SIX APPROACHES TO THE MODERN SHORT STORY
IN THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES

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PREFACE

Post-World War One social and literary ferment in the Southern United States gave birth to a New Criticism and a New Tradition in writing; in what became known as the 'Southern renaissance', a wealth of literature appeared amidst the social and economic poverty of the late Confederacy, a harvest of plenty in a land of dearth. Over half a century later, the election of the first Southern President of the United States, since before the American Civil War, has focused popular attention upon the South with an intensity before left to the serious reader alone. It is new appropriate, therefore, to examine some of the wealth familiar to the serious reader since the advent of modern writing in the modern South, particularly those writers found at the core of the 'renaissance', and the genre which best - except perhaps for the short poem - exhibits the facets of their writing which contain literary merit, the short story.

The short story itself will be examined to indicate why, as a genre, it best reveals the qualities of the New Tradition, the New Criticism, and the Southern 're-birth'; six approaches to the modern short story will be examined to see what qualities are revealed. These six approaches are taken from those writers/groups of writers at the centre of Southern short story writing: William Faulkner, the Fugitives, Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty, and Southern black short prose fiction writers. Textual analysis derived from close reading of selected central works of these writers should reveal their literary merit and perhaps a general pattern of the quality of modern Southern short story writing.
About sixty years after the War Between the States, an idea entered the public imagination that the fundamental differences between the late Confederacy and the rest of the United States were somehow darkly symbolic and mysterious. Curiosity and interest replaced suspicion; condescending prejudice against the life and literature of the South, which had existed almost consciously in the minds of post-bellum Northern critics, was eroded by the efforts of a new generation of writers who gave force to an almost mystical quality of 'Southern-ness'. Southern subjects in Southern frameworks found universal expression.

Immediately, the greatest public impact was perhaps that of the novel, but among the writers from the area since 1920 are some of the finest exponents of short fiction in the English language. That they are distinctly Southern without being mere local colourists is due to their very personal use of the genre.

The short story does not offer the opportunities for character development of the novel or for plot development of the play, nor is it always easy to read. But it excels the novel in creating the immediate atmosphere of a particular scene, and it surpasses the drama in its pictorial vividness and poetic concentration. It has a way of reflecting social experience through concentrated image and expression which places it between the novel and the poem as a literary form. By its capacity for preserving special qualities of a writer's background, it has always that critical interest that attaches to the imaginative evocation of the sense of time and place.
Short stories written from the same background have many common focuses of interest which do not make them mere stories of 'local colour': theme, style and tone, language, diction, structure, and pace.

The characteristics of such stories are related, but not identical. If we are looking for such relatedness in Southern short stories, we should approach the stories from a number of different angles.

This study examines six possible approaches to the short fiction of the South since 1920 through a critical evaluation of central works of William Faulkner, the Fugitives, Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty, and some black Southern writers. Taken together, these authors or groups of authors may help us to identify the family resemblances of the Southern short story.

The picture of the Southern short story that such an approach will give us is, as has already been suggested, that of a kind of writing somewhere between the short novel and the atmospheric lyrical poem. The same generalisation could be made about good short stories from any region. But certain elements in Southern life, in particular what may be called the combination of a static and a vivid quality, make that life a peculiarly attractive subject matter for the writer of short stories. Apart from the combination of the static and the vivid, a sense of wistfulness for the past and of latent violence under a polite surface lend themselves admirably to the short story writer's purposes.
In the Spring 1973 issue of The Minnesota Review, in a symposium on the short story, Charles E. May said, 'Although the short story is respected by its practitioners, it is largely ignored by both the popular and the serious reader'.

He pointed out that writers do not survive by writing short stories, and implied that no large audience for the short story exists outside of the group who practice the art.

May appears to be echoing H.E. Bates, who in 1972 said,

To this pessimistic picture must be added the fact that the reading public, not only in Britain and America, but also on the continent, shows no disposition to revise its age-old prejudice against reading stories in volume form. It grants some exceptions to this of course, as in the case of Maugham, Kipling and some others, but by and large it views volumes of short stories with grave and unwarranted suspicion. The young short story writer, even if able to get his stories published between two covers, need look for no vast fortune in that direction.

This sentiment has a long-standing history, for in 1917 James Branch Cabell said, 'For that "people will not buy a volume of short stories" is notorious to all publishers. To offset the axiom there are no doubt incongruous phenomena... but none the less, the superstition has its force'.

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Of course, the short story is not neglected. The popularity of *The New Yorker* and other high quality magazines is not diminished; the re-publication of collections of not only Kipling and Maugham, but Joseph Conrad, O. Henry, D.H. Lawrence, and Katherine Mansfield continues apace; and Ernest Hemingway, Graham Greene, and P.G. Wodehouse enjoy perennial revival. There are many readers for whom James Joyce's early genius presents itself more adequately in *Dubliners*, particularly 'The Dead' and 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room' than in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* or the fragment of *Stephen Hero*. Logan Sheirs feels that Chekhov's true greatness is in his short stories rather than in his plays. It is less in connection with high criticism than in relation to the much wider popularity of the novel that short fiction appears to be overlooked.

Kingsley Amis has said: 'We can be pretty certain that our literary tastes are arrived at not so much by conscious choice as in response to the less-than-conscious demands of our temperament'. If Amis is correct, his statement may give a clue to the apparent slighting of the short story. The novel does not exact in either the reader or, sometimes, the writer the precise attention to detail required by the short story. The novel's handling of time is less concentrated; its handling of plot and character, more extensive than that of the short story, is also less compact or dense.

This condition seems to imply a public preference for fairly easy reading. But it does not necessarily indicate a general bias towards mere length, simple and repetitive description, or sensational narrative that does not invite criticism. There are great novels and trivial stories.

The most naive reader of the crudest stop-and-go novel demands a certain amount of characterization, psychological motivation, meaning, style, and form. His threshold interests may not extend beyond these, but deeper interests include ideas and attitudes, relationships of characters and action, structure, sequence, and logic. The reader who turns his attention to the novels of writers like Leo Tolstoy and James Joyce must bring much more to bear, an interest in the richness of the texture of society and in the living contradictions of human emotion.

The best short stories cater also for our sense of social texture and human contradictoriness but, leaving very much implicit — presenting often the central complication without a preliminary exposition or a final resolution — they demand a delicate concentration of attention which even many quite intelligent readers are not prepared to give; there is nowhere to relax.

In May's *Minnesota Review* survey of short story criticism, he complained that there was only one scholarly journal devoted to the short story while the novel had at least half a dozen, that there was no adequate full-length theoretical study of the short story although there were many of the novel, and that there was not even a category for the short story in standard bibliographies of criticism.  

6. May, p. 163.
While this complaint may appear to be more a condemnation of scholarly criticism than any other cause of short story neglect, it must be balanced against the fact that the publishing outlets for short fiction are few and ever-diminishing. Magazines like The New Republic no longer publish fiction, and newspapers which used to publish stories in the manner of the New York Herald Tribune are no longer in existence. At the same time, a number of important quarterlies - some like The Sewanee Review and Shenandoah with Southern associations - print short stories regularly. Such quarterlies, financed for the most part by American universities, have prestige but not a wide readership.

What may be the case is that in America the serious short story is published mainly in academic literary quarterlies, and has a serious but small audience. The popular short story of the old Saturday Evening Post or Nash's Magazine type has been replaced by the short television comedy, thriller, or sentimental story: a form which demands even less concentrated attention than the old 'popular' short story used to do. The short story (like those of Ring Lardner) which combined popular humour and acute social satire is a form that has vanished.

By contrast with the novel, over the whole history of fiction, the short story has perhaps been thought of as a slight or ineffective form, perhaps an abbreviated novel used by serious writers for practice (at the same time, it should be noted that the first serious European attempt at prose fiction was a collection of short stories within a wider narrative framework, Boccacio's Decameron). From the sixteenth century onwards, many writers appeared embarrassed to use the shorter forms of fiction. They incorporated short stories in longer works,

justifying them as 'more meritorious' works, or accompanying them by explanations for their appearance which are almost apologies.

Though rarely strictly parables, the stories of Miguel Cervantes are termed 'exemplary novels' by their author. The works are of short story length, and the best 'examples' are literary, not moral. It is not necessary to be familiar with sixteenth century literary Spanish idiom to appreciate the covert satire in 'Rinconete and Cortadillo'. Monopodio's 'art' of retribution is succinctly expressed, 'I make it a rule to keep secret little affairs of delicacy; and would rather nail up twenty cuckold-horns, than give intelligence of one'.
The statement might be exemplary advice in a sixteenth century romance, but it is satirical in the knowledge that Monopodio's fledgeling 'artists' earlier employ cudgel, whip, and knife in undelicate ways.

Three centuries later, before the rise of De Maupassant, Stevenson, and Poe, the short story was excused by Sir Walter Scott as academic journalism ('The Bridal of Janet Dalrymple'), by Honoré de Balzac as single reminiscences in a series ('The Mysterious Mansion' in Scenes from Private Life), and by Charles Dickens as an auxiliary to the novel ('The Old Man's Tale of the Queer Client' in Pickwick Papers). Until about the middle of the last century, then,

the short story or tale was thought of as an 'occasional' sort of writing, making a journalistic appeal or an appeal of mere entertainment, and was not taken seriously as an artistic form. (We know, however, from Jane Austen - the famous 'Only a novel!' passage in Northanger Abbey - that the novel itself took some time to establish its artistic importance).

The nature of the short story is so elusive that, although it is a recognized form, there is little agreement about its definition. Most studies are directed towards what it is not rather than what it is, its history is disputed, and the only generally accepted critical statement concerning its form is that it purports to be prose fiction of more modest length than the novel.

The novel, though a relatively new form, has dominated much of nineteenth and twentieth century literature. It is a readable and adaptable genre, and like the short story, as times and ideas change, the novel changes in style, content, purpose, and form. It accommodates and explores new visions of reality, it asks new questions and answers some old. Most novels contain, though some more explicitly, the same basic elements as short stories: plot, conflict, characters, and setting – including exposition, complication, resolution. However, the novel uses different methods for different purposes. Novels often do not have a definable point of focus; their greater length allows greater scope for exploration and development of a wide variety of ideas and actions. The author of a novel strives for unity, but he is very often concerned with groups of characters in a number of situations, a number of
settings, and complicated, multiple plots, elements permitted by length. (There are of course short novels with simple plots, and there is the novella, somewhere between an unusually long short story and an unusually short novel – Thomas Mann was a master of this form).

Though both the novelist and the short story writer present a view of reality, however fictional, the story is usually limited in its scene and range of characters, the novel is allowed a much broader perspective.

Theorists in the field of short fiction (who usually confine themselves to brief essays or introductions to anthologies) create contradictions when they attempt further definitions of form than length. The short story is said to meet certain a priori conditions: it must be totally unified, it must concern itself with a single action, it must be within a definite range of length, it must excite, it must have a moral, it must not make a display of the central character’s lack of objectivity, even where his judgement is finally felt by the reader to be untrustworthy. These and other criteria have been suggested but on rather arbitrary grounds. It would be easy to draw up a list of good short stories to which some or perhaps all of the criteria fail to apply.

Modern criticism of the short story began with Edgar Allan Poe’s review of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Twice-Told Tales. It was the first essay to claim unity of effect and a single central impression as the marks of the true short story.12

Professor Brander Matthews, in his essay 'The Philosophy of the Short Story', stated that the short story deals with one character, one event, one emotion. Anton Chekhov claimed that the writer must be objective to the point of excluding subjectivity from the story: the hero's state of mind must never be depicted. Henry James said that there is no place in the short story for the novel's preoccupation with time, in any form. Bret Harte said that the American short story is derived from the direct style of newspaper reporting. And, from Sherwood Anderson to W. Somerset Maugham, the short story is held to be an art form distinct from the story which is merely short, though few definitions of this difference agree.

Formal definition in this manner appears to be an urge to separate the literary story from the anecdote. In a sense, the title of Hawthorne's collection Twice-Told Tales could serve as a by-word for the movement. The simple tale simply told has undergone a re-making which has produced a work of art. The idea that the story becomes art through a conscious act implies that there is a form for the short-story-which-is-art distinct from the form of the short-story-which-is-anecdote. This is not the case; the difference is not formal.


The attempt at definition by form appears to arise from the compulsion for the idea of order at the latter part of the nineteenth century. After unrest at the middle of the century—the French revolution, the British Corn Law Riots and Chartism, the American Civil War—came a period which was a reaction against disorder. The interest in the natural sciences and the human sciences, such as sociology and anthropology, no doubt also played a part. It was a time for formal definition, and as noted in the critical works cited, formal definition most often meant definition by form.¹⁵

Criticism has regarded the short story in English as an art form only since the middle of the nineteenth century. The short story per se is thought of as having evolved recently because its literary examination is a relatively recent occurrence. Hawthorne, Irving, and Poe did not create the short story, but only recognized it as a vehicle for literary merit.

The modern short story is said to have begun in 1832 with the publication of Edgar Allan Poe's 'Metzengerstein', in which the technique of single effect appeared.¹⁶ Had every short story writer who followed Poe utilized the single effect, it could be termed a condition of short story form, of structure. Had Matthew's or Canby's rigidly defined terms for short story structure been followed by succeeding writers and critics, their definitions would have become accepted for short story form. Had the definitions of other


critics received common critical and artistic acceptance, they would have become conditions of form. But from 1832 to the present, every short story writer, every critic has seen the short story in differing terms; although formal definition is critically implied beginning with Poe, no standard form is artistically employed.

One of the best definitions of short story form remains that of Washington Irving. In a letter to Henry Brevoort, 11 December 1824, he said, 'I consider a story merely as a frame upon which to stretch my materials'.

His statement seems to imply that the 'frame' is not as important as 'the materials', or the games with verbal tone and texture that were Irving's own main interest. We are fascinated less by the story than by the storyteller's voice and attitudes — by, for instance, Irving's own habitual demurely ironic humour and his liking for the pose of the small-town gossip. The 'materials' stretched are those of his own personal style and approach to life. It is an implication that the art of fiction from Edgar Allan Poe to William Faulkner is only advanced and sophisticated storytelling.

Ancient Greece, ancient Rome, ancient India, Persia, and Arabia fostered literary artists who excelled in the short form of prose fiction. 'Short story' will continue to be applied to works of prose fiction from stories at the dawn of literary history to the artful masterpieces of the twentieth century.

It may be the simple recounting of a tale, the sketch which is a fleeting impression, the brief intensity of a vignette, the highly polished work of single effect, or that more lengthy writing which approaches the short novel, or novella.

The exact status of even the novella is uncertain. A story of about one hundred pages long is generally called a short novel or novella, and is thought to be nearer in kind to the novel than to the short story, but the major studies of the prose form are unclear. One of the foremost, a two volume critical anthology by Ronald Paulson, The Novelette, states that the short novel is 'a narrative prose that is longer than the short story and shorter than the novel'. But then it claims that Boccaccio's Decameron (1353) tales are fore-runners of the short novel, not the short story, although they are 'the length of what we would call a short story'. The line between the short novel and the short story, according to Paulson, is that the short novel says something 'large and important as the novel' while the short story 'presents only a fragment which implies the rest of a completed action'.

Many short stories are more than fragments, and it is possible to find good stories which break this rule as easily as those which disregard Poe's single effect, James's timelessness, and Chekhov's lack of subjectivity.

Theories of short fiction form are often only personal stipulations. Poe's theory that a short story should be read at one sitting and should give a single impression based upon a single situation is reflected in his writing. Even a tale such as 'William Wilson' which covers a lifetime of psychological entanglement is a single situation. The curious association and introspection of the narrator is concerned with the single effect of identity. As he kills his life-long adversary Wilson, the narrator destroys himself. Poe has him declare, 'Not a thread in all his raiment - not a line in all the marked and singular lineaments of his face which was not, even in the most absolute identity, mine own!'

James Joyce's complex stories are based on a view of a much more diffuse world; they are filled with complicated situations and are often too long to be read at one sitting. A story like 'The Dead' has unity, but it is not limited to a single situation. Its unity is thematic and symbolic, through the use of cold and snow, and the snow is more than a supplementary descriptive image. The implications of Joyce's statement 'Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland' have to be grasped to understand his view of man's existence as a living death. Snow, the symbol of a frozen spiritual emptiness, unifies the story by providing a link between the living and the dead. But, it unifies a long series of impressions and complications, not just a single situation.

A workable definition of short story form cannot exclude all stories which do not fit the prescriptions of just one writer, however great. Neither can it exclude stories which are not weighty revelations of what W.H. Auden calls 'the real Nature concealed behind or within the stream of phenomena'. What we refer to as the 'tale' is perhaps a simpler, earlier, or cruder form of the short story: simple or sophisticated, it remains a kind of short story. Barret Clark and Maxim Lieber, in their introduction to Great Short Stories of the World, say: 'While it is quite true that Maupassant was a more highly inspired artist than say the Seventeenth Century Dutchman Jacobs Cats, it does not follow that Cats' fable... is not a story because The Necklace is a masterpiece'.

Even Henry James is not so far withdrawn from the marketplace; it is only his style of storytelling which separates his works from the tales of Scheherazade. The difference between the story and the twice-told tale is not form, but style; style draws the dividing line between the story which is a folk tale or personal anecdote and that which is a work of art. There are anecdotes without pretension of being anything but simple entertainment. There are highly polished works which provide enjoyment on a subtler level. For the purposes of this paper, the two strands will be termed the anecdotal and the literary.

The place where the anecdotal strand of storytelling and the literary strand interweave is difficult to find. At some point between direct transcription and literary tale the conscious act of creation takes place. Art may or may not be employed in the simple re-telling of a folk tale or reminiscence, but the further the story is removed from its source, the more it becomes woven up in the literary strand. When a tale is written down, it becomes subject to the judgements of literary merit, simply because all the meaning has to be in the words - it can no longer derive connotation and nuance from gesture, facial expression, or tone of voice. And, as William Faulkner said, it must be written 'in the way that people can understand it', using, 'a language which is accepted and in which the words have specific meanings that everybody agrees on'.

