy sardines but is surprised at how much they cost. When the
proprietor offers him lunch meat instead, Mink does not even know what
that is. Immediately we laugh at him because of his innocence. Then Mink
compounds the humor by purchasing a coke which he guzzles. To do this he
thinks "I'm going to pick it up and put my mouth on it before I ask the
price because otherwise I might not be able to touch it (p. 260)." His motivations are human but especially Snopes. We laugh because the thought of a Snopes dirtying something before he purchases it or earns it is characteristic.

When Mink gets on his way, he stops to earn some money to help him toward Jefferson. He rakes a yard and gets sent to a preacher down the road for additional work. Mink intends to work only a day or so and get only enough money to get him on. But instead, he finds himself working for a preacher who does not have any money and cannot pay him until the church collection is made on Sunday. Mink is thwarted by events but thereby gives the audience humor. The entire scene at the preacher Goodyhay's is stock humor. The misconception under which Mink labors is only one element of the stock humor. Also, then, the character of Goodyhay is a stock comic picture of a preacher, short of funds and dependent on the people for aid. This portrait is modified or intensified by the fact that the preacher was also a sergeant in the war and carries over his command abilities to the civilian handling of his temporary labor. Mink is soon told that he is "working for the Lord now, not mammon (p. 267)," but his dogged persistence causes him to disbelieve the actuality. Some realization finally occurs when Mink finds himself locked into the sleeping room at night and the explanation that the window is open so that the men can escape if they want but so that they cannot steal anything on their way out. The funniest turn of events here is that Mink is robbed of the ten dollars pinned to his overalls which is especially ironic when we
think that Mink could have had two hundred and fifty dollars in his pocket
if he had kept that which the warden gave him before his release. So, in
the especially Snopes logic, Mink has actually saved two hundred and forty
dollars rather than losing the entire two hundred and sixty dollars.
Snopesism is actually addictive, we being to think!

The story of the preacher's calling to God is a stock humorous inci-
dent. The preacher was a sergeant escaping a bomb threatened ship when he
returns to the ship to help a disabled soldier. The preacher is taken
under with the bombed ship and while under water, finds his calling.

According to the reverend, he was already safe and dead and
peacefully out of it at last on the bottom of the Pacific
Ocean when all of a sudden Jesus Himself was standing over
him saying Fall in and he did it and Jesus said TenSHUN,
about-FACE and assigned him to this new permanent hitch
right down here on the edge of Memphis, Tennessee. He's
got something, enough of whatever it took to recruit this
new-faith boot camp to need a church to hold it. (p. 268)

The fact that the preacher Goodyhay believes he was personally called by
God while already dead to this life is a humorous exaggeration, as in the
assertion that God would command followers just as an Army sergeant would.
Then, the similarity between Jesus and the sergeant is taken the final
step until the preacher commands parishioners just as he was commanded
and just as an Army sergeant would command soldiers. The analogy between
a soldier in the army and a soldier of God is often made in serious dis-
cussion by preachers. Faulkner takes this fact and twists it for his own
humorous purpose: Mink and the preacher become humorous and entertaining
and ridiculous by the twist rather than being a believable model for action
or standard bearer for Christ. The preacher takes his army commands a
further step when he oversees the ritual of bedding the men who have worked
for him. "Kneel down (p. 271)," Goodyhay commands. Then he kneels as
well and proceeds to bless the men. The invocation is humorous in its in-
congruity with what we expect. "Save us, Christ, the poor sons of bitches,"
Goodyhay says. We laugh at the separation between prayer and the language
of the preacher. Then we are reminded of the analogy between the preacher
and a sergeant and the humor increases as we hear the echo of the theme.

Finally, Mink gets away and to Memphis to purchase his pistol. The
scene there provides more stock humor which comes from Mink's misconcep-
tions about the city. Mink huddles to sleep on a park bench and is con-
fronted by a policeman asking him to move on. When the policeman realizes
that Mink has no place to go and no money for a bed, he gives him fifty
cents. This is an incongruous thing to occur and we wonder how Faulkner
will use it to his advantage; we are not long in finding out. Mink,
rather than being humbly grateful, is coniving and greedy and thinks he
has a way of milking money out of more policemen. Mink remembers that
he's heard of this new system in Parchman and analyzes it this way.

... they called it Relief or W P and A: the same govern-
ment that wouldn't let you raise cotton on your own land
would turn right around and give you a mattress or groceries
or even case money, only first you had to swear you didn't
own any property of your own and even had to prove it. (p. 287)

So Mink thinks to capitalize on this new system by putting himself in the
identical situation in another location. Sure, enough, another policeman
questions him the same way except that this resolution is different. Mink
is quite brazen when he answers the question of what he is waiting for with his desire for another half dollar. This time the policeman acts differently and chases after Mink. Mink learns from the situation. "He was becoming more and more oriented now . . . evidently the railroad policemen . . . didn't belong to the W P and A free-relief laws (p. 289)."

Rather than genuinely finding out what is happening to him, Mink persists in his stupid blundering thereby providing humor for the audience.

When Mink finally attempts to buy the pistol, we are provided with more stock humor of misconception. Mink does not realize that he should have a permit to purchase a pistol but the clever pawn shop men find ways to twist the circumstances so Mink can redeem a pistol from their "private stock." The men try to milk Mink for more money for the pistol and the shells and we wonder who will win in the end since we know how well Snopeses can deal with money. Mink wants the gun for protection and that statement alone provides humor for the audience since we know what Mink really intends to do with the pistol. Finally, after dickering over the price of the gun and the availability of bullets for it, the deal is made. "Give him the pistol and three bullets for twelve dollars and a dime (p. 292)." We are not really sure who has gotten the worst of this deal but we think it is probably Mink. The gun is large and dirty and probably unworkable. We find that out actually later when Mink tries the gun to be sure it works. The scene culminates when Mink attempts to kill Flem with the gun and it misfires. The ridiculousness of the scene adds to the humor. Flem might almost have had a chance to get away, but Ratliff
explains it as if it were a game and now Flem must take his turn at being "It."

The best stock humor comes from Mink when he speculates on God and his powers. Mink believes that the old gun absolutely must shoot because "Old Moster jest punishes; He dont play jokes (p. 393)." This sentiment runs throughout the scene like a refrain until Mink finally shoots Flem. The humor of the line comes from the audience's awareness that Mink is wrong and Faulkner's implication that God does too play tricks. When Mink attempts to shoot Flem, the gun does not go off at first. Then Mink cocks the pistol again and thinks "Hit'll go this time: Old Moster dont play jokes (p. 416)." The joke in this case involves the situation and the resulting humorous scene. That Mink must cock and shoot the gun more than once is itself humorous. Then, Flem does not run or make any attempt to escape his fate. That should take some satisfaction out of Mink's action but it does not seem to; it only increases the humor for the audience. Then, Mink tries to escape the house. He scrabbles at a door knob and Linda comes down. Mink thinks that she could hear all along and we know this is not the case so we laugh at Mink's innocence. Then, in his frustration, Mink throws the pistol at Linda since he knows the gun will not go off again. Linda voices the final insult. "Here. Come and take it. That door is a closet. You'll have to come back this way to get out (p. 416)." The Keystone cops type comedy has presented misconceptions, false starts and new developments.
The entire Snopes trilogy has been predominantly humorous although the humor has become less hurtful and less apparent by this third novel. Whereas *Hamlet* is broadly comic in tone, the two later books are primarily serious and less dramatically immediate (with the exception of the sections dealing with Mink in *The Mansion*). In addition to the sections with Mink, there are the few other mentioned humorous scenes. Throughout, the humor, whether stock or grotesque humor, has been linked to the theme concerning the hypocrisy of people and their systems, and the threat posed by the increasing advent of Snopesism. The conflicts have been between the evil and rapacious forces of Snopesism against the traditional but inherently corrupt forces of law and ethics of civilized Jefferson. The stock characters of all three novels have provided much comedy as they act against the more clever forces of the Snopes clan and presume to judge the evil which is the Snopeses. In the end, there is no winner; the conflict produces a cyclical process. The Snopes continually materialize; even at Flem's funeral, there are new but unmistakably Snopes faces. Jefferson continues to fight the clan but Gavin and Ratliff are old men now and their efforts are weaker. Possibly, the town had come to accept the Snopeses and either to accept the evil or give up the fight. The Snopes are not as apparently evil as they are inherently evil; Flem has bought respectability and acceptance with time. Faulkner seems to say that the forces of greed and corruption and villainy

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177 Tuck, p. 73.
are continually present despite the efforts of a few to combat these forces. Yet, the theme of the trilogy which arises from the conflicts is that each man is responsible for his acts, and "he has a moral responsibility to himself and to those around him." Throughout, Flem has acted according to his responsibility for those around them as well.

Both the Snopeses and the Jefferson society have a moral system of sorts but with different results. The theme comes down to Gavin's statement that "There aren't any morals . . . people just do the best they can (p. 429)." What is wrong with the Snopeses is what is wrong with Jefferson and the world: greed, hypocrisy, selfishness, irresponsibility. The cure is in the continual fight, Faulkner says, and his fight is apparent in these novels.

\[178\text{Volpe, p. 341.}\]
CHAPTER IX

FINALLY, THE REIVERS

The Reivers is an appropriate final novel for Faulkner; it is both alike and dissimilar from everything else which went before. Like other novels such as Sanctuary and As I Lay Dying, it is predominantly comic, but unlike those novels which are predominantly grotesque comedy, The Reivers is predominantly stock humor. The other major intended comic novel is The Hamlet, but that novel includes both stock and grotesque humor as The Reivers does not. Where a novel might have used predominantly stock humor such as The Sound and the Fury or Light in August, that stock humor was secondary to the theme and never before was stock humor made the predominant intended mode of the novel. There are some critics who say that the stock comic mode is the main failure of The Reivers. Critics complain that The Reivers is a fairy tale and posits a fantasy world of existence; not that the tale is unreal or extremely optimistic, but it is romanticised and idealized.

On the other hand, critics have also praised the book for its high comedy. Dorothy Tuck says that "the book is a comic novel in much the same sense as Hucklebury Finn is a comic novel: uproarious, sometimes
ludicrous adventures and excitement mixed with the very serious business of a boy's initiation into moral adulthood.\textsuperscript{179} Tuck goes on to elaborate on the comparison paralleling Lucius and Huck, Ned and Jim and the car with the raft. However, the major difference between Twain's masterpiece and Faulkner's more minor novel is that Huck meets reality in his growth process while Lucius finds a fantasy land where good triumphs. Granted, The Reivers may not be as good as Huck Finn but the comparison is valid since Faulkner owed so much to Twain. But then, it is an unfair comparison to evaluate the height of one man's talent with the conclusion of another's.