The re-telling of a folk tale or personal memory can be in any of the varying degrees from direct transcription to stylized elaboration. The more exact the transcription, the more the anomalies which exist between written and spoken language have to be taken into consideration. It would appear to be a task for scribe and philologist rather than for writer and literary critic. However, between spoken and written language anomalies such as dialect, more anecdotal than literary, sometimes nearly remove a tale from the language altogether. The writer and critic must then be called upon to make the story intelligible, and that creative act merges the literary with the anecdotal.

23. William Faulkner, Faulkner in the University, Class Conferences At the University of Virginia, 1957-58, edited by Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner, (Charlottesville, Virginia, 1959), pp. 52-53.
Dialect is an important facet of short story writing in the South. A look at its progression from what is ostensibly direct transcription to what is deliberately created reveals one of the points at which the two strands of storytelling interweave.

Perhaps the most familiar dialect tales of the South are in Negro-English jargon, beginning with the 'Uncle Remus' stories of Joel Chandler Harris. Harris was followed by such writers as C.C. Jones, Jr. (Negro Myths from the South Georgia Coast, 1888), M.P. Milne-Horne (Mama's Black Nurse Stories, 1890), and P.C. Smith (Annancy Stories, 1899). A philologist, Loreta Todd, in her language study, Pidgins and Creoles, said of the writers who produced such stories that they had 'a profound appreciation of the culture of the ex-slaves, and their writings reveal this culture to the white world', but that the works were literature 'aimed at a non-pidgin-speaking audience which was encouraged to see such language varieties as "quaint"'.

Most of the stories were presented as direct transcriptions, not inventions of the authors. At what point did the creative process replace transcription? In 1930, S.G. Stoney and G.M. Shelby published an introduction to Gullah, a dialect so distinct from most forms even of Anglo-American Negro dialect that Todd considered it a separate language. The book, Black Genesis,

is a collection of stories introduced by a history of Gullah as a combination of English, African, West Indian and American influences. The difficulty of direct transcription was pointed out by Shelby and Stoney, who quoted the black servant who, when asked by his master if it were cold, responded, "'E cold, but 'e aint so cold, but 'e cold, dough", meaning that it was noticeably cold, but not extremely so - 'It is not hard to explain, but how can you make printed words say it as it was delivered?"26

At this point, at least for Shelby and Stoney, the scientist was replaced by the writer. Imaginative sympathy modified direct transcription 'to secure clarity' in the two tales collected as originally told. For the others, they 'tried to make... fictional development fill in the action and setting that the embodied beliefs or themes of these stories deserved'.27

Julia Peterkin, whose short stories will be discussed later in this paper, also transcribed Gullah dialect tales. Her transcriptions were based solely upon imaginative sympathy, 'as if she were writing the dialect freely by ear and not following any standard orthography'. She claimed that she was 'not remotely an authority on Gullah, or any other Negro dialect'. In terms of imaginative sympathy, however, a black woman on Peterkin's Carolina plantation spoke of her, 'Miss has got a white skin fo-true, but I believe his heart is black as my-own'.28

27. Shelby and Stoney, p. xix.
It does not take an extreme dialect like Gullah to foster imaginative sympathy and a creative effort. Roark Bradford's tales in the dialect of the Louisiana Negro which formed the basis for Marc Connelly's successful play *The Green Pastures* (1929), despite their presentation as transcriptions from oral tradition, are imaginative expansions upon the original tales. Setting the tone for comment within the narratives are titles such as 'A Preliminary Motion in Judge Pilate's Court', 'The Stratagem of Joshua', and 'Nigger Deemus', suggesting that the link to oral tradition of these supposed Biblical explications is not as direct as claimed.\(^{29}\)

These dialect stories, whatever their origins, lay no claim to literary merit. Their success is measured in terms of curiosity; they are intentionally primitive tales of the anecdotal strand, whether or not they are direct transcriptions.

The anecdotal strand depends to some extent upon audience acceptance of the nature of the story. It is a dependence derived from the universal oral tradition in which the audience is expected to be familiar with the story line, or at least with the framework of ballad or tale. The telling is often in the first person, an implication that the related story can be verified as one of personal experience. However elaborate the story becomes, it begins with the premise that it is a description of an actual set of circumstances.

The more removed a story becomes from the oral tradition, the more its graphic presentation encourages the artistic to replace the primitive. And, the conscious act of creation encourages fiction to replace reportorial fact. That is not to say that the truthful is exchanged for the fanciful. The handling of fiction demands a literary truth, a verisimilitude, described by Katharine Anne Porter in personal terms as being 'true in the way that a work of fiction should be true, created out of all the scattered particles of life I was able to absorb and combine and shape into a new living being'.

The new living being must be authentic; the good writer in the literary strand is aware that his audience requires that his tale be probable. Firsthand testimony is preferable to hearsay, and twentieth century writers in particular have attempted to create fiction which is realistic. Authenticity is established by point of view, the second place where the anecdotal interweaves with the literary strand of storytelling. The anecdotal use of the first person contrasts with the classical idea of projecting a character whose rhetoric provides his own ethical proof, as described by Aristotle (Rhetoric, I, 2, 1356a). A writer of the calibre of William Faulkner generates character, rhetoric, and opinion from his narrator's point of view, as will be seen in the next chapter.

Nick Carraway in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Mark Twain's firsthand accounts, and Edgar Allan Poe's many first person narratives all satisfy the desire for immediacy, for authentication. Washington Irving's story, 'The Specter Bridegroom', which is told for all other purposes from the third person omniscient point of view, in describing the decaying castle of Baron Von Landshort, reads, 'its old watch-tower may still be seen struggling, like the former possessor I have mentioned, to carry a high head, and look down upon a neighboring country'.

For authenticity, Irving borrows from the anecdotal strand, however briefly, the role of storyteller-observer.

It is not the use of first person narrative, however, but how it is used that is the subject of literary judgement. The sparse style of Jesse Stuart is best adapted to simple tales of Appalachia in folk tradition, and his use of first person narrative is ideally suited to back-porch reminiscence, 'I put on my overcoat. I put gloves on my hands and a scarf around my neck. It is cold.'

Contrast that style with Faulkner's 'Monday is no different from any other week day in Jefferson now.' By the use and positioning of the one word, 'now', Faulkner established firsthand authentication with more immediacy than Stuart does by using a handful of personal pronouns. Stuart can be said to be

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part of the anecdotal strand; Faulkner, through his style, has lifted a facet of that strand into the literary.

What can be said about the short story, then, of its literary position, form, and nature?

Though it does not offer the new writer the chance of immediate wealth or fame as the novel does, the short story is not ignored. Some of the best American quarterlies continue to print new stories often making a demand for the subtlest and most alert attention. The classics of the American short story from Hawthorne and Poe to Katharine Anne Porter or Ernest Hemingway are kept constantly in print.

The feeling that the short story is neglected relates to the much wider popularity, often among less discriminating readers, of the novel. Unconscious changes in reading habits, including a loss due to the television habit of the power of concentrated attention, may account for the virtual disappearance of the 'popular' short story. Even very good novels tend to allow the reader's attention to wander from time to time, or allow him to skip. Popular novels, especially when full of episodes of sex and violence, allow themselves to be read in a state approaching the daydream. All these factors make the novel a better investment for the publisher. Editors again may find that a novel with its large simple pattern lends itself to more readable reviewing than a collection of contrasting short stories.
Yet the short story as such is not a slight or an ineffective genre. The various writers up to the middle of the last century who buried their short fiction in longer works or made facetious excuses for it had no real cause to think their short stories less worthy than their novels on the basis of form alone. What is true, perhaps, is that because of the rather low esteem in which it was held it took the short story about a century longer than the novel to become a truly sophisticated form on which a writer of genius, like Conrad or James, lavished all his care.

We have seen that it seems either fruitless or arbitrary to define the short story by purely formal criteria, but that a distinction between the spoken anecdote and the written text is helpful. We shall perhaps find it more helpful to think of the nature rather than the form of the short story. The nature of the short story, in the sense in which we are using the word, is defined by style.

From the purely formal point of view, it is enough to think of the short story as a piece of prose fiction which is both short and complete. Because it does not have the length of the novel, it will not have the novel's character and plot development. Because it is compact, it presents a denser, more immediate view of a particular scene. This view encourages pictorial vividness, poetic concentration, and expression of the special qualities of the writer's background. Because the short story is compact, it will demand more than the superficial attention of the reader. I summarise points already made.
There is unity, an artistic unity originating with the writer. It is ultimately the writer who uses his personal style to give his short stories their special nature. The short story presents the writer with a unique opportunity for freedom, but freedom built upon artistic control. The artist creates his own idea of the nature of the story with every story. O. Henry's 'The Furnished Room' depends not on a functional relationship among its elements, but on arbitrary (though controlled) manipulation by the author. The irony in that tale is accidental compared with the irony in Luigi Pirandello's 'War', or in Anton Chekhov's 'The Lament'.34 'The Lament' depends upon revelation of the cab driver's character, 'War' depends upon plot development, but little action, whereas Stephen Crane's 'The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky' depends upon plot development, but much action, and so on. In a sense, every short story success is a breakthrough beyond what is systematic or predictable.

If a short story is successful because it goes beyond the predictable and systematic, what is a modern short story? The question of modernity recalls the contributions made by Hawthorne, Poe, and Irving. Earlier it was put forth that they did not create the short story, but only recognized it as a vehicle for literary merit. That statement is not meant to imply that they were the first to so recognize the genre. There have been short fiction artists for thousands of years. Of an anonymously written story 'The Two Brothers', the product of the workshop of the scribe Anena, of the time of Ramses II in ancient Egypt, Barret Clark and

Maxim Lieber said, 'As in all great art, we are here impressed by the modernity of the author's attitude, which is only another way of saying that he understood his characters and was an accomplished artist'.

Although Clark and Lieber published their worldwide collection over fifty years ago, it may still be said that an accomplished artist's works are immediately appropriate, or modern. Of course such considerations as historical perspective and use of language are factors which date stories. Not only Anglo-Saxon, Middle English, or Elizabethan are avoided by the modern story writer in the presentation of his tale, but the idiom of Daniel Defoe in the eighteenth century, as well. And, although modern literature is generally conceded to have begun between 1860 and 1880, few short story writers since 1920 have used the idiom employed by Thomas Hardy in his first published work in 1871.

The good writer's works, of whatever age, contain an immediate appropriateness, but it is not necessary to designate some short stories 'modern' arbitrarily. For the purposes of this study, the term 'modern' will be applied by historical perspective to Southern short stories published since 1920. The period since 1920, in the work for instance of the 'Fugitive' group in verse and criticism as well as fiction, is often called 'the Southern Renaissance'. One historical factor was undoubtedly the slightly delayed impact of the First World War, and its moral aftermath, on Southern writers. This fact has been

35. Clark and Lieber, p. 4.
widely recognised by critics. Arthur Mizener, in the 1967 edition of Modern Short Stories, devoted one-fourth of the collection to Southern short story writers, saying, 'It has often been noticed that a remarkable number of America's gifted writers of the last fifty years have come from the South'.

Arlin Turner introduced his 1960 Southern Stories, 'the South has produced a good proportion of the best short stories written in America'.

Alfred Kazin, in Bright Book of Life, 1971, said 'In these postwar years, it looked as if "the South" had become the best country for American literature'.

And, Robert Penn Warren, in the signal 1937 anthology A Southern Harvest, commented, 'Southern writers of fiction have, in recent years, been highly advertised, and there has been some talk of a Southern renaissance... There is, in fact, a kind of literary ferment in the South'.


Although this literary ferment has been thoroughly documented, there has been little research into its genesis. Perhaps, as it chronicles so much violence, frustration and defeat, it was born out of the frustrating muddle of events which occurred in the South from the beginning of the First World War, precipitated by the Southerner's having to fight side by side with the hated Yankee against a common enemy.

After the nightmare of Reconstruction, the days before the First World War must have appeared relatively simple. Positions were easier to define: on the side of non-intervention were those who were embittered, who loved and hated and clung to the events of the past. On the side of joining the Allies were those more liberal Southerners who wanted the South to forget the past, to emulate the North. These divisions were more readily propounded in the social and cultural life of the South than in any political attitude, however. The days just before the First World War seemed safer, more secure. In literature, a white man, Joel Chandler Harris, became the recognised spokesman for the black man, while the works of the leading black writer Charles W. Chesnutt were considered merely curiosities. Chesnutt's fellow North Carolinian, Walter Hines Page, became editor of The Forum, World's Work, Atlantic Monthly, adviser to Houghton-Mifflin, founder of Doubleday-Page and Company, and United States Ambassador to the Court of St. James. Such a career did not reflect a general ferment; great Southern individuals succeeded, but the South slept.
At the end of the First World War, the ferment began. In November 1917, H.L. Mencken had published 'The Sahara of the Bozart' in the New York Evening Mail. He was immediately censured by Southern congressmen, newspapermen, and academics. The censure was, in turn, derided in the North, Mencken hailed as the South's leading intelligence (he was a Maryland man, but of German ancestry, philosophy, and taste, a disciple of Nietzsche). As if answering the challenge, or returning the threat of his contention that 'it would be impossible in all history to match such a complete drying up of a civilization', the civilization produced a new wave of writers. The South looked at itself, redefined its fears and purposes, and the Southern 'renaissance' began.

The redefined identity of the South extended beyond the physical outline of the thirteen 'battle flag' states held together below the Mason-Dixon Line by Indian Territory, tidewater region, and Appalachia. It was, as recorded by J.W. Corrington and Miller Williams in their introduction to Southern Writing in the Sixties,

an opaque and insoluble salt, with crystal faces and inner forces called KKK and SCEF, redbone and WASP, nigger and Negro, cap'n and cajun and hick. It is a river of sound, holy-roller shouts and the incantations of the Bible, beer-drinking honky-tonk music and gospel songs. It's an uneasy place, a landscape haunted by ghosts that can never leave because they have nowhere to go. It's haunted by Robert E. Lee, of course, and by Jeb Stuart, by Medgar Evers and Emmet Till. It is haunted by James Bowie and Huey Long and Bunk Johnson, by William Faulkner and Theo G. Bilbo and Hank Williams. 41

40. H.L. Mencken, as quoted in 'Mencken and the South', by Oscar Cargill, Georgia Review, 6 (Winter 1952), 369-76 (p. 372).
The art, culture, and civilization of a land are derived from the mental, emotional, and spiritual qualities of its people. There are also basic environmental influences which provide a background for the artist, but do not necessarily determine the outcome of the art. The writer responds to his background, but it is the manner of his response which determines merit.

The Southern short story writer's background avoids a narrow description. Tidewater Virginia is very different from the South Carolina Up-country or the Georgia plains which differ greatly with each other as much as they do with Tennessee Appalachia, the Alabama heartlands, or the Louisiana delta. The South is not an area with a few broad simple similarities, but remarkably various. Yet there are connecting links, among which are attitudes to history and place (with attendant elements of slavery, defeat, frustration, and violence), to religion (sin, salvation, ritual, symbolism), and to the family (ascendancy of women, individualism, education, art).

Running through Southern writing is an undercurrent of feeling that history is important to the Southern condition, that there was once a grand past, now fading. The feeling is heightened by nebulous fears associated with guilt about slavery or the threat of a continued Reconstruction, self-imposed.

More precious to the Southerner than perhaps spurious saint's bones were to a medieval believer are the physical links with the past, and perhaps more wide-spread. When Truman Capote needed a weapon at hand for his antagonist Eunice in 'My Side of the Matter',
it was natural for him to have her reach for her father's readily accessible Civil War sword. John Bell Clayton's 'Visitor from Philadelphia' turns on the point of history recalled by an old photograph. Peter Taylor's World War II sergeant in 'Rain in the Heart' considers a Civil War background as a symbol of the only reality. In a sense, he is the new South, forced into a modern age without an important enough reason to continue. He wants to become a Confederate soldier instead of remaining a G.I. so that his battlegrounds will not be abstract.

Not every Southerner is a historian, but every Southerner is familiar with the historical aftermath of slavery. The difficult and often ambiguous position of the Negro is a major undercurrent in most modern Southern short fiction. Not only the poor black of popular tradition, but a coloured race which encompasses a social cross-section with its middle class, and even its small upper class, is an important part of the writer's background. Blacks, though subdued by a dominant social and political system alien to their own, include members who acquire varying degrees of success in their own separate world, as do all cultures and sub-cultures.

Slavery also gave the South a dual culture, sometimes seen as a split personality, sometimes as tandem personalities. The

whole course of literature is enriched by the juncture of the races, simply because each race has attempted to explain itself and its counterpart to itself (and sometimes to its counterpart). It is evident in the anecdotal stories referred to earlier, whose primitive presentations make literary judgements superfluous. It is apparent in the search for personal heritage in the literature of symbolism explored by writers like Diane Oliver and Ralph Ellison.

Oliver's Reverend Davis and Sergeant Kearns in 'Neighbors' are complex symbols of withdrawal, explored in great detail through a story line of deceptive simplicity.\(^{45}\) Ralph Ellison uses suggestion to describe a physical setting which increases Todd's character development in 'Flying Home'. The pilot has crashed in his actual air voyage, but symbolically he has completed another flight, through defeat and frustration to an understanding of his identity.\(^{46}\)

Slavery contributed to violence, a part of Southern life in frontier days. The white's position was one of authority; a sense of power grew from the rugged outdoor life of most males, and merged with a romantic disposition derived from early fascination with adventure stories. Sir Walter Scott was widely

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read, and together with Arthurian tales generated an emphasis on physical action to back up a personal code of chivalry. Force was considered a valid arbiter of ethics. (Criticism of these tendencies by Southerners themselves has a long history: Mark Twain attacks both the influence of Sir Walter Scott and the cult of chivalry fiercely throughout Life on the Mississippi.) There are still many episodes of violence in which some whites, who consider themselves guardians of an ideal, attack others whose conduct they find objectionable.

The black man, too, has resorted to violence, in many cases as a response to abuses and frustration. Even after one hundred years of emancipation, many blacks are militant about their not being allowed full participation in American life. Short fiction about black violence is often disturbing, intense, ambiguous, and turbulent.

As well as sharing a heritage of loss and violence, both black and white Southerners share a common bond with the land. As with the Welshman, the Russian, the Cypriot, and the Jew, to the Southerner the land is special, in some way sacred. Ernest Lewald, in The Cry of Home: Cultural Nationalism and the Modern Writer, examines cultures which do not form political states but can be seen as ideological and/or material entities whose consciousness can be expressed in exile.

47. Mark Twain, Life on the Mississippi (New York, 1965).

Lewis Simpson's essay 'Southern Spiritual Nationalism', in the same work, portrays the South as a redemptive community, a 'Sacramental nation... purified by war'.\textsuperscript{49} To the modern Southern short story writer, the South is both a nation in exile and a sacrificial lamb, but it is also the promised land of a chosen people. The Southerner supplanted the American Indians as Joshua took over from the Canaanites and Palestinians. And, the Southerner feels that in so doing he has inherited the red man's special relationship with the land.

The land is sacred, and the Southerner's spiritual attachment to it is an important background element for the writer. The entire Agrarian movement, discussed later, grew from it. The spiritual connection is exhibited in works like Flannery O'Connor's 'Judgement Day'. The South, through O'Connor's poetic care of suggestion, becomes first the Garden of Eden, then a pagan land of innocence, then heaven, for Tanner exiled in his daughter's New York apartment.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{49} Lewis Simpson, 'Southern Spiritual Nationalism', \textit{The Cry of Home}, edited by Ernest Lewald, pp. 189-208 (p. 190).

Religion permeates the land, dominates portions of Southern life, and gives the Southern orator and writer a poetic diction and outlook based upon a kaleidoscope of merging philosophies and varying viewpoints. They circle around a Calvinistic core created and supported, for the most part, by the language and social force of the King James Version of the Bible, which will be discussed in conjunction with the works of William Faulkner, later. In addition, Doris Betts, in an interview with George Wolfe for Red Clay Reader, spoke of the influence upon her writing, saying that the Bible 'is a strong source in my writing because I grew up in a strict religious family, strong fundamentalist. I must have spent the same equivalent number of hours in church or church-related things as my children do now at television'. Still, 'I will never be free of the ethic, nor of the emphasis on emotion in people, which really I feel is stronger than reason in people'.

Her story 'Still Life with Fruit', in the same issue of Red Clay Reader, explores the emotions of an artist who is preparing to have a baby. Gwen realises that her intellectual needs are being subverted to her emotional drives, through Betts's almost rampant use of symbolism abounding in the Roman Catholic hospital. What would be excessive symbolism in a normal world, however, is normal in the excessive world of labour pain and fear.

51. Doris Betts, as quoted in 'An Interview with Doris Betts', by George Wolfe, Red Clay Reader, 7(1970), 12-17 (pp. 12-13).
52. Doris Betts, 'Still Life with Fruit', Red Clay Reader, 7(1970), 4-11.
Other cultures draw upon religion in the expressions of life and literature. What is peculiarly Southern is that religion is an essential and persistent part of all life and literature, explanation and definition. Not only visible in the extreme example just noted, no expression in the South appears untouched by it. Whether it is in the harangue of the preacher, the cold logic of the atheist, the conversation of the housewife, or the art of the storyteller, the Southerner exercises a casual familiarity with its Christian multiplicity. Symbolism is not a result of conscious effort in Southern writing; in a country where history, religion, and the land itself exercise so much influence over the thought and action of the people, symbol is as natural as the climate of the life, of the place.

The climate of the life is influenced to a great extent by Southern family life. The family provides the Southerner with a sense of security and with a source of pride. The family establishes standards against which all measurements are taken. Truman Capote, in 'A Christmas Memory' has his protagonist gain self-knowledge and insight from what he learns of his family and his aunt. However, Julian, in Flannery O'Connor's 'Everything that Rises Must Converge', has been damaged by the overbearing influence of his mother.

People everywhere are bound to their families and family traditions, and feel themselves to be helped or hurt by the ties, but Southerners seem to feel these ties more strongly than do most people from other American regions, perhaps because of the

53. Truman Capote, 'A Christmas Memory', Understanding Fiction pp. 436-45

controlling influence of women. Southern women ran the plantations and shops while the men were fighting in the Civil War. When men did not return, women became heads of households, breadwinners, the essential strength in a hopelessly ravaged land. They turned their hands to whatever was left by the Union troops and the carpetbaggers, and somehow managed to survive, and to hold their families together. They took charge until the men were ready to wrest the nation from the hold of Reconstruction, then they moved to the background, to take charge in subtler ways. They guided their households and exercised influence over every aspect of Southern life from religion to masculine romanticism, militarism, and frustration. They have become champions of education and art, and are the majority of successful practitioners of the short story.

The most unreconstructed of all rebels are women: the Grandmother in John Bell Clayton's 'Visitor from Philadelphia', the mother in Flannery O'Connor's 'Everything that Rises Must Converge', and the Lewis 'girls' in Betsy Lochridge's 'Claudie'. In John W. Corrington's 'Reunion', the most influential character is the grandmother, although she never appears. That she may have thought that her presence at Gettysburg would have made a difference to the outcome of the battle is a key to the understanding of Southern womanhood. Direct contact with events meant direct


participation and, eventually, control. The Southern woman, cast by war into the role of her male partner, found that she could survive, and more, that she could preserve her family and household. Her traditional functions as mother and homemaker were not reversed, but extended to include the traditional male functions of provider and protector. Because carrying the extra burden was the result of war, she saw her success as a martial victory. She left her daughters and grand-daughters that concept as a legacy.

Another force acting on the Southerner is his strongly romantic sense of individualism. It follows directly from his strong family ties, because the women of the family have reared their children to be fiercely independent: the unspoken threat of war ruin and Reconstruction is everpresent, dependent children may drag the woman down, some dependence is necessary, but children must be brought up to help, not to be a burden. The independence is reinforced by the early reliance upon a chivalric code that is the romantic ideal of man's personal innate qualities, the innermost belief of which is that a man (or woman) should meet adversity with pride, generosity, and strength, otherwise he will fail to survive or will lose his honour.

The Southerner's refusal to relinquish his code under the pressures of society reveals him in short fiction as Everyman, maintaining his dignity against overwhelming odds.
In Corrington's 'Reunion', the old soldiers refuse to dishonour themselves by taking part in a vulgar public-relations re-enactment of Pickett's Charge. Their refusal isolates them from the modern world, but gives their dignity a kind of sanctification. Their individuality elevates them from being merely old diehards. Mr. Maury, in Caroline Gordon's 'Old Red', is made one with his symbol, the old red fox, by refusal to drop his by other standards selfish individualism. He is elevated to immortality by implication.

The legacy of the American Civil War cannot be ignored. To a certain extent, many Southern men felt emasculated by defeat; the chivalric code which implied that force was an arbiter of ethics meant that the South's losing the military struggle implied that the Southerner's ethics (and therefore his way of life) were wrong. Those who returned to the small towns, burnt-out cities, impoverished farms, felt that their virility had been diminished, their potency drained. They had gone off singing to beat the Yanks quickly, they wandered home slowly, dazed by the years of pain and defeat, to a ravaged land and an occupied country where they were powerless. The women supplied the strength, for the most part, and the men, aware of the female control, responded by adding to the barriers between the traditional roles. Anything slightly connected with the feminine had no place in masculine behaviour. The greatest unspoken sin was the hint at male homosexuality.

It was also the greatest unforgivable sin. In James Agee's 'They that Sow in Sorrow Shall Reap', Mr Stevens is smashed across the mouth by Grafton merely for putting his arm around the narrator's shoulder.59

So man retreats to the world of men where such considerations can be dismissed jokingly, and a hand on the shoulder is only the sign of good-natured camaraderie. And, woman takes over the fields left to her by masculine dividing lines: education of the young, religion, and art. In the home, she can feed the male appetite (to an extreme, as in William Harrison's 'The Man Who Really Came to Dinner'). In education she can tempt and channel it, while the man is young; anti-intellectualism arises when the man is beyond school age. It is only with the emergence of the Fugitives that education is allowed masculine respectability, as discussed in Chapter Three of this study.

It is in art, and particularly in the field of short fiction that woman has particularly excelled. After Faulkner and the Fugitives (and the Fugitives mainly for their academic influence), women come to the fore. Caroline Gordon, Flannery O'Connor, Katharine Anne Porter, Eudora Welty, Elma Godchaux, Marjorie Rawlings, Julia Peterkin, Diane Oliver, Ellen Glasgow, Carson McCullers, Betsy Lochridge, Doris Betts are generally recognised for their short story artistry.

Southern short story artistry owes a great deal to these women. But, what determines a 'Southern' short story as opposed to any other? What are its literary characteristics?

What pattern of short fiction is outlined by its foremost practitioners? It is these questions that this thesis will attempt to answer.

This thesis will be concerned with only that period of the modern short story in the South, that is: stories published since about 1920, or since the beginning of modern literary ferment or 'renaissance in the South'. The modern Southern short story comes out of a background which is certainly extremely diverse, but which has certain inherent linking common factors: the preeminent role of women, the legacy of slavery, the casual familiarity with religion, the saturation in history, and the bond of place. Attendant elements are the importance of family life in relation to art and education; and, the prevalence of defeat, frustration, and violence. These are the basic environmental influences which provide a background for the Southern short story writer; the writer responds to his particular background, but the background does not determine the outcome of the art. Literary merit is based upon the manner of his response. The conditions may have fostered a potentially good writer, but in the end, it is the individual himself and not his environment which determines whether or not he will fulfill his potential.

It was noted earlier that the nature of the short story was more important than its form (a piece of prose fiction, short and complete). Because it does not have the novel's length, it will not have the novel's development of plot and character, but it will have a more compact, and therefore more immediate, view of a particular scene. Its density encourages poetic concentration, vividness, and the expression of the writer's background special
interests and attributes. Its concentration will demand the reader's close attention.

The literary characteristics of the Southern short story incorporate these general conditions, and are true to the general rule that each success is a breakthrough beyond that which is systematic. Not only has there been a creative Southern 'renaissance' since 1920, but a South-inspired 'New Criticism' as well. The poet-critics of the Fugitive-Agrarian movement cast their very large influence across the South from Tennessee to Mississippi, where it had to deal with Faulkner's work, though Faulkner was not interested in criticism. Many of his basic ideas, however, had unconscious affinities with those of the Fugitives. The short fiction generated around this meeting, while breaking through the systematic with a burst of substance, paid obeisance to a literary intelligence of total control. The guidelines were academic discipline, poetic concentration, and literary affinity. The short story was to be as concise and exact as a poem, as free as a novel.

The six approaches to writing modern short stories in the South have been chosen for their generally accepted foremost position and their influence upon their fellow writers of short stories. A close study of the two or three central works of each should outline the pattern of Southern short fiction. To this end, the first writer to be examined is William Faulkner, first among Southern writers. Faulkner shared with few other writers in English the Shakespearean ability to create a diction (in the poetic sense) that was at once unique yet universal.
'Barn Burning' and 'A Rose for Emily' reveal the way Faulkner controlled the language through a personalised idiom drawn from an environment which included such influences as the King James Version of the Bible, Mark Twain, and Sir Walter Scott.

The Fugitives must be considered for their influence upon Southern letters, in particular their advancement of the themes and ideas of their classical training and the controlled artifice of their formal writing. Stories by Allen Tate, 'The Immortal Woman', Andrew Nelson Lytle, 'Jericho, Jericho, Jericho', and Robert Penn Warren, 'Blackberry Winter', will be given a close reading for their many-layered symbolism, their references to classical literature, and their poetic concentration.

There will be an attempt to place the works of black short story writers directly and indirectly related to Southern short fiction, notably those of Southerners Ralph Ellison, Zora Neale Hurston, and Diane Oliver, migrant/ex-patriot Richard Wright, and New Yorkers Langston Hughes and James Baldwin.

Two of Katherine Anne Porter's most celebrated stories, 'He' and 'The Grave' will be studied for the firmly distanced control which made her the natural exponent of the short story.

Flannery O'Connor's 'The River' and 'Everything That Rises Must Converge' will be examined with special attention paid to her use of imagery in explaining her often very disturbing themes, and the building up of sometimes dark and frightening symbols.
'A Piece of News' and 'Powerhouse', two of Eudora Welty's central works, will be reviewed for their technical improvisations, structure, tone, and poetic effect; the sources and methods of her characteristic humour will be discussed as a product of perception drawn from the revelation of her character's relationships to their inner selves.

In the final chapter of this thesis, an examination of universality and regionality leads to a concluding discussion of the impact made upon Southern short fiction by these six writers/groups of writers, the changing face of the South, and possible directions of future Southern short fiction.
They rush past, forward-leaning in the saddles, with brandished arms, beneath whipping ribbons from slanted and eager lances; with tumult and soundless yelling they sweep past like a tide whose crest is jagged with the wild heads of horses and the brandished arms of men like the crater of the world in explosion.

This sentence is from the concluding paragraph of the Joe Christmas-Gail Hightower story in William Faulkner's Light in August. The paragraph, in the present tense, describes Hightower's dying thoughts, which are passing from the apotheosis of Joe Christmas to the galloping cavalry. This vision of the cavalry had earlier been Hightower's plague, but here it indicates his mental triumph. Previously vague and incorporating a kind of pagan inhumanity, the men and horses now illustrate Hightower's final vision of truth — that all men are brothers and that human life at any moment is on a grand crest rushing towards a final, glorious shore.

The grammar is carefully controlled; the paragraph is filled with strong patterns of balanced modifiers, and the phrasing is dramatic: with the narrator's last pause falling after 'past', there are twenty-seven words that must be read without a significant hesitation, an extremely long and rhythmical development giving a panoramic sweep — the cadence groups are perfectly in keeping with the massive advance of cavalry. Just as Hightower's vision is affirmative and grand, so is Faulkner's style affirmative and bold, illustrating the power of his language.

The Hightower story is one of those individual worlds, islands of privacy existing side by side for a time, then impinging upon each other or interpenetrating, that might be lifted as separate stories from Light in August, and which may have been the cause of Malcolm Cowley's saying of that novel in 1946 that it 'combines two or more themes having little relation to each other'. Although the structure of Light in August is due more to an elaborate juxtaposition of time schemes than to any thematic system, the enigma of the book's pattern of individual worlds is but another example of the author's genius as a storyteller.

Faulkner has been acknowledged as certainly the South's and probably America's foremost writer. Although he began his literary career consciously imitating the French symbolist poets, and although he was hailed primarily as a great novelist, he saw himself as a simple storyteller: 'I wrote for the sake of writing because it was fun.' Certainly the casual throw-away tone of that remark belies the extraordinary nature of his writing, as the Light in August passage reveals. He may have considered himself a farmer, but he created a body of literature whose craftsmanship has attracted literary interest almost without parallel in modern times: the Standard Bibliographical Index shows that in the whole of English language literature only Shakespeare and Milton (and possibly Wordsworth) have received more critical attention in print.


A great deal of that critical attention has been devoted to whether or not Faulkner had a writing theory, and most of the discussion surrounding that point has been concerned with the evident self-contradiction in his various statements made at the University of Virginia, at West Point, and at Nagano, Japan, as recorded variously by Gwynn and Blotner or Meriwether and Millgate. The point that a large amount of the critical attention fails to make is that Faulkner's statements were made after the fact, after he had been acclaimed a great writer; there is always an inherent danger of critical error in assigning, based on those statements of his, critical motives which may not have been present at the time of writing. There very probably was no 'theory of writing', at least no writing fitting an academic mould, for among all protestations and contradictions to the contrary, the one idea which consistently seems to emerge from his statements is that of using 'the nearest hammer' to put his stories together from materials in the 'lumber room of his memory', that, 'I like to tell stories, to create people and situations. But that's all. I doubt if an author knows what he puts in a story. All he is trying to do is to tell what he knows about his environment and the people around him in the most interesting way possible'.

Of course he did not mean that writers like Emile Zola and Thomas Mann, whose writing preparation included extensive note-taking and seeking expert advice on unfamiliar subjects, did not plan story structure, nor that there has not been a strand of concise pre-writing planning by novelists since Fielding and Defoe and by story writers from earliest times. If anything the

4. Meriwether and Millgate, 220.
'off-the-cuff' writer is in the minority. (An extreme example of pre-writing planning is the recent trend influenced by the 'New Journalism' in which research dictates what is written for the sake of 'documentary fiction'.) Neither did Faulkner mean that he himself was unaware of what he put in a story, nor that his stories and novels had no structure; he was merely saying that he used no grand critical scheme, and that his stories grew from themselves, not from pre-ordained patterns, literary or otherwise: 'As far as I know I have never done one page of research'. Perhaps this attitude stemmed from the fact that A Fable, which he planned in advance in great detail, was not as successful as his 'off-the-cuff work'. In that sense, he was closer to being a farmer than a member of the academic world in which he made so many apparently ambiguous statements. Like Shakespeare with 'little Latin, less Greek', literary and academic considerations did not seem to get in the way of Faulkner's flood of intuitive creative genius.

When considering Faulkner's life and work, it is difficult to escape at least a passing reference to Shakespeare: not only are there parallels in formal education, but perhaps literary motivation: both men wrote for a popular (rather than literary) audience which contained perceptive and intelligent elements, and both were received in much the same way - rewarded in their own

lifetimes, and elevated critically as great individualists
during them and since. Faulkner does not have Shakespeare's
centuries of acclaim, of course, but literary attention in sheer
volume paid to the Southerner has almost reached the Englishman's
level, and shows no sign of diminishing in any respect.

The most obvious comparison – their use of language –
shows that Faulkner and Shakespeare may be considered as the same
kind of writer, that is: intuitive individuals in classes separate
from and above other writers. Shakespeare's manner of expression
is inwardly related to the meaning he had to express. In Antony
and Cleopatra, we must draw upon all the imagery of the cinema to
describe the movement, which is more mixed than any tragedy could
seem to be without falling into slapstick comedy; yet through it
all, the technique is under deliberate, almost cool, control which
is neither enervation nor indifference, but rather what Coleridge
recognised as 'giant power' and 'angelic strength', surely a power
and strength born of the language. Take for instance the wryness
of Antony's death speech – there are no compromises, no limp
melodramatics:

> All length is torture; since the torch is out,
> Lie down and stray no further. Now all labour
> Mars what it does; yea, very force entangles
> Itself with strength; seal then, and all is done.  
> (IV. xiv)

In Richard III, Shakespeare gives the traditional (though perhaps
not historical) villain royal virtues of ambition, design, and
loyalty to self, which the Tudor age seems to have admired.
Without this ambivalence (the obvious irony of which is heightened
by the tone of Richard's counsels with himself) the play would merely
be a list of butcheries which, if modern, would quickly be dismissed
as gratuitous violence contrived by the playwright; it would have no psychological tension.