We also see how appropriate this final novel is for Faulkner when we look at the extent of the humor. "The Reivers becomes, indeed, almost an anthology of the most characteristic types of Faulknerian humor,"\textsuperscript{180} according to Millgate. Characters, situation, dialogue, point of view and so forth all contribute to the humor. Stock comic characters abound, the tall tale format is apparent and the mistaken situations add to the stock humor. The shift in point of view between an innocent child and more sophisticated adults further increases the stock humor for the audience. Yet, nowhere in the novel is there any grotesque humor; the closest we get is the strange, retarded character of Otis, a miniature and childish version of Popeye. But still, Otis never becomes the source of any grotesque humor; the novel is virtually devoid of any.

\textsuperscript{179}Tuck, p. 123. \textsuperscript{180}Millgate, p. 254.
how critics tend to discount the grotesque nature of much of Faulkner's comedy and have only dealt with the stock tall tale version of humor.

As with other predominantly comic novels, whether stock or grotesque, it is difficult to discover the source of the comedy since everything in the novel probably is involved in the comic effects. Characters, plot, action, misconception, theme, dialogue, and point of view all contribute to the comedy. Swiggart attempts to pinpoint the comedy when he says that much of the novel's humor ... stems from the disparity between solemn characters and their absurd behavior. But the narrator occasionally contributes an ironic commentary or encourages the reader in other ways to take the action as comic ... the primary source of the comedy is the white man's social world. 181

Despite his attempts to pinpoint the comedy, Swiggart then mentions many different elements; it seems he too has trouble locating one general source of the humor. Therefore, the best thing to say is that the novel is entirely stock humor and all the elements contribute to it; the mode of operation is stock humor and the medium is the message.

Every character in the novel has elements of stock comic stereotypes within the particulars of their being. The secondary characters themselves are one source for the stock humor of the novel. We have mentioned Otis, a weird boy with "something wrong about him (p. 80)." When we discover what is wrong with him, it is the fact that he is fifteen years old when everyone believes him to be ten or eleven. Otis is a nasty, selfish, unloved and neglected child. He blackmails Corrie for

181 Swiggart, p. 208.
a nickel a day not to reveal her real name. In Arkansas, he sold peephole views through the whorehouse walls. He wants to do a similar thing at Miss Reba's but is not sure how to go about it. He guzzles beer and we are reminded of the earlier picture of Uncle Bud at Reba's in Sanctuary. Otis is scared of horses and runs when he gets into trouble. He puts Mr. Binford on the spot when he reveals that they have been to the horse races instead of the zoo as Miss Reba and Corrie assumed. He steals Minnie's gold tooth and provides some stock humorous situations in the novel. After he has stolen the tooth, he gets himself into some funny circumstances trying to evade being caught. Uncle Parsham's hounds have taken a dislike to Otis just as most humans do and therefore delight in treeing Otis. When Lycurgus finds Otis, punishment and retrieval of the tooth occur simultaneously with a single action. "Lycurgus put Whistle-britches on the mule without no bridle or saddle and tied his feed underneath and told him any time he decided to wroop that tooth up in his cap and drop it off, he would stop the mule (pp. 206-207)." The picture of Otis being jostled on the mule is quite humorous in a slapstick sort of way. The stock humor of Otis' character also comes out in the incident. The first time Otis throws the cap down, there is nothing in it. The next time around, the mule decides it wants to jump a barbed wire fence and this is incentive enough for Otis to genuinely deposit the tooth in the cap. We laugh at Otis and his comeuppance.

Butch Lovemaiden and his counterpart Poleymus are also stock comic types of opposing natures. Butch's name alone gives us some stock humor
in our realization that he is a lecherous, old bully rather than the
more delicate creature his name indicates. Butch is almost a stereo-
typed villain; he is a drunken cop who relishes the authority his badge
and gun give him. Yet, he never does anyone serious harm and therefore
falls short of genuine evil while still providing stock humor or charac-
ter. Butch is annoying and makes himself apparently so especially to
Corrie. He is jovial but the joviality is only superficial. He apparent-
ly slaps Boon on the back showing cordiality but in actuality the slap
is slightly too hard to be cordial but not hard enough to be antagonistic;
the slap is definitely annoying. Despite Butch's being the villain, he
is only a complicating factor to the action rather than a force for evil.
Butch also has a counterpart who contradicts and counteracts his charac-
ter in Poleymus, the alternative good cop who rules with justice and
sympathy for all. Poleymus can control Butch because his rank is higher
than Butch's but also because his heart is purer. Poleymus' wife is an
invalid, and his tender care for her displays his true good nature. He
is a little man but he hides a large heart and a good soul. When
these two forces come together, the scene is humorous. He "walked up
to Butch and snatched that pisol outen his hand and reached up and ripped
that badge and half his shirt off too (p. 188)." The picture is funny
because of the difference in physical size between the two men and
then also because of the implications of the action to the theme of the
novel. Goodness triumphs over the villain and gives us humor as well.

Sam Caldwell is also a secondary stock comic character. He is the
railroad flagman who is devoted to Corrie and comes to her aid in getting the horse to Parshum for the race. Sam is a minor annoyance to Boon because Boon is jealous of Sam's attentions to Corrie and of Sam's bright uniform. Sam wears a "brass-buttoned coat and vest and the flat cap with the gold lettering across the front (p. 102)." Sam's polish and gentleness and ability are all annoying to Boon. Sam is almost the good guy who saves the maiden in distress since it is because of Sam and his maneuverings that the crew can get the stolen horse out of Memphis. Sam is kind and gentle and a great organizer. He seems to take over the situation whenever he is around and he always retrieves it from chaos. He remarks that if you want anything done, give it to men like Sam who know how to get it done. Sam has some useful connections with the railroad and also provides humor when he confronts Boon; the two are occasionally opposing characters and therefore provide us with stock humor.

Boss Priest and Uncle Parsham are similar characters but representatives of different races. Boss Priest is the picture of the Southern gentleman while Uncle Parsham is the Negro counterpart, the dignified black gentleman reverend. Each plays a minor role in the novel but an important and humorous one as well. Boss Priest begins the major action of the novel by purchasing the automobile in order to put Colonel Sartoris, who has banned all cars from Jefferson, in his place. Boss Priest is also then most important at the conclusion in stating the theme
of the novel when he tells Lucius that

A gentleman can live through anything. He faces anything. A gentleman accepts the responsibility of his actions and bears the burden of their consequences, even when he did not himself instigate them but only acquiesced to them, didn't say No though he knew he should (p. 221).

In a sense that is the major theme of the novel because that is what Lucius learns from all his adventures in growing. The voice is also Faulkner's telling the audience that those characteristics of a gentleman are what made the South as good and as strong for as long as it was. As we have seen before, the stock humor is linked to the theme of the novel and reflects Faulkner's own positive attitude toward the South. Uncle Parsham is another indication of what Faulkner commends about the South. Uncle Parsham is a dignified black man, who handles the world with common sense if not actual wisdom. Uncle Parsham is instrumental in Lucius' development because he allows him to cry and be comforted but only when Lucius genuinely needs such treatment. When Lucius stays with Uncle Parsham, they ride the wagon, go fishing and even sleep together. Uncle Parsham upholds the rituals of virtue which substantiate the sanity and goodness of the South. He says grace before meals with true graciousness, thanking God for the gift but also informing God of man's own part in the process. When Lucius is to sleep with Uncle Parsham, Uncle sees that Lucius says his prayers just as he would at home. Together, Uncle Parsham and Boss Priest administer judgment and punishment with wisdom and sympathy. Together they are an important force in Lucius' development. They encompass and attempt to continue the elements of Southern
gentility which Faulkner finds commendable, whether apparent in the
South or the world.

Corrie and Miss Reba are another set of stock comic characters who
are most important to the action and therefore the theme of growth. Both
are prostitutes but both are the typical stock prostitute with a good
heart. Reba is loveable and humorous and motherly. She perceptively
analyzes situations and provides humorous judgments on them. For instance,
when Sam and Boon and Red are attempting to get the stolen horse safely
away in the boxcar, Reba says "Jesus... A whore, a pullman conductor
and a Mississippi swamp rat the size of a water tank leading a race
horse through Memphis at midnight Sunday night, and nobody will notice
it? (p. 102)" There is humor in the line but there is also truth in
the picture. Miss Reba gives us a new point of view on whorehouses;
she impresses upon us how difficult and costly and troubling they are to
run, especially one with children in it. Then, later despite her pro-
fession, Miss Reba can handle Butch with tact and effectiveness. When
she checks into the hotel, Miss Reba requests a pallet for her maid
Minnie and the hotel management attempts to encourage her to use the
servants' separate quarters. But Miss Reba is a better judge of charac-
ter and knows when traditions and laws need to be broken. She gently
insists that Minnie stay with her and thereby flaunts the rules of the
segregationist South. Reba knows in her heart that slavery and segregation
are wrong and acts accordingly despite the letter of the law. She is a
whore with a good heart and a faithful disposition. She is married to the
"landlord" Mr. Binford and has been true to him for twenty years during which they were as happy as "two doves." The attributes of her character are those which are to be commended, again wherever they occur.

Corrie is like Miss Reba except she is younger and prettier and therefore has more trouble with the men. Corrie is the cause of much of the comic action and particularly much of the growth process of Lucius. She is pretty although a big girl; she has no special talents but has worked and tried the best she can to provide for Otis which explains her frustration when Lucius is so mannerly and Otis is such a clod. Boon assures her that she has done the best she can and that is good as the reader echoes his sentiments. Corrie becomes the object of Lucius' first love and is thereby so instrumental in his growth. Lucius fights Otis over Corrie's virtue and she therefore promises to quit her profession. Lucius believes her but we are more sophisticated than that and disbelieve she will stick to her promise so the difference in point of view here provides for the stock humor of it. Later, Corrie breaks her promise but only for the purpose of good; by doing so she can get Boon and Ned out of jail and off the hook concerning the ownership of the horse. Lucius is rightfully upset but the extenuating circumstances are explained with an analogy: although you have cleaned the house, there is still the trash to take out. We knew such a failure on Corrie's part might occur and so we smile in our superiority. But still, Faulkner has the last laugh on us because Corrie actually has reformed and has done this last thing only for something bigger and better than she is, unselfishly. Finally, she genuinely
reforms because Poleymus offers her a job caring for his invalid wife and she is truly a reformed prostitute because she is just a mother at heart. That is the final picture we have of her, married to Boon, an occurrence which causes humor just because of its inevitability and because of the abruptness of the announcement, with a baby named Lucius Priest Hooganbeck, a fitting name and concluding line to the novel. That final scene is proof that good triumphs over evil despite one's tests with evil. The good at heart will persevere, but only after they have entertained us with stock comedy along the way.