The point of control, and the point at which Faulkner and Shakespeare are most alike is in the power of language - a personalised idiom, a diction that is at once original and universal. From Coriolanus, we take an example of why at an age in which all else is popularly termed 'Elizabethan' (though, of course, Shakespeare wrote this late tragedy under the reign of James I - scholars sometimes use for the whole period, particularly in drama, the portmanteau word 'Jacobethan'), the literature has been referred to popularly as 'Shakespearean':

Cominius. But now 'tis odds beyond arithmetic;
And manhood is called foolery when it stands
Against a falling fabric. Will you hence
Before the tag return? Whose rage doth rend
what they are used to bear. (III. i)

As Shakespeare here used Elizabethan 'fabric' for 'building' and shortened 'rag-tag' (the masses) to 'tag' in order to achieve balanced alliteration, and 'o'erbear' instead of 'o'ercome' for the sake of a pun, so Faulkner used Southern language in his own special way (so much so that one scholar has been moved to publish a 241-page glossary of Faulkner's Southern expressions). Perhaps Faulkner's writing should more properly be termed 'Faulknerian' rather than 'American' or 'Southern'.

What then is 'Faulknerian' language; is it a specialised idiom, or merely Southern idiom in a literary framework? What is it about Faulkner's diction that makes it unique and at the same time acceptably universal? Of his writing, he maintained that he was

merely a storyteller, 'telling a story, introducing comic and tragic elements as I like. I'm telling a story to be repeated and retold... to entertain'. The idea of the farmer-storyteller is found throughout Faulkner's comments, and his apparently artless description of his reason for writing - purely for entertainment - is matched by an ostensibly simplistic notion of the style of language he used; if the reason for writing were sole to entertain, the language must not interfere with the entertainment:

Well, the writer, actually, that's an obligation that he assumes with his vocation, that he's going to write it the way that people can understand it. He doesn't have to write it in the way that every idiot in the third grade can understand it, but he's got to use a language which is accepted and in which the words have specific meanings that everybody agrees on.

As with all things Faulknerian, the seemingly simplistic is never quite simple. When he spoke of the duties or 'obligations' of all writers, he usually meant himself, and when he delivered a simple explanation about his work, it was usually thin camouflage for a deep implication.

Perhaps the primary evidence of the intuitive nature of his ability is that Faulkner's folksy expression, acceptable in his fiction, is somehow unsatisfactory when applied to definitions of his work (and the mechanics and art by which his work is displayed) - explanations returning again and again to seemingly unsophisticated analogies about extremely sophisticated writing veer dramatically from the accepted academic tradition of many-layered, multi-textured

8. Meriwether and Millgate, p. 277
comments applied to equally sophisticated works of art. We know what he meant in 'Hair' when he incorporated in his development of Susan Reed's quickening maturity the backwoods-philosophic, 'Girls are born weaned and boys don't ever get weaned. You see one sixty years old, and be damned if he won't go back to the perambulator at the bat of an eye';

we appreciate its many levels: its grasp of the fundamental differences of dependency between Susan and Hawkshaw, the men in the barber shop and the passing girls, and ultimately all men and women; we understand its implied references to Hawkshaw's tie to the Starnes mortgage, Sophie Starnes's premature death, and Hawkshaw's eventual marriage to Susan Reed; we note that Faulkner's use of 'perambulator' instead of the American (and Southern) 'baby carriage' is the key word in a Faulkner-created expression that, in its rhetoric, is perhaps more Southern than the standard expressions like 'tied to mama's apron string' which it parallels — at the same time, it comes closer to balancing the 'weaning' metaphor, yet avoids a more direct reference to the breast-feeding taboo.

The country philosopher as narrator enhances the meaning of Faulkner's fiction, but what did he mean when he claimed to be only a farmer, a carpenter, a storyteller? Obviously his style goes beyond the rustic 'good-ol'-boy'; folksy, rustic good-ol'-boys don't control the language the way William Faulkner did — their language matrix and background may be the same, but the control is different.

Words come easy in the South — the rhetoric of the evangelistic preacher and the filibustering politician are but two well-known examples — but the manner of the use of those Southern words by Faulkner went beyond the simplistic. Perhaps Faulkner defined his complex ability in simple terms because, being intuitive, it appeared easy to him. Edith Coulson, Thomas Wolfe's sibylline spirit of 'The House of the Far and Lost' tells her young American lodger of the 'bright world' and 'new beginning' which will never happen to her household again. 'It will happen to you', insists Wolfe's protagonist, faced with certain rebuff, 'It can happen to you whenever you want it to. It's yours, I'll swear it to you, if you'll only speak'. Only speaking, however, was not enough for Wolfe himself who, like his protagonist-narrator, strove for a personal contact with the Muse he felt as 'a word I never knew, a door I never found'. Wolfe's 'door' to the Muse was hidden somewhere in a torrent of words — he opened the door only after a sustained search for particular, almost magical words, and even when he had finished writing, the product was edited extensively by his publisher. For Faulkner, however, the 'bright world' and 'new beginning' happened constantly, and it occurred when he 'only' spoke. His talent was not so much a mechanical skill with words as a creative surge, an innate ability


which escaped definition as Southern regionalist, and broke through the boundaries of American literature set out in New England in the previous century.

Although a particularised and personalised idiom, Faulkner's diction began with what may be termed 'a national speech of the South', a rhetoric formed from the King James Version of the Bible, legal terminology, sermons, and frontier humour, interspersed with homely folk wisdom and local dialect usages. The difficulty of the non-Southern reader is considerable. Quite apart from Faulknerian terminology, Southern expression in its many-sided flow is often a language of opposites: how can speech be simultaneously direct and obscure, florid and folksy, bombastic and delicate? Compared with European traditionalism, the verbosity, hesitation, and repetition for emphasis and effect makes Southern Literature appear perhaps only gaudy and euphuistic. If so, it is because of the Southern background that engenders delight - appreciation and humour - in the texture of words and phrases, often for their own sake. The sound of words is important (the roll of rhetoric), but not just the sound - part of the delight is in grades and layers of meaning. Perhaps there is a conflict in Southern writing between linear and non-linear art. In European terms, Southern prose is essentially non-linear, an art of colour masses, perhaps at the expense of clarity of line. Dylan Thomas to a Southerner is preferable to Philip Larkin, as is a Faulknerian tradition to a Hawthornean tradition. Mark Twain's work is a
turning point for such conjecture, as brought out eloquently by Peter Coveney on *Huckleberry Finn*\(^\text{13}\) and Malcolm Bradbury on *Those Extraordinary Twins and Pudd'n Head Wilson*.\(^\text{14}\)

Before 1939, perhaps Faulkner's work was refused acceptance as much for the Southern nature of its language as for its themes and tone, and perhaps early favourable criticism stemmed from intuitive awareness of Faulkner's genius, expressed in varying terms, rather than any realisation that Faulkner had fulfilled the primary requirement of a great writer by making the language his own. In fact, Faulkner gave the answer to S.G. Stoney's question referred to in the first chapter of this study, concerning the separation of written language and spoken language, by creating a written expression to match the connotation range of the spoken word, and to extend beyond it in complex echoing levels, as well. He did this by the complete absorption of the climate and life of his particular Southern environment: 'I would say that the writer has three sources, imagination, observation, and experience',\(^\text{15}\) and 'He takes whatever he needs, whenever he needs it',\(^\text{16}\) and 'Read, read, read, Read everything - trash, classics, good and bad, and see how they do it',\(^\text{17}\) but 'I never read history. I talked to people'.\(^\text{18}\)

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15. Gwynn and Blotner, p. 103.
After absorbing the particular, he recast that environment for all mankind: life, symbolised by Yoknapatawpha, is the universal made Southern by the language.

C.S. Brown recalls that Faulkner told Brown's mother that Faulkner's Indians were 'made up', and that Faulkner made mistakes between bird types and 'misinformation, like the musky odor he attributes to the rattlesnake in "The Bear". The last is a widespread Southern misconception made Faulknerian to heighten a point of foreboding — in much the same way anachronistic clock is used in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. Brown underscores the challenge to the non-Southern reader by his translation of Joachim Seyppel's comment that it is not enough to know English to read Faulkner, that the reader must cope with Southern American, Negro dialect, and, 'master the whole body of folklore from Virginia to Louisiana, from Florida to Texas', coupled with his own comment that critics 'who will doggedly pursue a myth to the ultimate reaches of The Golden Bowl never even pause to wonder what a laplink or a shikepoke may be'.

But there is as much danger in considering Faulkner's country merely the South as it is to call it simply an imaginative myth. It is both, it is Faulkner's Country. And Faulkner's diction is more than a national speech of the South — precise knowledge of all that Seyppel claimed to be necessary to understand Faulkner is not enough. The critical reader, in order to gain further implication and insight, must realise that to a great extent the language is Faulkner's. The best way to achieve this

point is by close reading of his work — it is there that we see the control that particularizes the language and gives it literary stature. Here, an essential part of the Snopes history, "Barn Burning" — a story of complication — will be matched with a work of perfect control, "A Rose for Emily" — a story of deceptive simplicity.

Faulkner called "A Rose for Emily" a ghost story, perhaps because he wanted the tale to be accepted for its simplicity in order to enhance his "storyteller" position, or perhaps to emphasise the macabre quality of the story and its themes of death and decay, or perhaps to move the story into the realm of the oral tradition so that the reader might accept the associated demands of simplicity, verisimilitude, and suspension of disbelief. Or, perhaps Faulkner, wary of criticism that he presented horrible case histories merely to titillate the reader, wished to divert the attention of the reader from the pathological nature of Miss Emily's actions — there can be no tragedy, and little literature, if all action is clinical and all reaction is glandular.

We do not have to take Faulkner's word for what the nature of his story is. "A Rose for Emily" is much more than either a ghost story or a psychological case history, although good critical cases can and have been made out for both interpretations: the ghost story begins with the standard thematic trappings of death, a funeral, a mysterious house, a mysterious man, and a toppled monument, then continues accordingly — the psychological case history chronicles Miss Emily's progressive madness (though once we delve
beneath the surface, we see that Faulkner is not merely interested in presenting a report of abnormal psychology, which along would have no literary justification). The story has in fact often been treated critically in both respects, but it is not the purpose of this study to catalogue such attention. Fortunately, the simplest story cannot be exhausted critically, and, beginning at the primary level – that of the story's language and diction – we see that in many ways 'A Rose for Emily' is as much a triumph as a tragedy – and is, in itself, a symbol of the opposites found in Southern life and language that are so skillfully translated by Faulkner into a larger context.

The oral tradition of storytelling is very much in evidence throughout the tale, not only the facets of simplicity, verisimilitude, and suspension of disbelief mentioned earlier, but an inner tension building to full-blown suspense which does not ease until the final word. Faulkner achieves this concentration in part by capturing the reader's empathy. He calls for and receives the reader's identification with the narrator's fears, hopes, and speculations, even though the narrator remains anonymous throughout the tale. He ensures the reader's allegiance by the simple method of not only speaking in the first person for verisimilitude, but in the plural as well, as though he were spokesman for a group, the collective view of an entire town. Faulkner is certainly not the only person to write in the first person for contact with the oral tradition, but he is practically in his own class because of his ability, referred to in the first chapter, to raise the anecdotal to the literary by his manner of
using the eye-witness narrator:

When Miss Emily Grierson died, our whole town went to her funeral: the men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument, the women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house, which no one save an old servant - a combined gardener and cook - had seen in at least ten years.

The tone is neither deferential nor authoritative, but a gradual movement towards achieving acceptance by the reader. The first indication that the narrator is a participant in, or at least an observer of, the events described, occurs in the first paragraph: 'our whole town', the only identification of the persona of the narrator in Part I. The next mention is in the first paragraph of Part II, 'the one we believed would marry her' (p. 12), which moves to 'people in our town' (p. 13) and three was in the final paragraph in Part II (p. 14). After some self-identifying first-person plural, usually we, in Part III, the narrator builds a crescendo of twenty-nine was in the last two sections. Trapped in an empathetic allegiance to Faulkner's narrator, the reader accepts his view of Miss Emily, the town, and the situation, following along with the narrator as he examines and accepts of rejects various bits of evidence, suspicion, and comment.

The reported speech of the story's secondary characters aid the narrator's bid for acceptance in a subtle way, by repetition of the first-person plural, as though the town were indeed in concert with the narrator on the facts of the tale - the deputation from the city authorities at the end of Part I speak as we (p. 11), as does the unidentified man who complains about the smell, 'We really must do something about it, Judge' (p. 12).

21. William Faulkner, 'A Rose for Emily', These Thirteen, pp. 9-20 (p. 9). Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
Ultimately, the reader is prevented from full anticipation of the climax until it is upon him, saving drama from melodrama. Does Faulkner thereby dupe the reader? If so, the trick has been successful not because of Faulkner's use of the first-person plural tie to the oral tradition, but the manner in which he employed it - subtly establishing the narrator's verisimilitude to the point that the narrator's mere presence provides an internal rhythm of personal pronouns, driving in an ever-increasing tempo towards the climax of incredible death and decay.

Besides providing the narrator with an entry into the reader's confidence, the first paragraph sets the tone of the story that carries through to the end, presents Faulkner's habitual flirtation with time - it begins at the end, sets forth the theme of death and decay, and announces to the credulous that here is a tale of curiosity (he even employs the word) and perhaps anecdotal simplicity: it is short, and contains only one sentence. Only one word is longer than three syllables, curiosity, which directs the reader's attention immediately to the strange atmosphere of the story. The sentence's two sections are directly linked to each other, linked by a colon in the manner of philosophic terminology in keeping with a Southern folk-narrator cum cracker-barrel philosopher. Miss Emily Grierson died: (therefore) the townspeople acted in such and such a manner.

That style of introduction in itself focuses the reader's attention on the story's principal character - who is this woman whose death commands the attentions of an entire town? As if that were not enough to induce the reader to continue, the dead person
is a 'Miss', denoting an unmarried woman, but with a connotation of youth and premature death. The Southern custom of referring to all ladies as 'Miss' linked to their Christian names does not appear until the second paragraph, by which time the reader is under the correct impression that 'Miss Emily' is the name of a newly deceased unmarried woman, although no mention of the exact nature of her marital state occurs until Part II (p. 13). By the end of the second paragraph, Emily Grierson is at least four times a 'Miss', Faulknerian implication being that she was unmarried, prematurely dead because she never had been married, a lady by title, and, never having been married, something of a feminine monument, unfulfilled but hopeful - like her house (an extension of her), 'lifting its stubborn and coquettish decay' (p. 9).

The story is a series of portraits set in a complicated time scheme that relies on flashback technique to keep the reader off-balance but interested, to enforce the verbal as well as actual irony, and to give Faulkner a context in which to develop his own diction. The time scheme is the product of the narrator's point of view, from which also flows opinion, character and rhetoric (antithesis of the Aristotelian mode referred to in the discussion of the short story in Chapter One). If the chronological sequence appears to be jumbled to the point of confusion, it is because the persona of the narrator creates his own time scheme, in much the same way as an ordinary citizen of Miss Emily's town would relate the events to an outsider. The technique increases the 'reality' of the narrator as well as adding to the suspense of the tale, and partially obscuring the gruesome end. The story begins with the
death and funeral, moves back to 1894 when Colonel Sartoris remitted Miss Emily's taxes, then ahead to the smell, then back to Miss Emily at thirty. Ten steps follow in a more conventional chronology, built upon what the reader has learned in the initial, abrupt flashbacks: Miss Emily at thirty, with her father, accompanied by Homer Barron, the advent of the servant, the china-painting lessons, and so on.

The criss-crossing of time-patterns supplies Faulkner with a frame of reference in which to develop the meanings and connotations of his words and phrases. He goes beyond merely using Southern expression in a controlled and literary style; in a sense, he creates his own nuances, and often his own primary meanings. If the opening paragraph asks, 'Who is this Miss Emily?' the third paragraph only partially answers the question with: 'a tradition, a duty, and a care' (p. 9). Faulkner's definition of tradition, duty, care as inter-related words, referring to and dependent upon each other, grows from the first paragraph as an attitude of the townspeople - relayed, of course, by the narrator, founded upon the phrase 'noble oblige' (terminology the people would not use), then upon an admission - again through the narrator - that they could feel sorry for Miss Emily; the smell, the death of her father, and the fact that she never got married bring her to ordinary terms, 'a pauper', by which Faulkner means not only monetary status, but moral condition - she is no longer an angel in a church window. In fact, Faulkner defines the term in the same sentence, 'she had become humanized'
counteracting or vindicating the belief that the Griersons 'held themselves a little too high for what they were' (p. 13).

The definition is not without contradiction, but it is enforced by the reaction of the townspeople to Miss Emily's cousins, against whom the people sided with Miss Emily, 'because the two female cousins were even more Grierson than Miss Emily had ever been' (p. 17). These definitions are made by a balanced combination of direction, implication, and association, as are most of Faulkner's internal definitions, although not always as negatively based as this series. Faulkner's diction supports his personalised idea of the qualitative value of words and phrases, and most of his attempts at nuance are full of Southern ambiguities which Faulkner instinctively, perhaps even consciously, puts forth, like the ambiguity in this story that opposites are parallels.

Miss Emily herself progresses through parallel and opposite stages as an idol, a background figure in a tableau, an angel in glass, a lighthouse-keeper, a noblewoman whose twenty-one gun salute is the rustle of 'craned silk and satin' (p. 15). Finally she becomes the 'fallen monument' of the first paragraph.