Ned and Minnie, like Uncle Parsham, are typical black comic characters although they are stock comic characters of the lower class rather than of the accepted reverend status. Minnie is a beautiful minor portrait; she provides much of the stock humor of the novel, both of character and of situation. Lucius' first introduces us to Minnie although we met her briefly in Sanctuary.

And that was when I saw it. I mean, Minnie's tooth. I mean, that was how--yes, why--I, you, people, everybody, remembered Minnie. She had beautiful teeth anyhow, like small richly alabaster matched and evenly serrated headstones against the high chocolate of her face when she smiled or spoke. But she had more. The middle righthand upper one was gold; in her dark face it reigned like a queen among the white dazzle of the others, seeming actually to glow, gleam as with a slow inner fire or lambence of more than gold . . . (pp. 75-76)

The humor of the description and therefore of Minnie's character comes from the fact that Lucius sees the tooth as a beautiful thing in a childishly charming sort of way. But he describes the tooth in words such as "lambence"
which no eleven year old, however sophisticated, would be likely to use. So the incongruity between Lucius' status and his language is humorous. But then we realize that the language is appropriate whomever it comes from because it adds to the status and importance of the tooth. When we see the tooth, we immediately peg it as a trait of all stock comic Negroes, their external indication of status. Lucius goes on to tell us that Minnie later had the tooth removed and replaced with a regular ivory one when she no longer needed the gold one for an indication of status. His unknowing analysis of the situation is apparent when he says he grieved over its replacement. "I thought that, had I been of her race and age group, it would have been worth being her husband just to watch that tooth in action . . . (p. 76)." The mention of race reminds us that Minnie is black and her possession of the tooth must be viewed in a special light. For anyone but a black prostitute's maid, the tooth would be entirely gross and out of place, but for Minnie, the tooth places her and gives her status which giving the reader stock humor from a black comic stereotype.

Ned is probably the most humorous stock character of the novel. Whereas the humor of Lucius' character comes from his innocence and of Boon's character from his stupidity, the humor of Ned's character is much more complete and comes from many sources. Ned is the stock comic Negro family retainer. On occasion he claims to be actually a blood relation of these people. He speaks with the typical Negro dialect which results in some humorous lines in exactly the same way lines from Dilsey in The
Sound and the Fury were humorous. One of Ned's funniest characteristics in his trait of continually exclaiming, "hee hee hee." Besides talking like a funny black man, Ned acts like one as well. He is overly proud of his status and his boss' status. When asked his name he replies with the complete, "Ned William McCaslin Jefferson Mississippi." At first we think this is a funny long name for him but then we believe he is giving his home town as well and it is not all his name. Ultimately, we discover that it is all his name and we laugh even harder because we realize that it is especially appropriate and typical of the blacks to give their children such unwieldy names. When Lucius wonders how Ned manages to get things done in towns where he has never been and in secret, Ned explains that it is because he is a Mason! We laugh because of the apparent illogicality of the answer. Rather than getting an improved explanation, it only gets worse and more humorous.

"Boss is a Mason too but I never heard him whisper about it."
"I didn't know I was," Ned said. "But suppose I was. What do you want to belong to a lodge for, unless it's so secret cant hardly nobody else get in it? And how are you gonter keep it secret unless you treat it like one?" (p. 123)

Ned displays the typical characteristics of the stock comic Negro with his belief in secret organizations and charms and superstition and so forth. The wiliness of Ned's character is also apparent in his negation of his original admission that he was a Mason. So, we are actually left with a doubt but the brief incident has placed Ned as a stock comic black man while providing the audience with some humor.
There are a few incidents where Ned acts exactly as we would expect a stock comic black man to act but we are entertained and laugh despite the expectation. Ned is lazy but especially so when there is a woman in the room as he continually attempts to court the ladies. He does so with Uncle Parsham's wife and with Minnie, since, like Lucius, he is attracted to Minnie's gold tooth. When everyone else thinks there is something wrong with Otis, Ned can guess his age correctly. When Ned swaps Boss' car for a horse, we laugh and think he got the worst of the deal. But Ned is the only person who has any confidence that he can get the horse to run and Lucius humorously summarizes the situation by enumerating the figments of Ned's imagination. Ned is proud of his swap while Lucius and Boon are upset and worried, so in this way, Ned is the direct cause for much of the action of the story.

Besides extended scenes of humor, probably the most comic scene with Ned is when he is discovered as a stowaway. Boon has made elaborate plans to "borrow" the car for this secret trip to Memphis so Lucius is awed and excited but never verbally admits the possibility of their excursion. In contrast, Ned cleverly figures out what is happening and is the most prepared, in his own stock humorous way. The stock humor of the scene comes from the revelation and discovery after Boon and Lucius have been on the road for some time and have even pushed the car out of one mud hole. Suddenly Boon is aware of a smell and accuses Lucius of "breaking his manners." Before Lucius can reply, Boon turns around and uncovers Ned beneath the tarpaulin.
Ned sat up from the floor. He had on the black suit and hat and the white shirt with the gold collar stud without either collar or tie, which he wore on Sunday; he even had the small battered hand grip... All I ever saw in it was the Bible... which he couldn’t read, and a pint flask containing maybe a good double tablespoonful of whiskey. "I'll be a son of a bitch," Boon said.

"I wants a trip too," Ned said. "Hee hee hee." (p. 54)

Ned is exactly the picture of the stock comic Negro duded up for an outing. His humorous attempts at respectability are apparent in the gold collar stud and the battered grip. His stock characteristics are also apparent in the fact that he carries a Bible he cannot read and a pint flask to sip. The final stock humorous note comes with Ned's characteristic "hee hee hee" which is almost a slap in the face for Boon as well as for the reader. Because we see the excursion with less immediacy than Boon, we laugh while Boon is annoyed. Ned has been hidden beneath the tarpaulin while Boon pushed the car out of one mud hole and he attempts to get out of working later in the Hell Creek bottom incident. Characteristically, Ned displays the attribute of a stock comic Negro in his actions, his appearance, his language, his values and possessions, and so is a major source of the stock humor in The Reivers.

Boon is a most important stock humorous character of the novel. The story of his background which opens the book provides some humorous notes and prepares us for some of the antics and motivations which follow. The opening descriptions of Boon completely characterize him while providing us with stock humorous lines. For instance, "(Boon) was a mutual benevolent protective benefit association, of which the benefits were all Boon's and the mutuality and the benevolence and the protecting all ours
The tone of the remarks which come from Boss Priest are generous although rankled while the picture of Boon is typical. It is further expanded when Lucius describes Boon and gives his father's comparison.

He was tough, faithful, brave and completely unreliable; he was six feet four inches tall and weighed two hundred and forty pounds and had the mentality of a child; over a year ago Father had already begun to say that at any moment now I would outgrow him. (p. 18)

At first, we think of Boon as a type of pet since the first mentioned characteristics describe him that way, faithful and brave. Then we realize that this pet is not all it should be since it is not loyal or reliable; it is not well trained. Then, we return to the impression of Boon as a pet since Father says that Lucius will outgrow Boon as a child outgrows a toy and no longer has any use for it. Boon expresses the opposing view when he realizes how clever and useful Lucius might be. When Boon plans for the escape and changes into better clothes, he is the stock comic figure of a country boy out for a night on the town. Lucius says, "when I saw him, I was terrified. He had changed his clothes. I mean he had shaved and he had on not merely a white shirt but a clean one, with a collar and necktie (p. 45)." The description itself is interesting because of the white shirt and tie and the especially clean shirt. We wonder why Boon's clothes should terrify Lucius and only later in the paragraph do we find out the reason has to do with Boon's inability in dealing with "a child and had not merely to cope with but even anticipate
its unpredictable vagaries; not the folly of Boon's lack of the simplest rudiments of common sense, but the shame of my failure to anticipate." Lucius is more perceptive than Boon and he knows what the situation is and how risky it is so he temporarily but only partially rebels against the inevitability of Boon's actions.

Boon also displays the characteristics of an amalgam of stock comic types. He is just as lazy as Ned and is therefore like the stock comic negro; Boon also lusts after the ladies, just as Ned does although they do so in different ways. Eventually, Boon settles down with his wife but humorously, his wife is a reformed prostitute. Boon has elements of the stock comic dandy in the way he attempts to impress Corrie and the way he acts in the big city. Ironically, his lack of common sense cause him to act like a country boy on a lark who does not quite know his way around which we especially see when they arrive at Miss Reba's and he takes a few dollars out of his wallet but gives the wallet to Lucius to hold so he will not squander all his money in one place. His quick temper gets him into fights with Butch and almost alienates Sam. When Miss Reba makes him apologize to Sam, he growls, "forget it." His grudging awareness of the fact that others are more sensible and intelligent than he is provides humor. His false pride is apparent in his attitude toward Boss' car which he cares for so well that he washes it every day and thereby provides us with the humorous remarks about the paint washing off. Altogether, Boon is a stock comic character encompassing elements of many other types providing a major source of the
stock humor in the novel from his character, his remarks, his attitudes, and his actions.

And so we come to Lucius who is more than just a character in the book; he is the frame device and therefore part of the structure of the novel. He, as a child, is a symbol of innocence and goodness tested. He is the teller of the tall tales which are the events of the entire novel so his is the point of view from which the novel is presented, whether as a child or as an old man. Lucius is also the theme in the sense that it is his becoming a gentleman and an adult with which the novel deals. Finally, much of the humor of the novel comes from the dialogues between Lucius and Boon or Ned or one of the other major characters, or sometimes, the dialogues almost take place between Lucius and himself, regardless of age.

The importance of Lucius as a child story teller has been criticized.

The Memphis scenes of The Reivers seem flat and dull only by comparison to richer scenes in Sanctuary, where situations are saved from slapstick only by underworld grotesquerie . . . The relative weakness of the brothel humor in The Reivers, when compared to that of Sanctuary, stems from Faulkner's commitment to the boy's point of view and the consequent difficulty of contrasting reality and innocent illusion.\(^{182}\)

It is interesting that Swiggart implies that the brothel humor alone might be quite good but that it pales in comparison with that of Sanctuary.