Faulkner, as most Southerners, was familiar with the phrase, 'In the beginning was the Word.' From a somewhat mystical approach to speech which has emanated from a heritage infused with the cadences of the King James Version of the Bible, he sensed that, in the purest terms, words themselves are 'literary' symbols – combinations of signs standing for sounds representing images.
It was only one step further for him to incorporate in his writing, consciously or unconsciously, the concept that a simile or metaphor is as much an extended word as an analogy is an extended metaphor or simile. Thus, Emily Grierson is the central symbol and focal point of Faulkner's diction in *A Rose for Emily*, and, in the story's language context, not only is she the symbol, 'Miss Emily' is Faulkner's 'word' for 'the South'. This concept is accentuated by the townspeople's considering Miss Emily less 'Grierson' than her cousins.

The usual literary device of describing characters through some listing, real or implied, of the qualities associated with them is swept away in the terse, emphatic conversion of a proper noun into an adjective through its modification by the adverb 'more'. To say that her two female cousins 'were more Grierson than Miss Emily had ever been' is not only a placing of her cousins, but a continued description of Miss Emily, and an acknowledgement of the gulfs existing between Miss Emily and the townspeople, Miss Emily and her cousins, and the cousins and the townspeople. Further, it is an implied symbol of Miss Emily's (the South's) separation from a past in which a higher position, socially and morally, was the prevailing condition. The most important aspect of this act of changing a proper noun into an adjective is that it defines beyond any previous direct description or implication Faulkner's meaning of the words 'Grierson' and, by comparison, 'Miss Emily'. If *symbol* is an extension of *word*, Faulkner here contracts the symbol into the word. It is as though he implies
that the word has its own life, that the proper noun is not just a label. Such a concept is a Biblical one, and Faulkner's unconscious incorporation of it in his writing lies at the heart of his diction.

Perhaps another reason that Faulkner's diction appears to some degree inaccessible is this Biblical connection. The Southern predilection for the grand phrase and for pushing words around, nurtured in the climate of casual familiarity with religion, is found in the almost bewildering excitability of Faulkner's language. Northrop Frye says that the Bible has been the greatest literary influence on Western literature, although few critics take its influence into full account. If it is true as Frye says that, 'Biblical typology is so dead a language now that most readers, including scholars, cannot construe the superficial meaning of any poem which employs it. And so on', perhaps the same is true of the literary precepts the Bible contains, such as the Manichean-Judaic idea that a word has its own life, and is equal to that which it symbolises.

A striking example of the word having its own life and its equation with literary symbol occurs at the beginning of Part III in 'A Rose for Emily', in what appears at first glance to be a reference to an external event, for the sake of dating the action, 'The town had just let the contracts for paving the sidewalks' (p. 13). The phrase is in fact the pivotal group of words around

which the rest of the story revolves. It introduces the paragraph in which Homer Barron first appears, the symbolic invasion of the South by Yankees and machinery. By the end of the paragraph, Miss Emily (the South) has been seduced into a partnership with the North, 'seduced', because the North provides a relationship which is attractive, but unproductive, one of the story's (and Faulkner's usual) general themes.

In this case, the invasion of the South is underlined by Faulkner's 'word' for 'the North', 'Homer Barron'. 'Homer Barron' is much more direct in meaning than 'Miss Emily', and in fact contributes to the definition of 'Miss Emily' as 'the South'. It continues Faulkner's use of opposites as parallels, for Homer is at once 'baronial' and 'barren'. The name 'Homer' is of course more than an allusion to the past greatness of the Greek poet (and thence by implication of the 'civilising' effects of a Northern invasion's corrupting the past greatness of the South), but a more localised and purely American allusion. A homer is a 'home run' in baseball, and as a run scored by a single hit (minimal effort) - the best possible batting (attacking) play, it describes succinctly the impact of Barron upon the town: he makes a 'hit' with the people ('Whenever you heard a lot of laughing anywhere about the square, Homer Barron would be at the center of the group.'), and he 'scores' with Miss Emily ('Presently we began to see him and Miss Emily on Sunday afternoons driving in the yellow-wheeled buggy and the matched team of bays from the livery stable (p. 13)).
The opposite and parallel nature of the ill-fated Yankee is that he is not a 'homer', one who by nature seeks home, yet he becomes a permanent (though grisly) feature of Miss Emily's home. And, by extended implication, through such companionship, death and decay become permanent features of the South's condition.

Homer Barron (the North) is the agent by which the sidewalks are paved. Referring to Faulkner's personal Mississippi environment, C.S. Brown glosses paving the sidewalks as, 'Before concrete sidewalks were laid, most of the sidewalks in Oxford consisted of planks nailed to and resting upon transverse two-by-fours every few feet. Others were made of bricks laid on the ground without any mortar.' As Faulkner lived not only in Oxford, Mississippi, but, for a time, in Oxford, England, as well, he surely would have been aware of the differences in the terms applied to the city footpaths of the seat of English terminology as opposed to those of the primitive town of Mississippi's Oxford-become-Jefferson; the implication inherent is that in civilised cultures the 'sidewalks' have been paved for such a long time that they have become 'pavements', and that the paving of the sidewalks in Miss Emily's town by Homer Barron is by implication a civilising influence.

The opposite and parallel definition/symbol of 'paving the sidewalks' is that the act of paving destroys that which is already there, in this case, the general Faulknerian image of wood or woods being replaced by machinery and inhumanity (although perhaps not so ostensibly or with as much obvious violence as in 'The Bear',

because the violence is veiled in 'A Rose for Emily'). It is not far-fetched to say that Faulkner built an ambiguous definition/symbol as a focal point for the story: without the paving, the invasion of Yankee and machinery would not occur, the past (symbolised by wooden and brick sidewalks) would not be lost, and the tragic union of South and North and death and decay would be diverted.

It is worthwhile adding here that paving the sidewalks in 'A Rose for Emily' does not change them into 'pavements'. After all is said and done, they remain 'sidewalks', a perhaps unconscious bit of irony that the footpaths do not take on the attributes of civilisation as evinced by terminology merely by undergoing the civilising act, and/or perhaps an indication that the South remains the South, that all that contact with the North brings is death and decay, or a hastening of death and decay.

Faulkner often combined or extended irony of plot, language, and drama; the irony of his language is rarely limited to simple hyperbole or understatement, and is usually related to plot-linked or dramatic irony. By 'irony of plot', I mean the way in which Thomas Hardy created the cascading disaster in The Return of the Native, precipitated by Eustacia's failure to answer the door to Mrs Yeobright. Mrs Yeobright, misunderstanding Eustacia's motives because she has seen Eustacia through the window and knows that she is home, becomes disconsolate and leaves, to die on the heath. All subsequent adversities proceed from this ironic twist of the plot. (Perhaps the most well-known instance of dramatic irony is in Oedipus Rex, as Oedipus imagines that he is about to discover his father's murderer: when he condemns the murderer, the audience is
Faulkner merged irony of language, plot, and drama in scenes like the purchase of the arsenic in Part III of 'A Rose for Emily'. Before the druggist retreats from the force of the Grierson demand, and sends his Negro helper to deliver the poison, the exchange with Miss Emily is presented to the reader as such an overt contest of control, 'to reaffirm her imperviousness', that it masks the brooding irony behind the poison's true purpose (it is only in retrospect that the reader realises that the determined labelling of the box, 'for rats', is an ironic comment upon Homer Barron's nature). Again, Faulkner's diction is allied to his handling of time; the reader's attention is diverted by flashback techniques and time displacement, setting aside the conversation as an independent unit,

'I want some poison,' she said.
'Yes, Miss Emily. What kind? For rats and such? I'd recom-
'I want the best you have. I don't care what kind.'
The druggist named several. 'They'll kill anything up to an elephant. But what you want is -'
'Arsenic,' Miss Emily said. 'Is that a good one?'
'Is...arsenic? Yes, ma'am. But what you want -'
'I want arsenic.' (p. 15)

This incident owes its success not only to Faulkner's effective juggling of time, but to his characteristic use of repetition and hesitation as a framework for his diction. Faulkner took the Southern teacher, the preacher, the story-teller, the cracker-barrel-philosopher with their driving repetition, wedded them to the slack-jawed woodsman, the red-necked illiterate, the village idiot with their inarticulate hesitation, and re-formed their weaknesses as strengths. Repetition was turned from redundancy to emphasis, and
hesitation became a signal not for indecision, but for a heightening of dramatic tension.

In a way, by creating his own diction in such a framework, Faulkner stepped almost beyond the English language to a kind of guttural gesture on a primitive level. He had the ability to grasp the language not only at the highest point of communicative nuance, but at the nadir of blind frustration, turning sophisticated word relationships and mindless utterances alike into points of absolute control, and often juxtaposing the two. Whether he learned the technique from his juggling of time, or vice versa, is debatable, but his system of time control and his framework of repetition and hesitation complement and enforce each other. At the story's end, we are awake to the design of the repetition and hesitation in the scene of the confrontation of the tax committee, in the townspeople's response to the smell, in the breaking down of the door after 'Miss Emily was decently in the ground', in the contest with the druggist; at last, we know about the 'rats'. And, if the townspeople have been duped by their own hesitation and frustration, we have been caught in their inaction, carried along on the formidable wave of Faulkner's diction.

'A Rose for Emily' proves ultimately to be more than a story about the tragic fall of a once grand lady; it is true that Emily Grierson is clinically mad, but it is also true that in a sense she is victorious - over Homer Barron (and therefore the Yankee invasion), over the government (taxes and the Post Office), over the church
(the Baptist minister), over her cousins (though they appear to conquer her), over society (which determines the line between sanity and insanity), and even over the reader, who, through the narrator, becomes part of the community.

Faulkner clearly indicated that Miss Emily was to have an accolade for her accomplishment - the title states that she should have the victor's rose, and the scene of her final, grim triumph echoes the premiss: beneath the 'pervading dust' are 'the valence curtains of faded rose color...the rose-shaded lights' (p. 19). The roses are faded, perhaps, but they were undoubtedly bright for Miss Emily's 'bridal'.

This perplexing mixture of triumph and tragedy is another example of opposites becoming parallel in Faulkner's work. Miss Emily is never successfully confronted with the unreality of her life and its psychologically abnormal aspect. There is no anagnorisis in the Aristotelian sense, so there can be no tragedy in the classical sense. Yet, although she does not gain insight into her real being, Miss Emily is too grand a figure for her story to be dismissed as being merely a pathetic case history; her 'fall' into madness comes from the heights of a certain grandeur, and, as suggested earlier, she attains a singular victory. Can Miss Emily's success be defined in Existentialist terms? Although Maurice Coindreau and Jean Paul Sartre (Sartre's essay in Situations: 'Faulkner's humanism is the only acceptable kind') took some interest of him, Faulkner did not follow an

existentialist line, and 'A Rose for Emily' really does not meet the demands of natural, classical, or theological existentialism, because although her triumph is over social and situational forces meaningless to her, Miss Emily, like many of Faulkner's characters, is the source of her own misfortune.

Perhaps the ambiguity of Miss Emily's tale can best be explained by the opposites and parallels in the curious passage concerning the old men gathered to pay their respects to the deceased,

the very old men - some in their brushed Confederate uniforms - on the porch and the lawn, talking of Miss Emily as if she had been a contemporary of theirs, believing that they had danced with her and courted her perhaps, confusing time with its mathematical progression, as the old do, to whom all the past is not a diminishing road but, instead, a huge meadow which no winter ever quite touches, divided from them now by the narrow bottle-neck of the most recent years. (p. 19)

Disproportionately contemplative, and vaguely disturbing, this extract flows with a poetic force that almost isolates it in the text. Despite being surrounded by other concise images (the Negro man's exit, 'Miss Emily beneath a mass of bought flowers', the one room 'no one had seen in forty years'), it seems to grow from and feed upon itself. The narrator for a brief moment soars beyond his local persona in a sentence of 128 words completed by this passage in an obligatory pause that heightens the horror of the following final paragraphs.

From the semi-colon after the description of Miss Emily, lying in state, Faulkner builds a series of images which grow from each other, beginning with the parenthetical expression qualifying 'the
very old men—some in their brushed Confederate uniforms—', and continuing through eight major clauses, a profound statement on the relation of perception to time. The sentence ceases to be a description of the particular moment, at the third comma after the emphatic parenthesis, and becomes a universal commentary upon the 'mathematical progression' which changes diminishing distance into immediate presence, separated only be a recent 'bottle-neck'.

The sentence to which this passage belongs follows a short statement, 'The two female cousins came at once' (p. 19). The reader already knows that they are 'even more Grierson than Miss Emily', and all the haughty efficiency that implies, so it is no surprise that Miss Emily's funeral is quickly and quietly managed within two days. Faulkner's diction, the implications of his meanings, make a further statement unnecessary. The narrator appears to be following the same style of presentation employed in the first four parts of the story: a curious tale is being told by an articulate member of the community, concisely (despite the jumbled time sequence), and with a fond familiarity. Then, as though 'the crayon face of her father musing profoundly above the bier and the ladies sibilant and macabre' signal a 'profound' discourse leading through whispers to a 'macabre' ending, the narrator assumes a detached air that almost brings about a complete change in style, as he comments upon the appearance of time past to the 'very old'.

A lesser author might weaken or ruin his narrative by such a
seeming transformation, but Faulkner's image-generated diction allows him to use the reverie-like musing as a point of control, to check the momentum of the tale, to prepare the reader for the climax, in much the same way in which Shakespeare used the Clown at the end of *Antony and Cleopatra*, to allow the audience a brief respite from the psychological tension building towards an impossible summit (the temporary release does not allow the audience to 'brace' for the shock of Cleopatra's death — the demise of the popular symbol of alluring sensuality). So does Faulkner's commentary upon old age momentarily distract the reader from the story-line, allowing the gruesome climax to destroy not only the 'imperviousness' of Miss Emily, but all the illusive nature of her state: she no longer represents decaying grandeur, but terror which reaches beyond simple mortality. Perhaps it is for this achievement that she is offered the rose.

If 'A Rose for Emily' is deceptively simple, 'Barn Burning' is almost prohibitively complicated. 'Barn Burning' deals with an aspect of life in the South which captivated Faulkner's attention: the tendency of Southerners to become violent, to seek out conflict as a solution to the slightest problem. Faulkner saw the simple almost mindless vehemence of such response as the consequence of extreme commitments made by the Southerner to the things which are a matter of belief: loyalty to family, region, or his own idea of himself. Because of the pattern of resolute, individual action (part of the personal and national heritage), the Southerner readily resorts to violence if the objects of his loyalty appear threatened. 'Barn Burning' deals with this Southern trait in a manner that
underscores its many-sided nature, its uneven application, and its frustrating implications.

The barn-burner, Abner Snopes, drags his family from town to town, job to job, leaving a trail of hatred, destruction, and futility behind him, displaying in his strange sense of personal loyalty an innate antagonism for the society around him, and a hate for both those who threaten his loyalty and for those who lack his unswerving devotion to a personal cause. Snopes sees his personal loyalty as a commitment to his 'sense of dignity', and that sense precludes his living at peace in any society. Essentially, his unyielding conviction makes him not so much an ornery misanthrope as an embodiment of some shadowy force of destruction. Constantly bitter because others have more money, position, or success (which allows them to have the ability to exercise control at some point over him), Abner Snopes reacts violently, as an animal might strike then spring away, employing those weapons against which his 'enemies' are least effective, principally arson. Abner pushes his conflict onto his son, Colonel Sartoris Snopes, forcing him to choose where his loyalty lies, and it is this action around which the story revolves.

Faulkner's prose style is a pattern of varying complications in this story, aided and abetted by time jumps, hesitation and repetition, and the way in which he varies the tempo of the tale: now long, almost drawn out, now tightly compressed and fast moving. The style changes are disconcerting, but, as in the contemplative passage on time in 'A Rose for Emily', style change or tone change are deliberate and effective, the artistry of a master storyteller.
Three sources which are generally held to have influenced his storytelling are Mark Twain, Sir Walter Scott, and the King James Version of the Bible.

From the Bible, he gained rhetoric and control; he would undoubtedly have been familiar with the story of the Prodigal Son, arguably one of the finest, most compact tales in the English language. Not a word appears to have been squandered by the translators, nor does there seem to have been a forced attempt to limit the parable to its twenty-three verses. From, 'A certain man had two sons' to 'this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found' (Luke 15. 11-32), the story is a lesson in economy. Of course, 'Barn Burning' is not limited to twenty-three verses, although it often reads like a parable, but it exhibits the same economy as the Biblical tale, from its straightforward, 'The store in which the Justice of the Peace's court was sitting smelled of cheese' to the final, many-levelled, 'He did not look back.'

More akin perhaps to Faulkner's style is the speech of the elder son upon his brother's return, a rhetorical lament for himself as the undeserving victim of circumstances he does not understand and cannot interpret,

Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. (Luke 15. 29-30)

There is a faint echo of this sentiment and its rhetorical impetus in 'Barn Burning' when Colonel Sartoris is sent for the oil. As he runs, he feels,
the old blood which he had not been permitted to choose for himself, which had been bequeathed him willy nilly and which had run for so long (and who knew where, batten on what of outrage and savagery and lust) before it came to him. I could keep on, he thought. I could run on and on and never look back, never need to see his face again. Only I can't. I can't. (p. 27)

Although both stories deal with initiation, there is nothing to suggest that Faulkner took this or any other influence directly from its Biblical source; Faulkner's primary contact with the King James Version was through its influence on Southern life and language, where he, through absorption, a literary osmosis, received indirectly its rolling idiom. More direct sources of influence upon Faulkner were Sir Walter Scott, a pervading influence in the South, and Mark Twain, with whom he shared the background of the oral tradition, the American frontier humour, and the firm belief in storytelling that is natural, yet requires artifice for success. It is difficult to place Faulkner with any direct literary influence, because he is so obviously an innovator, a writer in the fore-front of twentieth-century experimental fiction. The best we can do is to indicate those Americans with whom he had an affinity or with whom his work was parallel: the complexity of Henry James (but not his theory), the determined abstraction and darker themes of Hawthorne, and the element in Melville which digressed into allegorical depth, and which in Faulkner allowed him to range from free association (The Sound and the Fury), to the open-ended Snopes trilogy, to the instrument of perfect control ("A Rose for Emily").
Although he was an innovator, he was self-taught, and seemingly unaware of what experimental fiction had accomplished. Perhaps it can be said that he unknowingly retraced paths already opened, but his in-born genius managed to avoid, even in his less successful works, the experiment-for-experiment's-sake path, the empty rhetoric of which he was first accused, or the impersonations of his youth.  