This might also be caused by the fact that the brothel humor in Sanctuary

is definitely grotesque and we know that stock humor is more low keyed and less overbearing than grotesque humor. Actually, Swiggart's comments might not be a criticism but simply an evaluation because the mode of the comic scenes in the two novels is entirely different arising from the difference between grotesque humor and stock humor. Also, the boy's point of view might be seen to add to the humor of the scenes or circumstances rather than detract since incongruity arises from the difference between what Lucius describes for us and what we know he is seeing and what we realize he is talking about but that he himself does not recognize. For instance, when Lucius first enters Miss Reba's, he does not know the type of establishment he is in, nor can he identify the smell. We realize where he is and therefore we can laugh when Lucius says "the whole house smelled that way. I had never smelled it before. I didn't dislike it; I was just surprised. I mean, as soon as I smelled it, it was like a smell I had been waiting all my life to smell (p. 75)." Lucius' humorous comment indicates the nature of his coming growth and the probable cause of his loss of innocence, so the line is humorous for the audience but is also tied to the theme of the novel and its major actions. Hence, the child's point of view might be construed as an advantage and one of the sources of the stock comedy of the novel rather than a weakness of it.

Physically, Lucius is a sad little abandoned eleven year old who spends almost the entire time in the novel dressed in the same clothes. Only when Corrie takes pity on him do his clothes get laundered but
being the normal young boy he is, Lucius rebels when Boon demands he take another bath because of the newly washed clothes. Such a touch might be totally thematically unnecessary to the novel, but it gives us a true picture of a real little boy. Throughout, Lucius has displayed his innocence in humorous ways by not being able to drive a car or race a horse or court a lady; the novel shows up his learning process. Occasionally, Lucius voices his discontent with his status one way or another such as when Boon appears all dressed for the escapade, and Lucius is scared and questions Boon and himself and God. "Dont you realise I aint but eleven years old? How do You expect me to do all this at just eleven years old? Don't You see You are putting on me more than I can handle? (p. 45)"
The lines summarize the action of the novel as well as describe the character of Lucius. They are also humorous in the innocence of their appeal so while Lucius displays the characteristics of a typical eleven year old such as purposely forgetting his toothbrush and his pajamas, he also voices some rather intelligent and perceptive comments, both of which provide the audience with stock humor.

Lucius provides further humor in the dialogues he has with assorted people. Millgate says that "the verbal humor, the comedy [is] achieved directly through the dialogue,"183 and Swiggart specifies when he says "Faulkner's humor is at its broadest in Otis's conversations with Lucius."184 The particular conversation takes place between Lucius and

183Millgate, p. 255.  
184Swiggart, p. 211.
Otis in the attic of Miss Reba's house after the boys retire there to sleep although neither of them can sleep and so they resort to talking and then fighting. Lucius feels that there is something wrong with him but does not know what it is, just as he does not know what is wrong with Otis. The reader expects something and can almost analyze Lucius' trouble but we are not given the time quite yet since Otis begins the conversation. "The jack that's here . . . You can even smell it. It aint' fair that it's just women can make money pugnuckling while all a man can do is just try to snatch onto a little of it while it's passing by (p. 115)." The comment causes laughter because it comes from someone we believe to be only eleven or twelve years old, and incongruously it shows more sophistication than that. Then, too, the lines are quite risque as a conversation opener among any groups of people much less between two young boys. Separate, the lines are quite funny in the attitude they display, the jealousy Otis has for a money making proposition, while Lucius is puzzled and troubled and he asks Otis how old he is. This gives Otis the opportunity to admit that he is only ten years old which we find out later is entirely untrue. Lucius is also forced to ask why Otis wants a peephole in the floor of the attic so he can look at the people below. Lucius does not realize what actually goes on in the rooms below or the significance of the actions while Otis probably does not realize the significance although he realizes exactly what happens and sees the opportunity as a money making deal.
More humor arises from Lucius' saying that "you should be prepared for experience, knowledge, knowing: not bludgeoned unaware in the dark as by a highwayman or footpad (p. 115)." Actually most of the humor such as this arises from the thoughts of Lucius on the external situations rather than from actual dialogues between two people. When Otis finally tells Lucius what pugnuckling means, the definition and the attending realization motivate Lucius to attack and fight with Otis. It is as if Otis is the source of all the sin and corruption linked to the definition, as if Otis made up the definition himself and is therefore the corrupt source of Lucius' frustration. The scene is entirely funny because of the difference between the relative knowledge of the two boys and what we know as well as because of the actual location of it and the words voiced in the dialogue between the characters. Yet, the scene is also very important to the process of the theme of the novel since this is a step in Lucius' loss of innocence, and ironically it comes at the hands, or mouth if you will, of a retarded, backward creature Lucius has only just met. In one sense Faulkner uses the scene to laugh at all who are innocent and who have lost their innocence at some repulsive source as well as to develop sympathy for Lucius. At this point we are involved with him and feel as he does, partially because of the boy's point of view; then we know that what Lucius has learned will not hurt him directly but will rather help him in the future. We laugh at his innocence and cry for his loss of it because the scene is a sort of bittersweet humorous summary of the coming of age of a boy in Memphis.
and the South in 1905. The fight is also funny because of Lucius' extremely romantic attitude toward Corrie. This "love" or infatuation with her is punctuated by Boon when he remarks that Miss Reba should "let him alone ... He's in love (p. 159)." Boon realizes a little of what has happened to Lucius but he has not taken any responsibility for the happening. While Boon's analysis is a humorous understatment of the theme of the action at that point, the humor also comes from the dialogue of Lucius, his point of view, the action and the results of the action.

Throughout The Reivers, there are comic scenes of a stock nature: mistaken assumptions, rapid shifts in circumstances, and slapstick types of scenes make the action of the novel as stockly humorous as the characters. Vickery says that "the comedy arises out of a sudden disordering of familiar patterns." Certainly this is true; in fact, the familiarity of the patterns and the reversal and exaggeration of them adds to the elements of the stock humor of the scenes. The major incidents of extended stock humor are all related to the theme of the novel. None of the scenes are in the book for pure comedy or comic relief or so forth; they are all integral to the entire action of the story and therefore related to the theme. Each comic scene adds to the theme and the total experience of the stock humor such as the most important ones to investigate, the opening scenes with the car and the contested horse race.

185Vickery, p. 229.
Lucius says that "my grandfather didn't want an automobile at all; he was forced to buy one (p. 22)," and so begins the kind of tall tale which is The Reivers stemming from the purchase of the Winton Flyer. The circumstances under which the car is brought to Jefferson add to the stock humor of the tale since all the action is triggered by a dare and a counter dare. Colonel Sartoris has outlawed all automobiles from the streets of Jefferson and thereby dares Boss Priest to defy the order. When Boss buys the car, he further dares Colonel Sartoris to do something about it. Instead of Sartoris doing anything much, however, Boon takes over and shoulders the challenge. Boon and Ned both vie for the privilege of caring for the car but there is little contest and Boon muscles in on this new territory. The challenge now becomes how to get the car out of the locked stable and in use as it was intended. In order to achieve this, Boon enlists the aid of Boss' family especially his wife. The tale of the first tentative rides is most amusing.

Boon first wangles the key to the car from Boss and promises Miss Sarah a ride. Grandmother gets in the back seat, Ned is prominently in the front seat, and Boon starts the car. Immediately, the stock humor of the action begins when Grandmother yells as Boon starts the car and he attempts to quiet her fears. "I dont care! ... Get in quick! I'm nervous!" (pp. 29-30)." Her reaction echoes the reaction of the reader and prods the first laughter of the scene. Then, Boon moves the car around the garage and out into the open where we expect him to go roaring off into the sunset or something equally foolish. Instead, the quietness of the
scene almost disappoints us although the humor is there, nonetheless.

"The car went slowly and quietly across the lot until it was facing the
gate to the lane, to the outside, to the world, and stopped (p. 30)."
The pause is Faulkner's as much as Boon's and the car's since Faulkner
is saying, "stop and look and beware; the mechanical age you are
controlling may turn out to be more than you can control." The car it-
self is only one of the first in Jefferson and it is a type of warning
of what is to come. Only after the pause does the true stock humor
surface. Throughout the previous pages, Faulkner has described Boon's
attempts to drive and control the car over Boss Priest's limitations as
a battle between two enemy forces which provides for some of the humor
of the scene as well as opening up more interpretations. "Maybe it
wasn't a victory," Lucius says in describing this first brief encounter
with the car. "But anyway our side--Boon--had not only discovered the
weak point in the enemy's (Grandfather's) front, by suppertime that night
the enemy himself would discover it too." All the characters and the
action become grander than human by their comparison with soldiers in a
battle. We almost forget that the prize is not glory but a car and a car
ride. When we remember, the realization causes the laughter, both at the
actions of the characters as well as at ourselves. The brief scene pre-
figures all the rest of the action caused by the illicit running of the
car.

A period of time passes since Lucius summarizes the habit of car
riding on Saturday afternoons by painting a picture for us of the players
in the action. There are always Boon and Ned and Grandfather but the rest of the passengers rotate in turn. There is Grandmother, mother, the children including Lucius, and "our various connections and neighbors and Grandmother's close friends." It seems as if car riding has become the national pastime in Jefferson despite its illegality. This cast of characters also appears in elaborate costume, "in linen dusters and goggles." Now, the action develops and the humor increases as we hear about the tobacco spitting incident.

Grandfather chews tobacco and Lucius tells us "the first time he turned his head to spit out of the moving automobile, we in the back seat didn't know what was going to happen until it was already too late." The reader who is more experienced with the vagaries of such actions because he is acquainted with moving automobiles knows what will happen but now wonders exactly how it will occur or how the trouble will be resolved. This anticipation on the part of the reader actually increases the humor because we look for Faulkner's technique more carefully since we believe we know the nature of the action. So, in order to draw out the humor more carefully, Faulkner pauses for other analysis from Lucius who explains. "None of us had ever ridden in an automobile before ... let alone one going fifteen miles an hour (pp. 32-33)." Lucius is excusing the characters' stupidity while Faulkner is excusing the simplicity of the theme of the scene. Within the statement, Lucius further pauses for explanation concerning their speed: it seems that Boon always boasts of going twice as fast as he is actually going, but, as Lucius says, "this
was before he knew that we knew that the thing on the dashboard which
looked like a steam gauge was a speedometer (p. 33)." There is humor
within humor all aimed at ultimate humor of action. We are also reminded
of Aunt Jenny's remarks concerning speedometers from Sartoris and our
laughter is echoed.

Now, the ultimate indignity and the high point of the humorous action
occurs as Lucius describes the scene.