It would be hard to imagine Faulkner's not being influenced by Twain, even if Ringo in *The Unvanquished* didn't sound like Huckleberry Finn's Jim, "'Then hit's so" he said. "If somebody tole you, hit could be a lie. But if you dremp hit, hit can't be a lie case ain't nobody there to tole hit to you"!  

Tramp printer, river pilot, Confederate guerrilla, prospector, starry-eyed optimist, acid-tongued cynic: the man born Samuel Langhorn Clemens, and who ranged across the nation for more than a third of his life before beginning to write, must have appealed to the man from Mississippi who joined the Canadian Air Force, popped up at Oxford, England, and returned to Oxford, Mississippi sporting a cane and a mysterious past. In *Huckleberry Finn*, travelling down the river with an escaped slave, Huck firmly believes that his soul is lost for harbouring the fugitive. In a classic conflict between society's moral teaching and an individual's conscience, Huck writes a letter betraying his friend Jim. 

'Conscience', Southern individualism, wins, and Huck tears up the Note: 'All right, then, I'll go to hell...'

When that same moment comes for Sarty, it is with the same suddenness; forced by his father to choose loyalties, Sarty decides the barn-burning must end, but Ab Snogs realises that the boy's decision has been made against him, so he leaves Sarty struggling in his mother's grasp,

' Lemme go! ' he cried. 'I don't want to have to hit you!'
'Let him go!' the aunt said. 'If he don't go, before God, I am going up there myself!'
'Don't you see I can't?' his mother cried.
'Sarty! Sarty! No! No! Help me, Lizzie!'
Then he was free. (p. 28)

A further possible influence must be noted: that of Sir Walter Scott, whom Twain attacked in Life on the Mississippi. The climax of 'The Bridal of Janet Dalrymple' offers a suggestion as to the origin of one strand of 'gothic' horror in the South; the tone of the narrative is reminiscent of Faulkner, though of course the diction differs,

On opening the door, they found the bridegroom lying across the threshold, dreadfully wounded, and streaming with blood. The bride was then sought for. She was found in the corner of the large chimney, having no cover save her shift, and that dappled in gore. There she sat grinning at them, mopping and mowing, as I heard the expression used; in a word, absolutely insane. The only words she spoke were, 'Tak up your bonny bridegroom.'

Again we notice the use of the first-person narrator for verisimilitude, not as an implication that Faulkner was influenced by this piece in writing 'A Rose for Emily', but as an indication of the origin of one of the influences he surely would

have met in his Southern environment: the Scott tradition of
the violent, passionate, 'mannerly' tale, and the persona of
the narrator.

The narrator of 'Barn Burning', by contrast, is in the
third person. The story's central figure is 'Sarty', Colonel
Sartoris Snopes, the child of Abner Snopes, and the 'victim'
of initiation (Ab is represented as a force rather than as a
person). A first-person narrator would have been severely
limited, because 'Barn Burning' is concerned with the internal
growth of a child; instead, the third-person narrator,
interrupted rhythmically by subjective, dramatic dialogue,
brings objectivity to an otherwise undecipherable time scheme.

The story begins Sarty's growth on an animal level; the
opening trial scene in the general store is a catalogue of
hunger's appeal to the senses, 'smelled the cheese...smelled
cheese... could see... the dynamic shape of tin cans...labels
his stomach read...cheese which he knew he smelled...hermetic
meat which his intestines believed he smelled' (p. 9).

The animal stirs, 'Smell and sense just a little fear...
of despair and grief, the old fierce pull of blood'. Purely
sensual reaction gives way to Sarty's first expression, gut-level,
guttural, inarticulate, 'our enemy he thought in that despair;
ourn ! mine and hian both ! He's my father!' (p. 9). The
first style is on the level of the backwoodsman whose speech is
limited to guttural monosyllables, precluding first-person
narrative, because any growth from that point would have to be
examined in the light of a literate, articulate storyteller's
personal view of that growth; some patronising tone cannot escape such a diagnosis, so the third-person narrator rescues the tale, makes it a triumph of the growth of an independent spirit towards awareness through initiation.

The initiation is story-long, beginning with the trial in the general store when Sarty realises, 'He aims for me to lie...And I will have to do hit' (p. 10). Above animal level, Sarty is started out of his hunger dream by constructing complete sentences. The idiom is still backwoods thought pattern, but, at the moment of realisation, the thought is total, subject and verb.

His first voiced words are those of his own name, 'Colonel Sartoris Snopes', and like the name identifications in 'A Rose for Emily', this name has a definition, a place in Faulkner's diction that gives a proper noun its own life, 'I reckon anybody named for Colonel Sartoris in this country can't help but tell the truth, can they?' (p. 10). Although Sarty's response is the animal thought reaction, 'Enemy! Enemy!', it signals the beginning of Sarty's independence, because his father's way, the way of unquestioning loyalty to Ab Snopes is dark with deceit, and his father's independent spirit can be maintained only at the expense of the independence of those surrounding him: his wife, the aunt, the twins, and eventually Sarty. So, even though he fights and is bloodied for Ab on the way out of the court in the general store, and refuses his mother's attentions on his return to the wagon, his initiation has begun, and the 'Forever' that he hopes will hide the incident of the barn burning and the
resulting trial will become instead the condition of his relationship to his father Ab, until he finally warns De Spain, and runs away.

From the moment of his evolution to adulthood, he must leave; his father's insistence on loyalty to the independent spirit works, but Sarty becomes loyal to himself, not to Ab. Faulkner marks the moment with a paragraph of personalised dialogue between the narrator's comments and the boy's thoughts in Faulknerian diction: in and out of time, full of repetition and hesitation,

Maybe this is the end of it. Maybe even that twenty bushels that seems hard to have to pay for a rug will be a cheap price for him to stop forever and always from being what he used to be: thinking, dreaming now, so that his brother had to speak sharply to him to mind the mule: Maybe he even won't collect the twenty bushels. Maybe it will all add up and balance and vanish — corn, rug, fire; the terror and grief, the being pulled two ways like between two teams of horses — gone, done with for ever and ever. (p. 23)

The italicized thoughts give the passage an urgency to the eye; the reader bends with the thoughts to catch the flow, and Faulkner adds repetition which emphasis the importance — four maybe, with two evens, twenty bushels twice, rug twice — a mathematicacal progression, 'add up and balance', 'two ways', and 'two teams of horses'. The passage is given the dreamlike quality of a wandering mind; Faulkner even interrupts the dream to have Sarty's brother tell him to pay attention to his plowing ('mind the mule'), and the hesitation of the interruption and the dashes before 'corn, rug, fire' and 'gone, done with for ever and ever' act as equal marks in a mathematic equation, 'corn + rug + fire = vanish', 'terror + grief + being torn apart = gone, done with for ever and ever'.
The mature judgement of that passage sharpens, intensifies the struggle between the Colonel Sartoris part of Sarty and the Snopes part, and the reader's emotional response to the general conflict between the 'fierce pull of blood' and the growth, 'later years...still later', are brought to a head by the confrontation when Ab accusingly states, 'You were fixing to tell them. You would have told him' — which is answered, in typical Faulknerian manner on the same page, but twenty years later, 'If I had said they wanted only truth, justice, he would have hit me again' (p. 14).

Had Sarty's response been the narrator's or anyone else's line of dialogue, it would have rung false; as it is, it is still a bit too straightforward, unless a close reading is given the statement and its counterpart commentary on the De Spains, when the narrator has to speak for Sarty. When Sarty twenty years on says that the men in the store wanted only truth and justice, it is not as an adult that he speaks. He is merely finding words for his inarticulate younger self. The young Sarty, closer to animal, to whelp, than to man, was affected by the men at the trial's search for 'truth', for 'justice'; after all, they had brought home to him his own individuality — they had told him who 'Colonel Sartoris Snopes' was, and that definition was linked, identified somehow with truth. So although Sarty did not know how to express himself at that particular moment, the unidentified urge he felt he needed to fulfill was truth, was justice. And, the only person who can supply the inarticulate boy with the correct phrase is an
articulate version of himself — and that does not occur until twenty years later.

The counterpart commentary upon the De Spains and their relation to Abner is another instance of Faulkner's time jump, in this passage under the auspices of the narrator, interpreting the thoughts Sarty has about the De Spains. In a way, it is explication for an inarticulate boy by an outsider, and perhaps an ironic comment on Faulkner's part that he was just an interpreter. The reader does not question the narrator's right or the level of his imaginative sympathy, because Faulkner moves quickly in the distance of a single sentence from the immature, 'Hit's as big as a courthouse', to the explication of the 'surge of peace and joy' which Sarty feels but is too young to put into words, but which Faulkner supplies, giving the reader another good example of his personalised diction,

They are safe from him. People whose lives are a part of this peace and dignity are beyond his touch, he is no more to them than a buzzing wasp: capable of stinging for a little moment but that's all; the spell of this peace and dignity rendering even the barns and stable and cribs which belong to it impervious to the puny flames he might contrive. (p. 16)

This is probably the central passage of the story. 'Barn Burning', almost a hymn to initiation survival, rotates around the internal conflict of Sarty, and this is the centrepiece of the conflict. Again, it is only in retrospect that the reader realises that Faulkner is spelling out the directions in which to look. Sarty's loyalty to Ab is seen here for what it really is, or what it would amount to: Ab is 'no more' than a buzzing wasp, who stings for a 'little' moment, whose greatest achievement of self-defense is
to light 'puny' flames, and these are 'contrived'. Taking the meanings of the words in context, we grasp the fundamental issue of Faulkner's diction: primary meaning is not enough, connotation and nuance are nearly everything. Peace and dignity, usually considered passive words take on new life as forces which render barns impervious to flames. A moment is not brief enough for Faulkner — it must be qualified, a 'little moment'. And, people who are part of the peace and dignity of the elegant landscape are somehow freed from the cycle of humanity which locks them tight — they are somehow beyond the touch of a Snopes. So, Faulkner's diction is found in context — a connotation and nuance that surpasses the primary dictionary meaning, reinforced by juggling of time schemes, built upon a framework of hesitation and repetition, and generated from a Southern background awash with Scott's mock chivalry, Twain's incisiveness, and the rhetoric of the King James Version of the Bible. The main point is that the spring which released it was one of intuitive genius; he made the language his own through some great innate process, and succeeded possibly beyond anyone in the twentieth century. As for the short story, although he later claimed never to have written one he liked, his success and influence over other Southerners was absolute; he came close to achieving his own definition,

In a short story that's next to the poem, almost every word has got to be exactly right... You have less room to be slovenly and careless. There's less room in it for trash...It's got to be absolutely impeccable, absolutely perfect. 31

Chapter Three: The Fugitives

When John Crowe Ransom died in 1974 at the age of eighty-six, Time magazine pointed out in its synoptic manner that he was 'widely acclaimed for his poems', that he 'shepherded the Fugitives', that he was 'longtime editor of the Kenyon Review', that he 'fathered the New Criticism', that he influenced 'such poets as Randall Jarrell and Robert Lowell', and that he once said that a professional critic 'is a man who, in dealing with a work of art, creates a little work of art in its honor'.

Whether or not he 'shepherded' them, Ransom was the standard-bearer of the poet-critics whose rigid textual analysis and obeisance to form concentrated their attentions upon the mechanics of writing instead of the writer's background or ideas; the New Criticism which they generated derived from their Southern isolation and the internal stimulation of a number of talents devoted at the same instance to the 'making' of poetry. As adherents of 'compressed emotion' and 'courtly rhetoric', the studied literary gifts of the Fugitives were polar to the innate largesse of William Faulkner, but equally influential in the South. In fact, the Fugitives may be said to have been an initiating influence upon Southern literature and criticism while Faulkner may be said to have been an inhibiting force (as evinced by Flannery O'Connor's celebrated comment, quoted by Alfred Kazin in Bright Book of Life, 'Nobody wants his mule and wagon stalled on the same track the Dixie Limited is roaring down').

In many ways, the method of the Fugitives is the antithesis of that of Faulkner: it is the success of control drawn from talent fortified by exact attention to the formal, critical, mechanical aspects of writing versus the success of control drawn wholly from native ability. Perhaps the best example of the difference between the two major approaches to writing in the South may be found in the genesis of each: poetry and the university. Faulkner's success did not begin until he unburdened his talent, until he outgrew his imitative fascination for Paul Verlaine and the other French symbolists — Faulkner's 'L'Après-Midi d'un Faune', published in The New Republic in 1919, and possibly the best attempt he made at poetry, per se, contained the infamous 'lascivious dreaming knees' and the doubtful 'blond limbed dancers' sandwiched in among the unfortunate 'hot quick spark', 'quick shadows', and 'ghostly hands'. The seeds of Faulkner's search for nuance and connotation are barely evident (a 'spark' was not hot enough nor quick enough for Faulkner — he attempted to emphasise 'spark' beyond its primary meaning), but they could not grow until he moved away from the constrictions of imitative poetry to the freer drive of his personal storytelling; as with his criticism, Faulkner's undergraduate poetry ironically suffered from the successful ingredient of his prose fiction: his personalised diction.

The contrary is true of the Fugitives, thrown together improbably, perhaps by the same classical 'Fates' of whom they later wrote — the Fugitives gained their foremost positions from...
the Vanderbilt University junction, and from the poetry and criticism generated at that contact; not immediately nor uniformly successful, but exhibiting an austere flavour, formalism, and an appreciation of literate word values.

It was John M. Bradbury, in his 1958 Ford Foundation study, who suggested that the Fugitives neither wandered nor fled, nor were they pursued; Bradbury supposed that the poet-critics merely 'departed' from 'conventional Southern smugness and insensitivity to aesthetic values'. Perhaps they were departing from the Southern publishing vacuum, which reflected that smugness and insensitivity, to join Robert Frost, Conrad Aiken, Archibald MacLeish, Carl Sandburg, and others pursuing the 'little' magazine revival led by the launching of Poetry, The Poetry Journal, and The Little Review, but the eventual academic and critical regard held by the Fugitives (notably John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, Andrew Nelson Lytle, Donald Davidson, and Cleanth Brooks) was the result of an intellectual camaraderie born out of mutual feelings of modern alienation and the Southern tendency to lash out at any threat, real or implied — thus the attacks upon T.S. Eliot (although he appeared to be a natural ally), and the one-sided appraisals of Shelley, Keats, and Blake, who, according to Ransom's 'Survey of Literature', variously 'drowned in pale lemon jelly', dripped 'blood of pickled beets', and 'foundered on sweet cake'.

Perhaps there may have been no New Criticism had there been no isolated group like the one at Vanderbilt which met in the

home of Sidney Hirsch; the New Criticism represents the
intense concentration upon the making of poetry in the
confines of a small, talented group who felt that they were
under some kind of attack — hence the necessity of stripping
away all background material from a work of art before a just
and justifiable criticism can be made, in order to escape from
the implication of American literature set out in the previous
century by the New England Transcendentalists, that only New
England individualism represented American literature, in order
to avoid having to assess the background against which a work
of art was created in order to assess its merit, in order to
flee from the censure sure to follow any merit-judgement in
favour of a group member, or perhaps some other Southerner, in
order to be able to apply one standard to all works: does it
stand on its own?

It is this Fugitive-developed criticism which has affected
Southern short story writing; of the group, only Andrew Lytle
and Robert Penn Warren have gained reputations based upon their
short fiction, and even that is qualified by the success of
their novels (more so for Warren) and their impact upon the
South as editors and educators. The Fugitives were and are
principally poet-critics, not short fiction writers, but if we
are to explore thoroughly the pattern of short story writing in
the South, we must examine those who set the standards, 'their
classical training, their passion for poetry, their perfect
respect for tradition, their abounding literary intelligence'
and their 'Southern temperament'.

It is interesting to note that as the poet-critics moved away from poetry's sphere of absolute control into the tentative world of prose, emphasis slowly shifted from the finished product to the moment of creation, the initial point of control; to gauge this shift, standards set by the writers as critics will be applied to their prose, namely: 'Jericho, Jericho, Jericho' by Andrew Lytle, 'Blackberry Winter' by Robert Penn Warren, and 'The Immortal Woman' by Allen Tate — works of a short story writer/novelist, a poet/novelist, and a poet; all three are teachers and critics.

Of the three, only Andrew Lytle did not concentrate on poetry, but revealed an editorial and critical talent he exercised as a contributor to The Southern Review and as an adviser to The Sewanee Review, dealing for the most part in direct analyses, of Faulkner's novels, including a lucid approach to the complexities of A Fable, 'The Son of Man: He Will Prevail', in which he stresses the necessity of control in the author's view and style.

Lytle's own work has concentrated on historical fiction; sometimes successfully as in At the Moon's Inn (in which his portrayal of the Indians DeSoto encounters in Florida becomes more than just an agrarian allegory about ties to the land, but a perceptive picture of the incoherent clash of two coherent alien societies); and sometimes not so successfully, as in The Long Night (which needed a Faulknerian energy rather than controlled intellectualism to cope with the theme of mindless revenge).

8. Andrew Lytle, At the Moon's Inn (London, 1943).
Perhaps the finest piece of fiction Lytle wrote is the third story in his 'Long Gourd' series, 'Jericho, Jericho, Jericho', which appeared in 1936 in The Southern Review. It deals with more than just the time-weary theme of fighting the inevitable moment of death, and though it is slightly reminiscent of other stories of self-assertiveness in the face of the final capitulation (Bradbury for one is reminded of Warren's 'When the Light Goes Green'), it exceeds in its rich imagery and sophisticated classical/Biblical allusions any of the pieces of agrarian propaganda to which John Bradbury is alluding, even had Lytle intended it to be propaganda.

The tumbling down, suggested by the title, of the aged McCowan plantation mistress, exceeds the design of the earlier 'Long Gourd' stories by such dimensions that a question is posed by implication: was Lytle using the other tales as a rehearsal for the genuine effort of 'Jericho, Jericho, Jericho'? 'Old Scratch in the Valley' and 'Mister McGregor' seem slight attempts to grapple with the oral tradition of the Tennessee-Kentucky valley setting, in comparison with the many-layered tale of the old woman who 'could smell her soul burning and see it...dripping with sin, like a rag soaked in kerosene'. Perhaps Lytle heeded the implicit warning in the final couplets of Ransom's 'Survey of Literature' by writing with 'gravy', 'grub', 'pewter', 'pub', and eschewing an empty frame with 'No belly and no bowels,/ Only consonants and vowels.'