Maybe it was because Grandmother was sitting on the left
side . . . directly behind Grandfather. She said at once
to Boon: "Stop the automobile," and sat there not mad so
much as coldly and implacably outraged and shocked. She
was just past fifty then . . . and in all those fifty
years she had no more believed that a man, let alone her
husband, would spit in her face than she could have believed
that Boon for instance would approach a curve in the road
without tooting the horn. She said, to nobody, she didn't
even raise her hand to wipe the spit away: "Take me home."
(p. 33)

The action of Grandfather spitting his tobacco is innocent and ordinary
enough of itself, but its reverberations are stockly humorous. We had
anticipated someone getting splashed with the spit but we did not anti-
cipate the actual fact that it should be Boss' wife who is the victim of
the humor. Then, that she should get it in the face rather than on her
clothes or hands is another source of the humor. It is almost a Three
Stooges kind of pie-in-the-face incident except the pie is much less
pleasant. Then, the way the action is described also adds to the stock
humor of it since Grandmother's reactions is outrage and shock while ours
is pure laughter. Also, the fact that Grandmother is so proud that she
will not bother to rid herself of the indignity adds further to the
humor.
The resulting action becomes more complicated and more humorous as the characters attempt to deal with the situation putting themselves in for more laughter. Grandfather throws his tobacco away and we almost can imagine him begrudging a good chew. He wants to give his wife his handkerchief to wipe herself but she will not take it so Boon gets out to go to a house to borrow soap and water, but Grandmother also vetoes that. "Dont touch me," she said. "Drive on." Now, here is the ultimate touch of humor from Faulkner. "So we went on. Grandmother with the long drying brown splash across one of her goggles and down her cheek even though Mother kept on offering to spit on her handkerchief and wipe it off." The picture of the woman who is so proud and the man, her husband, who was so proud but is now subtly chastized, is quite humorous. Also, the picture of one woman trying to aid the other, older one only makes matters worse and the humor more: Mother will spit on her handkerchief to wipe off the earlier spit of tobacco! Mother treating Grandmother like a little child with a dirty face increases the humor.

There is one last further humorous result of this first humorous action.

[Mother] had invented a kind of shield on a handle like a big fan, light enough for her to raise in front of us almost as fast as Grandfather could turn his head. So he could chew now, Mother always alert and ready with the screen; all of us were quick now in fact, so that almost before the instant when Grandfather knew he was going to turn his head to the left to spit, the screen had already come up and all of us in the back seat had leaned to the right like we were on the same wire . . . (p. 34)

See what new inventions the automobile might spawn! Since Lucius tells
his story totally innocently, the point of the humor comes from Faulkner and is a warning against the evils of modern machinery. Obviously, the point is there, but it is so much differently stated from the approximate same point in the description of Popeye in _Sanctuary_, for instance. Where Popeye was definitely evil, the automobile here is only potentially hurtful. The coming of the automobile was inevitable, but that is no excuse for not giving a gentle warning or caution on its use and abuse. Faulkner is saying that the automobile is a source of pleasure as well as a potentially destructive product. The entire scene prefigures the rest of the adventures which befall Lucius because of the automobile and is also a typical example of how the South greeted technical advances. One the one hand, they outlawed occurrences they had absolutely no control over; on the other hand, they persisted in their proud, haughty, aristocratic ways as long as possible. Even in the conclusion of the novel, Grandfather is the picture of a gentlemen which we expect a Southerner to be despite the fact that we have seen him here in a shameful position. Neither the action nor the people here are worthy of criticism so the tone of the humor is one of gentle chiding. There is much affection displayed for these people through the humor.

The incident at Hell Creek bottom is one of the most sustained stock humorous incidents of the entire novel. There is much preparation for this action and we should expect something to happen but nevertheless, the action is a surprise and humorous. The preparation consists of Boon and Ned digging the car out of one or two small mud holes before they actually
come to Hell Creek. Then, there is a pair of mules hitched to a tree nearby boding no good. Lucius has a feeling of uncertainty because they are caked with "more of the same mud which was rapidly encasing Boon and Ned (p. 65)." Lucius is slightly worried by the prospect, especially since he must steer the car while Ned and Boon push. Ned, in contrast, thinks it is mighty convenient that the mule team should be there and hopes he might get out of some work. Lastly, Boon is annoyed but clever; he's been through this before and does not want to enlist the aid of the man who sits on the porch of the nearby cabin or the mules he is so conspicuously displaying. Boon knows that last year they had to pay two dollars to get the wagon pulled out of this same mud hole, and that gauling thought prevents him from being reasonable. To the reader, the scene is extremely picturesque and humorous in a stock slapstick sort of way. Boon tells Ned to shut up but Ned is a little slow to respond and continues arguing how convenient it would be to have the mules do the work. Boon responds with a characteristic lack of subtlety or good humor. "'Didn't you hear me say shut up?' Boon said in that fierce, quite courteous murmur. 'If I didn't speak plain enough, excuse me. What I'm trying to say is, shut up!'" We laugh at many elements of the scene: there is the picture of Ned and Boon all muddy with their pants legs rolled up trying to push a car out of the mud. Then, the dialogue between Ned and Boon is also humorous because Ned is characteristically lazy and stupid and will play into any trap rather than expend energy he does not have to and Boon is characteristically proud and over-confident and so is sarcastic.
with Ned. Lucius gives us the story through his innocence so the humor of the description and action are increased.

Ned finally comes to a realization, as does the reader, and the humor of the incident is increased. "You mean to say he gets in here with that team and works this place like a patch just to keep it boggy?" Ned inquires incredulously. The reader laughs because we have been exposed to the Snopes clan and the likes of them previously and so we know just such a thing is possible. It is humorous that a man might work his team to keep a patch muddy to earn money by pulling vehicles out of the mire rather than expend that same energy in working a crop and growing or supplying his own livelihood. But then, Ned gives us the explanation which fits with the circumstances: "This sho beats cotton," he says and we realize how profitable that muddy hole is. We do not get the full awareness of this realization until the later revelation concerning the battle over the cost of the tow. We now realize how profitable Faulkner's humor is for the purposes of the novel, however. The scene has only begun and already we are provided with stock humor and revelations.

Now, where we are prepared for some violent action, much pushing and tugging and activity, we are treated to almost the exact opposite. The action nearly takes place in slow motion because of the elaborate nature of the description. The voice of the teller of the tale is a combination of the young Lucius, the old man Lucius and Faulkner himself.

There was something dreamlike about it. Not nightmarish: just dreamlike--the peaceful, quiet, remote, sylvan, almost primeval setting of ooze and slime and jungle growth and
heat in which the very mules themselves, peacefully swishing and stamping at the teeming infinitesimal invisible myriad life which was the actual air we moved and breathed in, were not only unalien but in fact curiously appropriate, being themselves biological dead ends and hence already obsolete before they were born; the automobile: the expensive useless mechanical toy rated in power and strength by the dozens of horses, yet held helpless and impotent in the almost infantile clutch of a few inches of a temporary confederation of two mild and pacific elements--earth and water-- (p. 66)

The language is certainly out of step with young Lucius's point of view so the humor resulting from it is more directly attributable to Faulkner. The situation itself is entirely colored by the reminiscent point of view of the old Lucius retelling the entire business, so we get his voice that way. Finally, young Lucius is responsible for the description of the action as dreamlike which is the frame which encompasses and guides the reader's point of view and interpretation. Within the passage itself, much humor arises first from the contrast between the men, the animals and the machine in a contest to see which will win and we are not sure who to root for. Then, more stock humor comes from the tone when the automobile is described with slight sarcasm although it is a correct analysis of the machine as an expensive and at least partially useless toy. Also, humor comes from the contrast between the peacefulness of the setting and the frantic activity of the men and the machine. Finally, the reader's realization that all the activity is probably useless and the mules will have to be used to help extricate the car provides further humor. The most violent action of the entire scene and some of the best humor is the
description of Boon trying to push the car. "Boon strove like a demon, titanic (p. 67)." The comparison is slightly out of place for the foolishness which is the character of Boon and so it is funny. Then, he becomes a modern Southern Hercules in the next sentence. "At one time he dropped, flung away the pole and, stooping, grasped the car with his hands and actually ran it forward for a foot or two as though it were a wheelbarrow." Besides the image of Boon as a Hercules, we are given the humorous country image of the car as a wheelbarrow. The contrasts between the country man and his grand comparison and the grand car with its country comparison provide much of the stock humor.

Now we expect the scene to break somehow, and it does with the arrival of the man and his mule team. The description of their arrival is one additional source of the humor. "We could see him as well as hear—the suck and plop of the mules' feet as they picked their delicate way along the edge of the mudhole." Boon again is delicately sarcastic when he remarks about the mud crop which he man seem to raise and comments on the two dollar charge. This is the opening to the bargaining scene which provides much stock humor of the tall tale horse trading nature. Here, we see Boon trying to trade work for money but he would prefer to pay nothing since the sham of the occurrence is paymen enough in itself. The mule man says that the two dollar charge was last year's price and we expect an announcement of some ridiculously high price so Boon can bargain with him. Instead, that action is suspended temporarily while we get new humorous action: Boon wants to know where to attach the tow line and the
man comes up with some stock humorous retorts. "I dont care myself . . .
Hook up to any part of it you want out of this mudhole. If you want all of it to come out at the same time, I'd say hook to the axle (p. 68)."
The humor comes directly from the lines but also from the annoyance of Boon with the situation in general. The mules quickly pull the car out of the mud and Boon says to unhook the tow; we expect to be returned to the bargaining over the price now that the deed is accomplished.

Instead, the action is further complicated by another announcement from the man. "There's another hole just this side of the bridge that I'm throwing in free. You aint been acquainted here for a year now . . .
What we call the reserve patch up thisaway." We envision another immense mud hole and wonder why the farmer is being so kind and generous as to do this job for free. We anticipate that he will up the price accordingly and we begin to look forward to the coming bargaining session. Now, however, Ned complicates the action with his remarks. "You means the Christmas middle," Ned says. The farmer and the audience wonder what he is talking about and so Ned gives the explanation. There is a strip of ground set aside where any profits or crops grown will go for the niggers to have a Christmas bonus. The tension builds because we believe Ned is playing with fire by insulting the farmer that way. We can just see the farmer towing the car right back to the bog where it came from and wonder just how this action will be resolved. Lucius says that after a while Ned says "Hee hee hee," and the tension breaks because we laugh just as he does. The farmer, however, cannot let Ned get away with a joke at his expense and so returns to the issue of the price for the job.
"Prices have doubled around here since last year (p. 69)," he announces. We laugh because we notice how greedy and profitable this business must be and because this crew has been so innocent as to get caught in the trap. Boon rightfully wonders why the price has gone up since the car is the same and there is "even the same mud." The answering explanation from the farmer reminds us that this is a contest of wits much like the standard horse swap deal and the tall tale story. "That was last year. There's more business now. So much more that I can't afford not to go up." The logic to the statement is totally nonexistent and so adds to the stock humor of the action. So the bargaining is temporarily stopped in order to pull the car through the second mud hole. When that is done summarily, the farmer proudly announces that "you're all right now ... until you come back." The direct insult he has the nerve to throw causes us to laugh. Boon characteristically reacts and says they are not coming back that way and when we realize the outcome of the entire escapade and the ignominious conditions under which the three do finally return, the comment becomes even more humorous.