10. Bradbury, p. 269
'Jericho, Jericho, Jericho' is no empty frame; the story is as solid as the grandmother's bed, 'wide enough for three people to lie comfortable in, if they didn't sleep restless'. The bed suggests classical and Biblical allusions which dominate the story, providing explicit and covert symbols which connect Lytle's ideas of control with his primary theme of attempting to regain innocence. The bed is Mrs McCowan's personal symbol of her seventy years as mistress of Long Gourd plantation, the life-and-death flow of her family is bound up in its oversized bulk. However, it is 'not wide enough for her nor long enough when her conscience scorched the cool wrinkles in the sheets'. (p. 239).

Before the reader is apprised of the 'sin' of the plantation theft from Iva Louise, he is confronted with the classical symbol, 'how long would these never-picked grapes hang over her head?' (p. 240), tacit communication that the old woman is equivalent to Tantalus. The gender is appropriate for the strong woman who, man-like, took and held a plantation, outlived her husband (his rank of General magnifies her vitality, gives her a permanence), had only contempt for the 'weakling' married to Iva Louise, and has more masculine perception than her grandson, 'It takes a heap more than pants to make a man' (p. 243).

Tantalus was famous for his wealth, and was the overlord of a fertile land, but the gods decided that he had misused his privileges and had to be punished (though not killed, because of his immortality (Homer, The Odyssey p. 583)). It is at this point of the Tantalus legend that we become acutely aware of Lytle's poetic use of compressed symbolism in the 'concrete' image of 'the heavy cluster of mahogany grapes that tumbled from the center of the headboard' (p. 240): Tantalus was immortal because he had eaten the
food of the gods, and was punished accordingly; the grandmother enjoyed the fruits of the ill-gotten plantation, and was punished by its loss, Tantalus-fashion, aware that she was losing Long Gourd through a man's weakness (the manner of her acquiring it), but unable to prevent the loss.

Perhaps it is a questionable practice to extend the search for analogous material beyond a single generation in the legend of Tantalus, but in the light of the grandmother's comment that Eva looks at the McGowan heir 'like a hungry hound' (p. 245), it is not excessive to recall that Tantalus served his own son Pelops to the gods, and that his grandchildren were devoured because of the actions of a seductive woman (Euripides, The Cretes, 995). Of Lytle's classical training, Donald Davidson in Southern Writers in the Modern World recalled the early meetings of the Fugitive group, given over to 'the art of poetry alone -- seriously, light-heartedly, exclusively, as if nothing else mattered but to write poetry and explore every aspect' to its 'classical roots', in conversations starting with Sidney Hirsch, moving to John Crowe Ransom and Andrew Lytle, to settle upon Allen Tate (who had gone to Vanderbilt to study classical and oriental languages), as they dissected and absorbed 'all the old legends, all the old myths'.

John M. Bradbury seemed concerned that Lytle's fiction appears to be derivative. If so, its derivation is that of a conscientious scholar's exact attention to and acknowledgement of his themes. In 'Jericho, Jericho, Jericho', Lytle seems potently aware of the fluctuating interchange of legend and myth, and the handling of such material by the classical writers, the role of the poet-priest who

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re-shaped the stock stories of gods and cosmography at will, to make a point. Perhaps part of the reason that Lytle's 'Jericho, Jericho, Jericho' is successful where the other Long Gourd stories are not is that no attempt has been made to formulate a tale linked to the Southern oral tradition; 'Jericho, Jericho, Jericho' is taken almost directly from classical legend, and the 'belly and bowels' of the ancient tale support Lytle's story, allowing him to exercise his Fugitive control over the 'consonants and vowels'.

Without that almost analytical control, such devices as the story's Biblical imagery would seem out of place, grafted onto the symbols of an opposing tradition, or, at best, uncomfortably adjacent, with little or no continuity; as it is, the combination of Biblical and classical symbolism complements and merges, points and counterpoints — the proof of its success lies both in the fact that the tale is effective on a more superficial level (without consideration of the Tantalus legend) and upon a close reading, in which the interweaving strands of imagery add to the richness of the story, flowing from and into one another.

The title warns of a fall, and, at the same time, the triple repetition from the chorus of the Negro spiritual suspends the moment when 'the walls come a-tumbling down'. Pindar's version of the Tantalus legend (Olympian Odes, 1. 60) states that a stone hangs over the immortal one's head, always about to fall, condemning him to an eternity of fearful anticipation, the fate of Mammy McCowan: 'Four thousand acres of the richest land in the valley he would sell and squander on that slut and there was no way to warn him. This
terrifying thought rushed through her mind... the spectre of an old sin rose up to haunt her" (pp. 245-56).

The story opens with her immediate identification with Joshua, floating above the counterpane, 'asleep for hours or months' (p. 239), until she draws herself down to the reality of the moment. (In retrospect, we can reflect upon Euripides's version (The Orstes, 4) which puts Tantalus in the air to receive his punishment.) As Joshua, Mammy tumbles the wall, but in so doing, brings it down upon herself. Further, there is a suggestion that she is the wall of Jericho, as well, that it is she who is falling, towards death, having fallen into sin long before, 'to get the land and keep it together', asking 'had she stolen it because she wanted it?' (p. 246).

As her offense against the gods is described as 'sin', it is a matter of balance that her punishment comes at the hands of the primal Biblical temptress, here amended by a feminine Latinate ending to 'Eva', as though to emphasise the male-female conflict of Mammy/McCowan's male role in opposition to a female threat who 'looks sort of puny' and 'walks like she had worms' (p. 244). Lytle focuses upon the conflict through the old woman's disgust with 'unnatural' style, demonstrated by her anecdote about the corseted waists of the Matchem daughters, who had their bowels ruined by their vain mother, undoubtedly in an attempt to 'Matchem' to husbands. The good-natured presentation of the grandmother encourages the reader to sympathise with her, and it magnifies the shock of the grandson's lack of loyalty to her, to the plantation, to Mammy's plans for his welfare, and to his associated responsibilities, by his callous approach to his mentally-disturbed Cousin George, 'I could get somebody to keep him... Eva will want to spend the winters in town' (p. 245).
As though the classical and Biblical symbols were not enough, Lytle introduces a third set of images as a chorus to the other two: images which may be termed 'historical', as they are associated with the grandmother's personal history of Long Gourd plantation. This introduction is not as complicated as it appears upon first reading; the classical and Biblical symbols merge, but do not clash, because the classical symbols are the symbols inherent in the story's framework — 'Jericho, Jericho, Jericho' is simply the classical tale of Tantalus, placed in a Southern setting. Thus, the classical symbols are a basic layer which merge with, but are not confused with, the Biblical symbols on a secondary level which, in turn, fuse with the historical symbols of the surface layer.

The theft scene, placed first in this centrally-introduced series, is followed by a catalogue of sensual details: smells (a survey by Lytle of the plantation), and visual and verbal memories presented in a Faulkner-like manner of alternating narration and conversation, deliberated comment and bursts of dialect speech.

Through the last set of images, the story begins to reach a climax: the 'legal' theft, the parade of odours, the Negro girls on their way to a dance, dealing with bushwackers, Brother Jack, 'ruined from his cradle by a cleft palate' and a victim first to the 'fire of spirits' then to the 'chain shot from an enemy gun' (pp. 248-49), an increasing roll of history that brings the grandmother to the burial parties which are endowed with life more Biblical or classical than historical, and certainly more terrifying.
The stalk, they hunt in twos and threes, 'they blow down the fire to ashes', from which they emerge, they move slyly ('tipping about the carpet'), they argue 'in animated silence', but the one action which places them as the messengers of a terrible finality is that they negatively shake their heads as they go. Lytle uses the gesture to tell Tantalus that there is no hope: the stone will drop, suspension is not really eternal: there is a 'concrete' punishment, a real end.

And, as the stone falls onto the neck of Tantalus, so do the walls of Jericho begin to tumble — only this time, Joshua causes the walls to fall on himself; Lytle holds out until the very last word, until 'down! the grapes are merely indefinitely beyond digestion, the punishment is always just about to be fulfilled; Lytle, as Fugitive critic, had to have the balance of a resolution.

Of course, with the resolution of the story comes the end of Mammy's chance of regained innocence; perhaps Lytle had decided in favour of the literal and literate word value of 'innocence', that the loss of innocence is a final process, that, by nature, experience taints beyond recall, that one cannot become a virgin. It is the analytical mind of the critic, concerned with the text alone, which edits the classical legend, returns Tantalus to Joshua, suggests that immortality — at least immortal punishment — is Biblical rather than classical, something which occurs beyond myth, legend, or history, or beyond the concise outline of a well-made tale.

Robert Penn Warren, too, committed himself to editorial accomplishments and criticism, but his wide-ranging talent was founded upon the early days of the Fugitive movement, and the poetry
which it bred. Although he did not publish his first volume of poetry, *Thirty-six Poems*, until long after the early days at Vanderbilt University, it established him as a lyric poet of some power whose concern with the human condition was to lead him to the freer (less formal) field of prose fiction.

'The Garden', from that first volume, is among the finest poems he has created, and goes one step further than Lytle's 'Jericho, Jericho, Jericho' towards finding a definition akin to that implied by 'regained innocence'. Warren implies that there is perhaps such a thing as 'sacramental innocence', beyond knowledge and 'appetite'. ¹⁵ He uses for his framework not classical legend, but the more worldly poetry of Andrew Marvell; Marvell's poem, 'The Garden', is (for a Puritan) a sensual account of Eden,

The luscious clusters of the vine
Upon my mouth do crush their wine;
The nectarine and curious peach
Into my hands themselves do reach;
Stumbling on melons as I pass,
Insnared with flowers, I fall on grass. ¹⁶

Although Warren copies the verse form and tone of the Marvell poem, he exchanges Marvell's idea of retreat, 'Annihilating all that's made/ To a green thought in a green shade', for an innocence restored in the sacrament of participation in the silent ceremonials in the stark forest-cathedral. In a sense, he rescues innocence from the forest which 'bemuses' his 'green shade', because


he knows that forests and gardens are not forever green, that in
the ripening process, innocence is lost, and the fall towards
extinction is begun.

Warren's 'The Garden' is perhaps a better antithesis of
John Donne's 'Twickenham Garden' than it is a variation upon
Marvell's 'The Garden', because Donne brings the fall into the
garden with him,

But O, selfe traytor, I do bring
The spider love, which transubstantiates all,
And can convert Manna to gall,
And that this place may thoroughly be thought
True Paradise, I have the serpent brought, 17

while Warren cleanses the garden in the sacramental innocence of
bare ruined choirs of majestic trees, negating the serpent and the
consuming 'spider love'. But Warren, as an analytical critic,
would not have chosen Donne as a model, because Donne's verse, as
exhibited by 'The spider love, which transubstantiates all,/ And
can convert Manna to gall', often proved obscure, rough, and
technically lax, and, to a Fugitive, that was the unforgivable sin.

It is with Warren, though, that the Fugitive movement shifts
towards interest in the point of creation instead of remaining
steadfastly concerned with practical criticism derived wholly from
textual analysis. That does not mean that linguistic analysis is
forseen for the classroom concept of 'creative writing', however,
for Warren's critical ally and often partner Cleanth Brooks has
rightly garnered a reputation as an austere critic of the functional,
linguistic line. The collaboration with Brooks at Louisiana State
University, on The Southern Review, and on the text-books,
Understanding Fiction and Understanding Poetry, has had perhaps more

17. John Donne, 'Twickenham Garden', Poetical Works, edited by Herbert
impact upon the critical approach to literature within the United States than any other — *Understanding Fiction*, for example, is a standard undergraduate text in American universities, has gone into its second edition (1971) since first being copyrighted in 1959 as a classroom text, and many revised editions since first publication in 1943, and has fostered an abbreviated version, *The Scope of Fiction*, for use in single-term university courses on literature. 18

In *Understanding Fiction*, Brooks and Warren found it advisable to include a section entitled 'Fiction and Human Experience: How Four Stories Came to be Written' because, 'The world that the writer has created is what we want to savor and enjoy, but we cannot deeply appreciate it unless we comprehend its relevance to the other two worlds, the writer's world and our world', because 'the creative process is concerned with bringing things together' while the analytic process is concerned with 'breaking fiction down into its component parts'. Then there appears a most un-Fugitive-like statement, all the more curious for its rendering in italics: the creative process is more than just 'different' from the analytical process, 'what it brings together is not even the same kind of elements that critical analysis distinguishes.' 19

This statement appears to be a rejection of the Fugitive idea behind the New Criticism, but as it follows a quotation from


Eudora Welty, and as Eudora Welty is concerned with 'vision' (rather than any clinical excising or reconstruction), it may be that Brooks and Warren are merely reacting to the flesh-and-blood writer's implied opposition to surgical analysis with its connotations of sterile incision. Any good writer, of course, makes choices in his writing, though not necessarily 'I shall put this plot with this theme'. 20 All writing must of necessity include some analysis; what Welty (and Faulkner) rebelled against, often vociferously, was the clinical dissection of a 'live' work which they perhaps felt as an attempt to rob that work of its vitality, or, through implication, cancel its vitality by claiming that its construction was merely the reversal of lifeless, clinical dissection technique.

To judge how far the shift from purely textual analysis towards emphasis upon the moment of creation carried Warren, we must examine his own story which he included in Understanding Fiction, 'Blackberry Winter', and the following commentary upon its genesis, '"Blackberry Winter': A Recollection'. 21

Ten years after 'The Garden', Warren published 'Blackberry Winter', probably the most eloquent of his stories, in its discerning portrayal of man's response to the incursion of mystery into his life; it is eloquent in its encapsulation of the story's essence, rather than in any rhetorical sense. It is a fluid tale


of circumscription and perhaps circumspection, as well, because
the story deals with innocence, that is: the innocence of the
'love-defined world of childhood', a phrase captured by Warren
not in the story itself, but in the rambling discourse recalling
its origins (p. 640). The image of the child whose boundaries
are determined by love is a singular poetic symbol of innocence,
an Eden encompassing the 'boy-in-woods'. However, the story's
main point is not concerned, as is Lytle's 'Jericho, Jericho,
Jericho', with innocence retained or regained, but with the limits
of that innocence, 'nobody had ever tried to stop me in June as
long as I could remember, and when you are nine years old, what
you remember seems forever' (p. 621).

Warren's tale is from a different point of view from Lytle's
story, and the awareness of the boy, recalled thirty-five years
later, allows for an informality that would have been out of
place for the third-person narrator of 'Jericho, Jericho, Jericho'.
Again, the Warren story, not built upon a direct classical theme,
but upon the universal confrontation with mystery, does not need
to be as formal in its structure as Lytle's story, and the
occasional informal construction in the dialogue-styled narrative
is part of the story's whole, whereas Lytle's image of Mammy's
thoughts 'clicking like a new-greased mower' in the first paragraph
of 'Jericho, Jericho, Jericho' seems almost embarrassingly out of
place, slotted between the floating of Joshua-cum-Tantalus and the
exact imagery of the bed (the new-greased mower is a good presence;
it just appears to be counter to the general tone of the rest of
the introduction).
On the other hand, Warren's lapses in 'Blackberry Winter' while perhaps not as effective on their own as images, are nonetheless not as noticeable as lapses: after the concise, 'I tried to assess the degree of authority and conviction in that tone, but at that distance it was hard to describe', he allows the same narrator to weave a nebulous (more immature?) image on the nature of time perception for the young, 'you remember everything and everything is important and stands big and full and fills up Time and is so solid that you can walk around and around it like a tree and look at it' (p. 621). That description, by a Fugitive critic who gained fame for his attention to textual detail, when contrasted with the passage on time-perception for the very old in 'A Rose for Emily', by a man who was condemned for harrangue and atmospherics, comes off a very poor second. Here is no succinct 'bottle-neck' through which the whole of the past appeared a 'great meadow'; here is only a sketchbook nebulosity, an outline idea that has yet to be filled in; but because the story is seen as the reminiscence of a boy thirty-five years on, Warren gets away with it, even though the contrasting style in the preceding paragraph should have caught his analytical eye. Perhaps it did not, because, as the reader is informed, Warren had his mind's eye on the entry of the tramp while he wrote the fourth paragraph. He said that he was writing 'about the difference between what time is when we have grown up and what it was when we stood on... the glistening auroral beach of the world', that the tramp came up 'not merely out of the woods, but out of the darkening grown-up world of time' (pp. 640-41). Surely, the
explication is more controlled than the passage in the story.

The momentary lapse is not offensively intrusive, however, and Warren continues (with a tighter rein) to define the boy's boundaries of his safe world, not in geographical definition, but by 'the green twilight inside my head', the storm the night before he spots the tramp, his grudging obedience to his mother, his self-assurance (pp. 623-24).

The dogs, Sam and Bully, become touchstones for his self-assurance, and for his first evaluation of the stranger, an evaluation which pricks his curiosity and emphasises the man's sudden appearance in a place where he would not have been (in the circumstances of the storm and the swollen river). The dogs advance menacingly, but instead of picking up 'a heavy stick, something to take a swipe at them with and something they could see and respect when they came at him', the tramp draws his switch-blade knife: 'Pulling his knife against the dogs was a funny thing to do, for Bully was a big, powerful brute and fast, and Sam was all right' (p. 624). Warren has found the tone for his story, and sticks with it until the end: pulling a knife against dogs is not seen as stupid, but odd, 'funny'; the quick acknowledgement that Sam was 'all right' goes much further than any adjective qualification Warren could have used. The narration now comes naturally from the narrator; the narrator is no longer propped up by the words.

The incident with the dogs and the knife gives the tramp a special quality, 'funny', interesting; grown-ups in the boy's 'love-defined world' know how to handle animals — and this fact becomes the first major clue to the story's ambiguous nature: it is the
tramp who is innocent. The boy's innocence is upon him at
his birth; his concern is for the limitations of his
surroundings. The tramp, on the other hand is an innocent
abroad in the countryside as the result of his own decision.
It is he who has left the familiar city to wander, what for
him is, the mysterious countryside where pouls drown with
cows in floods, 'it might just have well been driftwood;
for it was dead as a chunk, rolling and rolling down the
creek, appearing and disappearing, feet up, or head up, it
didn't matter which' (p. 629). The dead cow, likened to a
chunk of wood, rolling in the floodwaters becomes part of the
tramp's initiation - the boy has seen floods before, his
Eden is still intact, but the tramp has made inroads into that
security.