Now we have the actual incident of payment. Boon takes out four dollars and hands the money to the farmer. This should be the conclusion to the scene when in actuality Faulkner has at least a few more comic twists waiting for us. "It's six dollars," the farmer announces! We know we have heard him rightly, we just wonder what extreme contortions of logic will be necessary to explain this new, higher fee. Boon assumes the two dollar fee was for the process of pulling the car out of the mud
and doubles the price, but the farmer extracts payment on an entirely
different scale: "I charge a dollar a passenger," he claims. This alone
adds significantly to the humor of the action because the farmer actually
has absolutely nothing to do with getting the people through the mud hole.
They can, and have, managed that for themselves although they have gotten
quite contaminated in the process. We, like Boon, are scandalized that
this farmer can genuinely succeed at his corrupt proceedings. But, unlike
Boon who is too involved with the action, we can laugh at the proceedings
and further anticipate the rest of the action.

The humor from the final section of the scene comes almost completely
from the quick retorts between the farmer and Boon. When Boon threatens
not to pay the man anything, the man counter threatens to have the mules
pull the car back where it was. At this point we are tempted to prompt
Boon to jump into the car and spirit off in a blaze of glory, an action
which might be characteristic and humorous and satisfying all at once.
But then we realize that this farmer is one of the types of Snopes men
in his greediness and corruption and cleverness and we can picture the
law after Boon for failure to pay a just debt or something of that sort.
Boon returns to one final attempt to deal with the farmer when he argues
that Lucius is only a half price person while the man replies that "walk-
ing back to Jefferson might be lighter for him . . . but it wont be no
shorter." Here we laugh at the veiled threat and still Boon tries one last
time by arguing that when Ned "gets that mud washed off, he aint even
white!" Again, we laugh at Boon's comment and are somewhat prepared for
the farmer's last retort and the close of the scene. "Son," he said, "both these mules is color-blind." We have the final source of the stock humor of the action: both the mules may well be color blind but that actually has nothing to do with the issues here. The farmer is almost certainly color conscious and would probably try to figure out some way to charge more for Ned rather than less, but his own superficial open-mindedness locks him into the policy of charging the same for every person and thereby implying that all men are alike and equal. Faulkner's voice is certainly coming through here since we see everyone being made fun of: no one actually wins in this final contest of wits although the farmer apparently does. Actually, the man has been brought low and made the object of Faulkner's criticism as well as his humor. The scene is concerned with the theme of the Southern bigot in several forms while also commending Boon for his restrained handling of the situation.

The contested horse race may be the funniest scene of stock humor in the entire novel. From the anticipation of the race to its conclusion in the double-or-nothing judgement, the stock humor of the action abounds. The characters, the dialogue, the tension, the narrative voice and all such elements add to the total effectiveness of the stock humor while in addition, the scene is crucial to them and the interpretation of The Reivers.

At the starting line of the race we have the humorous interview with Ned and Lucius where Ned assures Lucius that they can make the horse run at least once but they want to save that knowledge until they really need
it. Hence, Ned gives Lucius instructions: "Just before them judges and such hollers Go! you say to yourself My name is Ned William McCaslin and then do it (p. 193)." The instructions are strange enough to cause laughter from the audience since we see no apparent logic or sense in them. We also react exactly as Lucius does thereby preparing for the next humorous line since Lucius asks Ned "Do what?" as we echo. Ned's answer follows the nonsensical pattern: "I dont know yet neither." Again we laugh because we expected some definite instructions to help win the race where instead, we have a wily nigger giving instructions that he does not even know about. Lucius would be understandably frustrated as we are although we also laugh at the proceedings. We feel we deserve some further explanation although by now we might expect it to be somewhat silly as well and our expectations and our laughter are not disappointed.

... Akrum is a horse, and with a horse anything can happen. And with a nigger boy on him, it's twice as likely to. You just got to watch and be ready, so that when it do happen, you done already said My Name is Ned William McCaslin and then do it and do it quick. An dont worry. If it dont work and dont nothing happen, I'll be waiting right there at the finish, where I come in. Because we knows I can make him run once. (p. 193)

The explanation is nonsensical in a sense but then exceptionally sensible in another. The statements which Ned makes are mostly facts which one cannot test. For instance, "Akrum is a horse," and "dont worry," and "we knows I can make him run once." Their extreme sense in light of the circumstances adds to our humor. Then, there are the same statements viewed another way where they lose all sense. There is no need to assert that Akrum is a horse since we have seen that, yet, Ned sort of redeems the
statement and adds to the humor, although not necessarily the sense, by saying that "with a horse anything can happen." We already know that with a boy and a car and a nigger and an instigator anything can happen because that is this novel. Adding an unpredictable horse to the business is like frosting the cake; it must only get better. Again, when Ned says "don't worry" we laugh because that is all the bunch of them has been doing since the entire business began. It is also what we have been wondering about throughout the novel; how will these motley specimens get back to Jefferson. When we laugh at the nonsense of the statement, Ned adds to the humor of our reactions by further assuring Lucius as well as us. The assurance lies in the picture of Ned waiting at the finish line but how that might be assuring to anyone, much less to Lucius who knows Ned quite well, is amazing and humorous. The final assertion that they can make the horse run once only increases the humor of Ned's instructions because once would not be enough; they need to win two out of three races and have already lost the first one. Humorously, once actually is quite enough as we shall soon see.

Now the race actually begins and even that is humorous. McWillie is off to a good start while Lucius is at least three lengths behind. Humorously, this works to Lucius' advantage since it causes McWillie to react. McWillie expects to see Lightning near him as he was in the last race the day before, so McWillie barely turns his eyeballs sideward to see where Lightning is. When he cannot see the horse, he turns more and more and knows the horse is not there. McWillie is so frustrated at what is happening that he actually tries to slow his horse and turns his head to
yell at Lucius, "Goddammit, white boy, if you gonter race, race! (p. 193)"

By this time, McWillie has turned his horse sideways to the track and from here on, the race is entirely pandemonium.

This is the point at which Lucius resorts to using Ned's instructions. It is silly, but we have wondered if Lucius will substitute his own name for Ned's in the incantation. Either argument would have a humorous support: Ned said to use his name because, being rather stupid, he might not think of substituting Lucius' name for him in the instructions. Or, Lucius might believe that there is something special about the incantation of Ned's name rather than his own. Either way we wondered and now we see Lucius sticking to Ned's name in the ritual. Hence, we should be prepared for some surprising and humorous occurrence since neither Ned nor Lucius knew what to anticipate. What Lucius does is in itself neither surprising nor humorous: he cuts the horse with the switch, a most logical and sensible thing to do in a horse race. We are temporarily disappointed and so Faulkner can increase the resulting humor. The ramifications of Lucius' actions are what are so surprising and amusing.

Lucius goes on barely passing Acheron and there is one point where all four creatures are temporarily fused so only Acheron knows what happened. In the instant where all are so closely linked, Lucius uses the switch but not on his own horse. At first, we wonder what is going on since that would be an extremely unfortunate thing to do in a normal horse race. But we have forgotten that Acheron is turned sideways to the track and we begin to see the glimmerings of some sense and fun.
Lucius goes on with the race not even looking back because he does not want to lose control. The reader can see first hand what is happening and laugh. What follows is a Max Sennett kind of miss and near miss chase scene.

Acheron feels the switch and goes on in the direction he is pointed; humorously, that direction is counter to the track. Also humorously, that path lies through the planking marking the official track and a horde of spectators and on through a pasture. The scene is beautifully funny as Acheron goes through the planking and scatters the spectators before him. By this time, McWillie has gained a little control and attempts to get back into the pattern of the race. But by this time, Lightening is so far in advance that McWillie chooses to run Acheron on the outside of the track rather than attempting to get him back through the opening in the track and onto the track itself. So the race continues but in a new mode: Acheron is on the outside of the track and it is a minute before the reader realizes that the outside of the track is where all the people would be standing attempting to see the race. We wonder how the horse might like running through or around people and the picture of the proceedings is quite funny in a stock way. All the spectators again fall back to make way for the wild horse who runs the outside of the track. The analogy in the description of the scene adds to the humor: "the spectators hollering and leaping like frogs from in front of him as he cleared his new path or precedent (p. 194)."
Now the race becomes a closer thing and we can imagine the bets increasing. We are tempted to bet on the outcome ourselves but certainly do not know how to bet! Acheron is catching up with Lightning and McWillie is posed with the dilemma of trying to get the horse back inside the track and having him refuse to go past the wreckage of the planks or continuing the race from outside the track where his path is clear. Acheron stays on the outside and runs to the finish finally crossing the parallel place of the finish line three lengths ahead of Lightning while Lightning actually goes under the proper line. So the race is contested and the issue concerns whether the finish line is just that single rope or whether it extends into infinity. Ned has the most sensible and right argument in the entire humorous business. He almost redeems his entire character when he argues that the finish line does not extend into infinity because then "there are horses down there Mississippi that we aint even heard about yet (p. 196)." For once, we argue that Ned is right and sensible, and then we laugh at him. He is so clever that he can turn circumstances to his benefit only if he finds that necessary. We wonder about what would happen if Ned used all his sense all of the time.

Now, unbeknownst to Ned or Lucius, three new men appear on the scene. Among them is Lucius' grandfather Boss Priest but none of the characters nor the reader are informed yet. These three mysterious men add to the tension of the scene and eventually to the humor as well. The dilemma of the last race is solved when the decision arrives to declare the winner of the next race as the winner of the contested race as well. This
is not such a bad deal we believe, but actually, if Acheron won the third race, it would add insult to injury since then Acheron would win three out of three and would have worked harder at a two out of three race than was necessary. However, if Lightning wins this last race, he will have won and gained as well; he would win through expending the least amount of effort. Now, we are genuinely prepared for the final race and the entire conclusion to the novel.

It takes us a while, but we finally remember that Ned still has his ace in his pocket although we are timorous of believing that since we have no real explanation for why Lightning runs some times and not at others. Ned knows, but we do not and that suspense adds to the heightened nature of the humor. Ned again gives Lucius instructions and they are no more clear than the last ones. He says that when Lightning comes into the home stretch, Lucius should have him where he can see the wire and know that is the end. We and Lucius do not understand how this will make any difference, but since Ned's instructions worked humorously the last time, we just hope they will work again this time.

Now the last race begins and Lucius says that "for the first time, at least since I had participated, been a factor, we even looked like a race, the two horses as though bolted together and staggered a little (p. 199)." The tension increases as the home stretch is reached and we anticipate the results of Ned's instructions but we are almost disappointed. Lucius and Lightning win the race because as Lightning saw Ned behind the finish line, the horse raced frantically. We are glad for the boy and Ned and hope now everything might be resolved because the crew can get
the car and go on home while we still wonder exactly what it was that made
the horse run.

Only pages and hours later do we discover the truth; then, the reve­
lation plunges us right back into another humorous horse race. It is as
if someone has not yet gotten enough of a good thing. That someone is us
and Faulkner and probably the players in the novel as well. Boss Priest
has appeared and extracted Ned's secret from him: Lightning has a taste
for sardines which most horses do not eat. Throughout, we have known
Lightning to be a special horse and here we have a simple but humorous
demonstration of the fact. This joke or trick resolves one tension of
the proceding scenes. Finally, we have a "reasonable" explanation for the
horse's behavior although that reason is posited on an exception to a rule.
The last horse race results because of an extremely elaborate deal between
Boss Priest and Mr. van Tosch, the real owner of the horse.

"All right," Mr. van Tosch said. "I'll bet you Coppermine
against Ned's secret, one heat of one mile. If Ned can
make Coppermine beat that black of Linscomb's again, I get
the secret and Coppermine is yours. If Coppermine loses,
I dont want your secret and you take or leave Coppermine
for five hundred dollars. (p. 215)

This is certainly a winner take all deal; to pay if you lose is an added
humorous touch straight out of Faulkner and the South which adds to the
feeling of the action as tall tale bargaining story. Yet, this is not
the end of that feeling since Boss Priest attempts to bring down the price
in true tall tale fashion while van Tosch is unshakeable. Grandfather
starts the bargaining at two hundred and fifty dollars, half the first
proposition. Assuming this is a normal trade, we might expect the dealing to conclude somewhere halfway between the two extremes. Instead, we are given the format of the bargaining without any substantial fulfillment. Everytime Boss goes up in his offer, van Tosch stay adamantly at five hundred. We disbelieve that even Faulkner can be causing us to accept this atrociously ridiculous deal, but it is true. Humorously, the dealing ends with van Tosch's one reduction in price: "Four-ninety-five (p. 216)" he offers. "Done" Boss immediately answers, and the race is on, echoed by our laughter.

This time Ned does not come through and we all want to know what happened, since it seemed a sure deal to have Lightning run for another sardine. But Ned explains "I never had no sour dean for him this time, and he knowed it. Didn't I tell you this horse got sense? (p. 218)" This is the final comic resolution to all the races. That Ned might not actually get another sardine for the horse is a lot to assume, but then we get one last final humorous explanation. Ned knew he had no sardine for Lightning so Ned knew the horse would not run. Hence, Ned bet against Lightning and has made a clean sweep! We laugh again at Ned's subtle cleverness and wonder how one might ever have enough experience to deal with such a nigger most sensibly. The only other revelation of the rest of the novel which might rival this one is the immediately abrupt announcement that Boon intends to marry Corrie and live happily ever after.

This entire horse race sequence is inherent to the theme of the novel. It is the direct cause for Lucius' punishment from his father and his salvation through his grandfather. It is Lucius' crying session that is
more important to him than the races or the stolen car or the punishment. The fact is that Lucius must live with himself and that is the theme of the book in one sense. The lines already mentioned about a gentleman living with himself and taking responsibility for his action whether actively or passively responsible for them are good advice. The advise comes from father talking to his son and from Faulkner talking to his readers; we too hear what the elder is saying. But we too cry for the loss of innocence and the realization, brought home to us with the final frame of the novel, that this world in which Lucius grew up is no more. That South of such gentility and warmth and good humor and responsibility for one another is gone now. Asphalt and concrete have covered much of the land and progress has come to the South. Faulkner seems to be saying that the way it was was better than how it is and that the way it was is how it should be. The humor has added to the significance of the theme because, through the stock humor, we have been able to see what is joyful and commendable about Faulkner's South, the world in general and all of the people in it. This gentle stock humor has not criticized, but only highlighted the commendable characteristics of the subject, whether that subject is a person, a town or an entire world. Not that progress and modernity are maligned here, but only that the more gentle if not slower paced existence is preferrable. The characteristics of people and the South in general depicted with such gentle stock humor are characteristics Faulkner would have us commend wherever they occur.
CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION: A NOTE ON DEVELOPMENT

As we have seen, Faulkner's humor is pervasive. Every novel, even those not usually thought of as comic, show humor on careful investigation, although that humor may not be a major device of the novel. When one looks at all of Faulkner's works together, it is easy to see that all the incidents of a humorous nature fall into one of the two categories of stock humor or grotesque humor.

Faulkner's stock humor grows out of his relationship to the tradition of Southwestern, tall tale humorists and the American tradition of exaggeration. That stock humor works through stock characters, such as the dandy, the corrupt politician, the innocent country boy, the good-hearted prostitute, the raving preacher, and the respected Negro servant. The stock humor also works through the situations of mistaken identity, divergent points of view, exaggeration, tall tales, especially those which deal with horse trades and the bargaining process, and pratfalls and slapstick maneuverings. This type of stock humor in Faulkner often works as comic relief although it does not stop there since, in addition to the possible function as comic relief, the stock humor is always tied to the
theme of the novel in some way. By tying stock humor to the theme of the novel, Faulkner can indicate his position on the characters or their actions through his use of humor. Stock humor is a gently chiding device which often makes a character or a situation slightly ridiculous so that we see them as slightly foolish although not hurtfully so, used in Faulkner to commend the actions or the characteristics which are displayed. Stock humor indicates Faulkner's positive attitude toward the South; whatever is the butt of this humor is the object of Faulkner's commendation rather than his criticism, not the case with grotesque humor.

Grotesque humor is a much more hurtful, potentially offensive type of humor. It often results from someone's receiving pain, although it will be successful only if the audience is sufficiently removed from the particulars to see the humor. Often, those characters involved in the grotesque humor of a scene will feel that the occurrences are scandalous or a disgrace while the audience is removed from the action through the psychological crutch of the statement that this is only a novel and not reality and therefore they can realize and respond to the grotesque humor. Sometimes, the difference between the stock humor and the grotesque humor of a situation may be only in the handling since the extremity to which the pain or the circumstances are taken heralds grotesque humor. Grotesque humor also works by taking an object or an institution or a person who is normally revered or respected and exaggerating to such a hurtful extreme that pain, ridicule and criticism result. A characteristic of grotesque humor is its unnaturalness; this is how monsters and deformed or deficient characters can be funny. Another characteristic of grotesque humor is
its subject which deals with delicate matters such as death, love, sex, politics and religion. Because of the nature of the subject and the extremity of its handling, grotesque humor results in a characteristic feeling of tension in the audience. That is, the tone of grotesque humor might vacillate between disbelief, realization, denial of realization, and reinforcement of a realization. This alternation, or sequence of responses, results in the tension of the audience until they remember their detachment from the circumstances and can laugh at the grotesque rather than be hurt by it. Not only the audience but also the author himself must be sufficiently detached from the material of grotesque humor for it to be successful. When one is involved with the object of grotesque humor, one tends to feel sympathy or excuse the actions rather than criticizing the victim. However, in grotesque humor, because of the detachment of the audience and the author, the criticism certainly comes through because the purpose of grotesque humor is to criticize. Faulkner uses grotesque humor to criticize the South and to indicate his displeasure and occasional hate for it and the people it harbors. While stock humor is a gentle matter used to indicate Faulkner's positive attitude toward his native South, grotesque humor is used to criticize that South and to indicate Faulkner's hate and annoyance with it.

It is difficult to outline the development of Faulkner's use of these two humors because there is no obvious example of an aging man becoming disenchanted with his life and therefore becoming more critical so that the humor develops from stock to the more hurtful grotesque. Nor vice
verse. The most general position I might defend is that Faulkner went full circle in the development or that he slightly mellowed. Although the early works are sarcastic, they are stock humor just as The Reivers is stock humor. In between, we have the completely grotesquely humorous novels such as Sanctuary and As I Lay Dying. This might become clearer as we look at each step in Faulkner's development.

The early novels such as Soldier's Pay, Mosquitoes, and Sartoris are obviously stockly humorous. They all include elements of the tall tale structure and the process of bargaining with traders. There are also the elements of slapstick humor and mistaken situations, or the pure stock humor which comes from a stock character such as a servant or a preacher. For instance, we remember the cavortings of Januarius Jones in his humorous efforts to pursue Cecily Saunders; while both are stock humorous characters, they also participate in incidents of a stock comic nature such as when Jones fights George for Cecily's favor or when Jones loses his pants and then swears at the maid instead of Cecily. Mosquitoes includes the most obvious early examples of the tall tale at work when Fairchild seriously posits the story of the sheep which turn into alligators and then of the man who turns into an alligator or shark himself. The niece Pat also goes through some of the most ridiculous circumstances of a stock comic nature in her trek through the swamp which she has begun believing it will be quite a romantic adventure and just like a picnic. The figures of Mrs. Maurier and Mr. Talliaferro provide more stock humor from the nature of their characters as the society matron and the timid bachelor.
Sartoris also includes such stock comic figures as Aunt Jenny and old Bayard, and the Negro Simon. Aunt Jenny's commentary upon life in general and the particulars of her men family provides stock humor as does her antics with Doc Peabody over old Bayard's wart. Simon is particularly amusing as a stock comic Negro when he goes for that wild ride with young Bayard in the new car, speeding through the countryside and upsetting wagons along the way. These early examples of humor show up Faulkner's positive attitude toward the South particularly as he begins his Yoknapatawpha cycle in Sartoris. The stock humor is gentle and is used to emphasize or underline the theme of these novels as well as for comic relief from serious discussion, such as in Mosquitoes. In these early novels, Faulkner seems to be feeling his way and flexing his muscles to see what kind of effects he can use and the implications and interpretations of those comic effects.

The Sound and the Fury is not an obviously humorous novel since the theme and the action are serious, but nonetheless, it does include scenes and characters rich in stock humor. Any humor in The Sound and the Fury is completely stock humor coming mostly from the characters. Dilsey, Luster, Caspey and all the Negroes of the novel enhance the stock humor although that humor is always secondary to the serious theme and purpose of the novel. Quentin and Mrs. Compson also provide stock humor of character as does Jason although he provides that humor through much more extreme and exaggerated actions. With The Sound and the Fury we would be most tempted to say that the stock humor truly functions as comic relief from the most serious story of the downfall of individuals, a
family and the South. Although that function as comic relief might be valid, it is not the only function of the stock humor in the novel since the humor also indicates Faulkner's own attitude toward the South and his commendation of certain characteristics which it is necessary and important for the South to have. Dilsey is extremely loyal and understanding and sincere despite the unpleasant circumstances under which she labors in the Compson household and she therefore transcends her functions as a family servant to become the moral standard of the novel.

Mrs. Compson seems a minor figure, the stock comic hypochondriac and martyr and complainer, while she is also a symbol for the dying order and gentility and aristocracy which was once the South. Jason is the stock humorous figure of the miserly bachelor who is quite concerned with his external reputation and the reputation of his family and that is why he is so critical of Benjy. His concern with appearances while being a hypocrite himself provides much stock humor of the novel which reinforces the theme, underlines its importance, and provides comic relief from the more prominent tragedy of the Compson household.

By the time Faulkner comes to *As I Lay Dying*, the humor has become totally grotesque instead of totally stock; everything in this novel, all the action, the characters, the techniques and the theme contribute to the total effect of the novel as grotesque humor. Anse is the major grotesque comic figure since he is the human buzzard awaiting the burial of his wife so he can get his new teeth. Cash is the literalist who uses his mother's bread pans for carrying dung while Vardaman is the poor boy
who thinks his mother is a fish and bores holes in her coffin and her face in his wayward attempt to give her air to breathe. Darl is the mad boy who sets fire to a barn to rid the family of the curse of their mother's coffin but only provides Jewel with another incident for grotesque heroism. Dewey Dell's inertia has resulted in her being pregnant and she uses the funeral journey to find help for her condition while she is only misused again by a soda jerk parading as a physician. The action of the novel, the funeral journey of Addie Bundren's coffin from their home to the burial in Jefferson, is another aspect of the grotesque humor because everything which happens participates in that humor. Addie's coffin continually takes on a life of its own as it goes sliding into the wagon and then out again in the fording of the swollen river. Even the literary techniques of the novel add to the grotesque humor of it as we see in the mock epic nature of the novel and the folk tale nature of many of the sections voiced by Doc Peabody, Tull, Armstid, Cora and the rest of the townspeople. Finally, even the theme of the novel heightens the grotesque humor since, if the theme says that life is a reaffirmation, it also says that life is grotesque. The phoniness of a sacred ritual is the theme of the novel which we get through the grotesque humor of the funeral journey and the pious but hypocritical comments of Cora Tull. When we see the theme of the novel as an example of the separation between word and deed, we also see how the grotesque humor becomes that theme through the extreme antics of Anse in his attempts to carry out to the letter the promise he has made to his wife. The concern with hypocrisy and violated
customs reflects Faulkner's own attitude toward the South and his criticism of its phony rituals and hypocritical figures.

Sanctuary, like As I Lay Dying, is completely grotesque humor. The distorted figure of Popeye provides grotesque humor both in his physical characteristics (his mental or intellectual characteristics are almost totally ignored since he does not have any) and his actions throughout the novel. Popeye is impotent and so cannot rape Temple even though he desires to do so, and in frustration, he resorts to raping her with a corn cob. To cover his tracks and secure an alibi, Popeye then takes Temple to Memphis and sets her up in a whorehouse, an incident which should scandalize Temple, the fair Southern belle, but which she enjoys and actively participates in especially with Red. The most obviously grotesquely humorous scenes are the funeral of the gangster Red and the tea party at Miss Reba's afterwards and these incidents have most often been criticized as unintegrated and unnecessary to the main theme of the novel. In contrast, I believe that these scenes posit the theme of the novel directly and humorously since their major concern is with the hypocrisy of the system and its rituals. When a funeral and a wake are supposed to be serious occurrences and carried out according to precise rituals, Faulkner turns the same wake and funeral into grotesque humor in order to criticize the hypocrisy of that ritual. What is wrong with Popeye and the South is wrong with the world, and Sanctuary is one of Faulkner's attempts to communicate that discontent and criticism to his reader through the use of grotesque humor. The system of justice in the
South, criticized through the grotesque humor, is another theme of the novel, one which becomes apparent through Horace's misguided attempts to defend Lee Goodwin and the explanation of Popeye's ultimate fate. Popeye is arrested and tried and executed for a crime which he did not commit and during which he was miles away committing another crime. Faulkner seems to be saying in Sanctuary that the law will get the criminal in the end, even if for the wrong reason but that is not how it should be.

With Light in August and Absalom, Absalom! Faulkner seems to have come out of the cynicism and hurtfulness of the habit of grotesque humor into slightly more gentle stock humor. Both types of humor, grotesque and stock humor, exist in both these novels although neither novel is mainly a comic novel. When we have hurtful grotesque humor in either novel, it is tempered with more stock humor, with the attempt to balance the scale and give an unbiased view of the world.

The theme of Light in August concerns religion and its place in the world. We are given several stock comic preacher figures including Doc Hines, McEachern, Hightower and Byron Bunch; these men profess to be devout while only being selfishly orientated and motivated except for Byron who, although he is not a duly ordained minister, is the most genuinely religious and devout man in the novel. Byron also provides humor through his character and his ministrations for Lena where he becomes the stock comic character of a bungling expectant father despite the fact that he is not the father at all. Lena and Byron together come to symbolize the theme that sincerity and goodness have nothing to do with ordained
functions, since both of them are good people despite the fact that Byron is not an ordained minister and the fact that Lena cannot find or continually loses her "husband." In contrast, Joe Christmas and Joanna Burden portray the theme of hypocrisy in another way; Joe thumbs his nose at religion despite his Christian name and Joanna upholds the facade of a staunch Southern gentlewoman while actually she has a part nigger lover. Joe and Joanna give the grotesque humor of the novel in contrast to the stock humor which comes from Byron and Lena. Joanna is grotesquely funny in the manner of her death when her head is cut almost completely off and turned around backwards. Individuals, the community, and all humanity are responsible and guilty for the way of the world; everyone shares the hypocrisy of mankind and is therefore responsible for the guilt and the goodness which occur side by side.

*Absalom, Absalom!* also includes both stock and grotesque humor but both are very subtle and unobtrusive in the novel since it is not traditionally viewed as a comic novel. The stock humor comes from the figure of Rosa Coldfield whose tiny size is in complete contrast to the energy and spunk of her character; she is especially stockly humorous when she drags Quentin out to the old Sutpen place to discover the mystery of who is hiding there when she acts like the Southern belle who needs protection and so has brought along her own weapon, a rusty hatchet. More stock humor also comes from the the band of wild niggers which Sutpen has employed and the figure of Sutpen himself, whose story is a kind of parody of the Horatio Alger
The grotesque humor comes from the scene of Sutpen's wedding to Ellen Coldfield where the couple is pelted with garbage and attended by the band of wild niggers. It also comes from Shreve's final joke that soon the entire South will be overrun with mad niggers of Sutpen origin such as the boy Jim Bond, who is brawny but stupid. When we view the theme of the novel as a history of the South, we can see how Sutpen's story and the failure of his design epitomises that history and how, therefore, the stock humor underlines that theme. When we view the theme as Quentin's love and guilt complex over the South, and thereby Faulkner's own views of the South, we can see how the grotesque humor of the wedding of Sutpen, his death and Shreve's final joke are that theme. The stock humor provides some comic relief while being used to underline a theme while the grotesque humor is the theme and together they indicate Faulkner's ambivalent attitude toward the South, at one time loving and encouraging and at another critical and hateful.

The comic Snopes trilogy, *The Hamlet*, *The Town*, and *The Mansion*, also includes both stock and grotesque humor although these, and especially *The Hamlet*, are intended much more as humorous novels than are *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Light in August*. *The Hamlet* is probably the most completely humorous novel Faulkner wrote because it includes both types of humor as a major mode of operation. There are incidents of stock humor in the tall tales of the horse trades with Pat Stamper and Ab Snopes which remind the audience of similar laughter in those early novels. The characters of the Snopeses are stockily humorous in many ways but an especially good example
is the figure of I.O. with his continual mouthing of nonsensical proverbs. Eula's attack by Labove, the schoolteacher, and the sequence where Snopes bests the devil in a bargain over paradise also provide stock humor from action, character and the tall tale form. In addition, the incidents with Ike and his love for the cow and with Mink and his attempts to dispose of the dead body of Houston are entirely grotesque humor, thereby showing up Faulkner's attitude of criticism toward the South. The "Spotted Horses" sequences at the end of The Hamlet is one of the most famous in all of Faulkner's work and includes both stock humor and grotesque humor; the stock humor comes from the tall tale format, the exaggeration and the variety of action while the grotesque humor comes from the resulting lawsuits and the wayward effects of justice. Both the stock humor and the grotesque humor help to convey the theme of the novel which includes Faulkner's ambivalent attitude toward his native South.

The Town and The Mansion are both much less obviously humorous than The Hamlet but include both types of humor as well. Much of the humor of The Town, a series of tall tales strung together, comes from its format. Particular examples of stock humor include Eula's "attack" on Gavin Stevens and the story of Old Het and Mrs. Hait besting Snopes in a deal. Grotesque humor comes from the inscription about a dutiful wife which is put on Eula's tombstone and the appearance of Byron's grotesque children whom no one can handle and who arrive with shipping labels attached to their apparel. The major humor of The Mansion comes from the incidents with Mink newly out of jail and his feeble attempt at jail breaking in a
woman's clothes. Further, the incidents with Meadowfield and the hogs in his yard and the incident where Clarence Snopes, the politician, gets abused by a pack of dogs who think he is their watering patch also provide grotesque humor. The theme of the novel is voiced by Ratliff when he says that we are all poor sons of bitches but that life goes on anyway and is carried out through Faulkner's use of both stock and grotesque humor.

By the time we get to *The Reivers*, the humor is again completely stock humor of character and action and so we can say that Faulkner has come full circle to the beginning or that he has mellowed from the hurtful business of *Sanctuary* and *As I Lay Dying*. The mode of this novel is predominantly stock comic as the mode of *The Hamlet* is also predominantly comic although that novel includes both stock and grotesque humor. By this time in his life, Faulkner has evolved in his use of humor as a technique to the point where stock humor is enough to fulfill his theme. *The Reivers* has been criticized because of the romanticized fantasy world of good hearted prostitutes and the good triumphing over evil which it posits as the growing medium for Lucius. But that same criticism might be turned to an advantage if we see the novel as an affirmation of the goodness of the South and a directly prejudiced opinion from Faulkner. We know how hard it is to criticize something or someone you love even as you can see the need for criticism; Faulkner felt just that way about the South throughout his career and those mixed feelings communicated themselves to the reader through the stock humor and the grotesque humor. This last novel of Faulkner's is indeed an appropriate one for him and
us since it allows us to see that Faulkner was not soured by the evil of the South; this last novel reaffirms the qualities of the South worth commendation. Although Faulkner could see the need for criticism and communicate that need and that criticism to the reader through grotesque humor, he has chosen to end his work with a positive statement reaffirming his faith in the South and the world.
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The dissertation submitted by Justine M. Manley has been read and approved by members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date

Advisor's Signature