Perhaps the tramp was, in one sense, the Wandering Jew,
a figure who seemed such a fascination to the Fugitives, and
of whom Allen Tate wrote, 'A Fugitive was quite simply a Poet:
the Wanderer, or even the Wandering Jew, the Outcast, the man
who carries the secret wisdom of the world'. The tramp
certainly appeared to have that mystic attraction for the boy,
and his conversation seems to confirm it,

Then I said: 'Where did you come from?'
He looked at me then with a look which seemed
almost surprised that I was there. Then he said,
'It ain't none of yore business.'
Then I said, 'Where are you going?'
He stopped, studied me dispassionately for a
moment, then suddenly took a step toward me and
leaned his face down at me, the lips jerked back,
but not in a grin, to show where the teeth were
knocked out and to make the scar on the lower lip
come white with tension.

22. Allen Tate, 'The Fugitive - 1922-1925', Princeton University
Library Chronicle, (3), 78-79.
He said: 'Stop following me. You don't stop following me and I cut yore throat, you little son-of-a-bitch.' (p. 637)

And, perhaps the 'Wandering Jew', the man with the secret knowledge, was, in that single sense of wonder, a Fugitive, because the boy did continue to follow him 'all the years', because Warren reveals in the commentary, when saying that the story is not autobiographical, 'no tramp ever leaned down at me and said for me to stop following him or he would cut my throat. But if one had, I hope that I might have been able to follow him anyway, in the way the boy in the story does' (p. 643). The desire to follow the tramp, the wanderer, the Fugitive symbol expands in 'Blackberry Winter' towards the point of mystery, and through mystery to recognition. Through his own initiation to the countryside (and hence the loss of his naive innocence), the tramp pulls the boy through the boundaries formed by love, out into the world (which assuredly is not so defined), for thirty-five years of wandering; the boy, too, becomes a Fugitive, in one sense, and an escapist in another (or, are the two compatible?). Warren has the boy physically return to his place at home, to the mother who won't let him go barefoot, because it is a 'blackberry winter', a season out of time.

But, the boy follows the tramp in his mind, the boundaries will never be the same again, and his recognition of the man's innocence (despite the tramp's viciousness) dissolves his own. Perhaps the point of total recognition is when, in talking to the boy's father, the man 'used the word which they would have frialed me to death for using', then the narrator's father orders
The tramp off the farm, and the tramp slowly reaches for the pocket where he 'kept the knife'.

I was just about to yell to my father about the knife when the hand came back out with nothing in it. The man gave a kind of twisted grin, showing where the teeth had been knocked out above the new scar. I thought that instant how maybe he had tried before to pull a knife on somebody else and had got his teeth knocked out. (p. 636)

The passage is introduced with a colloquial expression frailed me to death, a country slang saying in which an adjective has been converted into a verb. This term is common in the South, unlike Faulkner's personalised use and exchange of meanings, but employed here with the same effect, because for uttering that particular swear-word, the boy would have been beaten badly (until he was 'frail'), but more than just frail: until he was dead. That simple statement sets the tone for the confrontation between his father and the tramp — the sense of importance is heightened, and so is the sense of wonder: how can the tramp possibly live through the retribution that was sure to befall him, now?

The tramp survives, by flashing a wry grin instead of the looked-for knife, and the boy's vision (scope of perception) moves to the real threat of the implied retribution, 'maybe he had tried before to pull a knife on somebody else and had got his teeth knocked out'. The tramp moves on without being 'frailed to death', leaving the boy unsure of the meaning of the confrontation of the tramp with his father, but aware that there is more to existence than those things within his boundaries. After all, he had the advantage over the city.
tramp, yet the tramp was able to do something which he could have never dared.

After the tramp's threat and the boy's mental pursuit, Warren adds what appears to be a curious anti-climax, a recapitulation of the highlights of the thirty-five intervening years, the death of the boy's father by lock jaw, the broken-hearted death of his mother, the sale of the farm, and so on. Without that passage, however, the story would have ended with the tramp's departure, and the boy's staying behind, physically and mentally; the passage implies that the narrator heeded the tramp's warning and returned to everyday life - the first-person ramblings of recollection winding down to a stopping-point (any stopping point), until that final line frames the tale: 'But I did follow him, all the years' (p. 638).

The physical boundaries of the narrator's world provide a territorial counterpart to the boy's garden of innocence, in much the same way that the physical presence in Warren's 'The Garden' promotes the ripening of sacramental innocence. Here, instead of the works of Andrew Marvell, however, the major influence appears to be those of John Donne: the images seem to be created from logical points or thematic sequences, instead of Warren's usual self-generated symbol (which in turn engenders its own symbolic overtones). From the ice-like mud to the thought that Dellie would not make him cover his feet, the image of Dellie's cabin rises fluently in the narrator's mind as the chain of reasoning lengthens,
then hesitates, while the passage completes a direct
description,

Dellie's cabin was of logs, with one side,
because it was on a slope, set on limestone chunks,
with a little porch attached to it, and had a little
whitewashed fence around it and a gate with
plow-points on a wire to clink when somebody came in,
and had two big white oaks in the yard and some
flowers and a nice privy in the back with some
honeysuckle growing over it. (p. 631)

This passage compresses within one sentence solid descriptive
prose which forms a bridge between the military appearance
of the narrator's father (recalling the Civil War, with its
connotations of lost causes, strife, and slavery), and the
introduction and definition of Dellie's family (contrasting
them with the other Negroes, and Matt Lawson's and Sid Turner's
families).

There are only two words of more than two syllables,
honeysuckle and somebody, and the phrasing in four, five, six,
and three word groups gives the passage the necessary baldness
of a newspaper-like presentation. The usual acceleration of
Warren's style through lush complexity is here contracted into
reportorial simplicity. Adjective modifiers are scarce and slight:
'limestone', 'little', 'whitewashed', 'two', 'big', 'white',
'some', and 'nice'; modification and qualifications are more the
result of sentence structure: the cabin had one side 'because it
was on a slope', and the 'nice' privy in the back had 'some
honeysuckle growing over it'. Warren also employs sound-linked,
and therefore effective, words to punctuate his description,
giving the gate to Dellie's house alliterative 'plow-points' that
'clink' to announce an arrival; he uses chunk (a Southern
A colloquialism for any squat, relatively unimportant piece of material) three times in the story — once in this passage:
in the first paragraph of the story, by way of definition, 'just a fire of chunks' (p. 621), in the description of the
down-stream progress of the 'drownt cow', which was 'dead as a chunk' (p. 629), and here as an internal comment upon the value
of the stilt-like foundations of Dellie's house, 'set on limestone chunks'.

Warren's usual creative drive towards a self-expanding image is recognisable elsewhere in 'Blackberry Winter', notably
in the paragraph about the drowned chicks. The language is still simple, but the images are self-sustaining and more closely
linked to poetry than to reportorial prose.

There is nothing deader looking than a drowned chick. The feet curl in that feeble, empty way which back when I was a boy, even if I was a country boy who did not mind hog-killing or frog-gigging, made me feel hollow in the stomach. Instead of looking plump and fluffy, the body is stringy and limp with the fluff plastered to it, and the neck is long and loose like a little string of rag. And the eyes have that bluish membrane over them which makes you think of a very old man who is sick about to die. (p. 627)

This passage once again alters the tone taken by the narrator, but this time as a natural progression of the narration. The boyish tone of the first sentence dominates the paragraph to such an extent that the word 'membrane' appears a logical consequence of the preceding sentence, even though the description of the chick's neck, 'like a little string of rag' is far less sophisticated than 'membrane'. By now, the reader has adjusted to the curious amalgam of quicksilver, mature insight among the leaden, juvenile attempts at understanding and expression,
and reconciles the apparent ambiguities to Warren's technique of recollection: the thoughts of youth among the thoughts of manhood, thence the mixed vocabulary and tone. But it is a little disconcerting to find the same idea expressed in the same youthful tone in drastically different levels of perception: while the boy feels 'hollow in the stomach', a nameless murmur, at the death of the chicks by drowning, his assessment of the foulness of the yard of Dellie's cabin, after the flood has swept the trash out from under her house, is the discerning, 'It looked just as bad as the yards of the other cabins, or worse. It was worse, as a matter of fact, because it was a surprise. I had never thought of all that filth being under Dellie's house' (p. 632).

Of course, his reaction to the drowned chicks was not a reaction to death so much as it was its unfamiliar manner, 'because it was a surprise', yet he never voices the same perception of the chick's drowning, nor does he tie the two moments together. An argument can be made for this seeming oversight on the part of Warren by observing the story as the narrator's growth towards self-awareness, that the incident of the chicks was not perceptive and the incident with Dellie's yard was more aware because the boy was growing through his innocence, but, if this is the case, 'Blackberry Winter' is a lesser variation on Faulkner's theme in 'Barn Burning', with the drawbacks of first-person narrative discussed in Chapter Two.

In his introductory comments to Joseph Conrad's Nostromo, Robert Penn Warren said of the 'philosophic novelist' that the
act of composing is a path toward knowledge, 'a way of exploration'. If that statement can be applied to his short prose fiction as well as his novels, it may help to explain Warren's approach to the creative moment, the attainment of 'vision', which 'depends on some free movement of mind, on letting the mind go loose, so that one thing leads to another, at random as it were', but that this seeming irresponsibility is 'a responsible kind of irresponsibility'.

Logic has to develop it, and meaning from it; or, to state the matter another way, as logic and meaning come clearer in the process, the vision will in its subsequent stages, more and more manifest them and develop them. 24

The manifestation and development, then, do not replace the analytical process, but control it— the 'consonants and vowels' must be given substance; form is not enough.

The stumbling block in the path of understanding the fiction of 'Blackberry Winter' is the rambling recollection appended to it by Warren, perhaps because it is not an explication, but a reminiscence. All the King's Men and Warren's study of Coleridge that he mentioned in the 'Recollection' are not directly relevant to 'Blackberry Winter'; they were merely the works he wrote prior to beginning the short story.

Neither is Herman Melville's 'The Conflict of Convictions' directly relevant, beyond offering the phrase, 'the slimed foundations', to Warren to use as the image upon which to build Dellie's cabin after the flood. 25

'Blackberry Winter', a season out of time, is certainly no chronicle of a conflict of convictions; actions follow habit, comfort, or fear. The greatest conviction enunciated in the tale appears to be that of the narrator in his youthful belief in the right to go barefooted in June.

To the extent his theory of fiction meets his theory of analytical criticism, Warren's prose does not adulterate, but rather elongates his poetry: 'Blackberry Winter' must be seen as such; it is, in fact, a series of poetic portraits, a 'free movement of the mind' that attains a certain vision.

Perhaps the strongest vision, and surely the strongest portrait which reaches towards that vision is neither of the boy or of the tramp, but of Dellie's husband, Old Jebb, thirty years or more her senior, who outlives her, reaches his century, and 'is probably living yet, as far as I know'. If the tramp has the wonder of the Wandering Jew, Old Jebb has the patience, the wisdom, and the immortality. A latter-day Noah after a small, Tennessee flood, a black Job, he never quite contradicts: 'Ain't sayen Miss Sallie doan know and ain't sayen she do' (p. 635), enunciating Warren's personal recognition that 'beneath mutual kindliness and regard some dark, tragic, unresolved something lurked' (p. 642).

Old Jebb is at least seventy years old when the narrator squats beside him to watch him shell corn from the cob with 'hand lak cass-iron won't nuthin' hurt'. Half a paragraph later, Warren arrests his own nostalgia in the introduction of the powerful, old man,
He had small eyes and a flat nose, not big, and the kindest and wisest old face in the world, the blunt, sad, wise face of an old animal peering tolerantly out on the goings-on of the merely human creatures before him. He was a good man, and I loved him next to my mother and father. I crouched there on the floor of the crib and watched him shell corn with the rusty cast-iron hands, while he looked down at me out of the little eyes set in the blunt face. (p. 634)

The tone and language are immensely sympathetic, yet somehow avoid the damning edge of sentimentality against which the passage is written. Nostalgia slides into treacle faster than any other type of memory, yet, despite 'he was a good man' and 'I loved him next to my mother and father', the boy's fondness never drags Warren down. The repetition of 'blunt', the visual impact of 'rusty cast-iron hands', and the attitude of Jebb's looking down at the narrator, avoid trivial pity and maudlin sentiment, but the central device which converts the passage nearly into lyric poetry is the accumulation of adjectives which appeal not to the emotion but to the logic of aesthetic: 'blunt, sad, wise', 'tolerantly', and 'merely'; there is a pagan call to the intellect in that description of an old animal's tolerance towards the 'goings-on of the merely human creatures before him'. Warren's compound symbol of sacramental innocence is realised in Old Jebb, who, in a sense, even outlives God — 'He done gone off and forgot me' (p. 638). By dismissing Old Jebb with a fond wave and pursuing the tramp 'all the years', the boy has followed the wrong Fugitive.

Compared with his poetry, Warren's prose seems intent upon 'letting the mind go loose', as he and Brooks assert;
perhaps this approach to prose fiction is more effective in a longer form of narrative, however—certainly *All the King's Men*, in which Warren's intimations of a regained, 'sacramental' innocence have graduated into a fully-fledged attempt at redemption, provides the length seemingly necessary for Adam Stanton and 'Eves' Sadie Burke and Anne Stanton to explore the theme of rebirth, transmitting their knowledge of evil to Jack Burden in the process. 26 'Fish for sale' is more than a mindless cry for the fictional Huey Long to flaunt as a sign of his dictatorship's supremacy: the ancient Christian fish becomes, by implication in the novel, a politically subverted redemption symbol, sold out on the State House steps, amid ritual killing and revival. Expansive prose like Warren's ('The Patented Gate and the Mean Hamburger' is another example of a wandering towards 'vision'—this time Agrarian 'redemption') should perhaps be examined in terms other than those which he applied to his tight-knit poetry. 27

While Warren's fiction expanded to cover this theme, Allen Tate's fiction contracted, became more complex, a composite of textures and levels of symbols, more in the manner of Lytle's 'Jericho, Jericho, Jericho'. Tate, like Lytle, a classicist, sought to write his stories in the manner of his poetry, eschewing nebulosity and external extension; it does not matter that the old lady of 'The Immortal Woman' may be the Jane Posey of *The Fathers*, years on, married to a Westerner; 'the Immortal Woman' is complete in itself, and there is depth in the story.

27. Norton Girault, 'The Narrator's Mind as Symbol: An Analysis of *All the King's Men*', *Accent*, 7 (Summer 1947), 220-34.
which perhaps exceeds that of the critical evaluation of heritage in the novel, partially because the short story lends itself to such compression. 23

Tate early avoided Ransom's dualistic concept of poetry whose purpose was to present a rational idea or 'intuition', an implication that poetry was merely prose elevated by mechanical excellence; throughout the open-ended discussions in *The Fugitive* (and it is significant that there was such extremely diverse interplay among members of a movement usually associated with a single-minded approach to criticism), Tate expounded the inherent linguistic difference between poetry and prose, and quoted historical examples of free verse - he sought a vocabulary which would 'accommodate' the 'fantasy of sensation'. 29 Tate undoubtedly owed part of that philosophy to his discovery of T.S. Eliot, whose work he did not feel was far out of line with the form behind the idea of Ransom's neoclassical 'regularity'. That Ransom eventually dropped his insistence upon the necessity of regular metre (still without accepting Eliot's works on the grounds of an undefined 'irregularity') was probably a tribute to Tate's success in such works as 'Ode to the Confederate Dead'. In that work, Tate's concern with Southern historical myth avoids the play of a totally mechanistic approach to poetry while not capitulating to Eliot's 'impersonal', 'abstract', and 'authentic' art. 30

30. Tate, *The Fugitive*, 1, No. 4 (1922), 100.
Although Kenneth Burke's assessment that Tate abstracted living human beings, denying their 'physicality', the flow of Tate's idea of historical myth created physical beings larger than life. If there is a doubt as to the effectiveness of Tate's creatures on physical grounds, perhaps it is that they are too large, too real, too complex in the kaleidoscopic whirl of their internal levels. Humans could not withstand the compression of gravity and atmosphere on Jupiter or the sun, and Tate's Southern myth creates such a sphere. It is only in enlarging the people as well that he fits them for his world of historical myth,

Row after row with strict impunity
The headstones yeild their names to the element,
The wind whirrs without recollection;
In the riven troughs the splayed leaves
Pile up, of nature the casual sacrament
To the seasonal eternity of death;
Then driven by the fierce scrutiny
Of heaven to their election in the vast breath,
They sough the rumor of mortality.

The poem is a thought within a thought: the poet Tate describes the graveyard, and the graveyard contains a thought of its own, of headstones, 'riven troughs' and 'splayed leaves' which moan 'the rumor of mortality', the passing of the old order (symbolised by Zeno and Parmenides), and the regret of those who are left behind, who magnify and elevate the old order far beyond its fondest ideas of itself. Tate's technique of sharing the burden of thought with the graveyard by making his monologue (not a soliloquy, because the graveyard exhibits

a presence) one long rhetorical question, makes this elevation possible, and actually puts forth a case for making the poem a 'homerical' echo.

The monism of Parmenides of Elea and of his friend and pupil Zeno is the qualifying essence of the passing of the old order; Parmenides, the first philosopher to consider the intrinsic value of the idea of 'being', opened his own didactic poem with an allegory describing his chariot journey through the gate leading from night to daylight, from which idea Zeno apparently formed his dialectic, dismissing the critics of his teacher by drawing pairs of contradicting conclusions from their premisses. (Aristotle, Fragment 65)

There being no rhetorical means of defeating such argument, all that can mute the pair is the temporary measure of the 'unimportant shrift of death', in which the 'wind whirrs without recollection'. The Confederate dead are likewise stilled in what Tate implies is a temporary, if ambiguous state. Only the physical being gives in to the 'ravenous grave' which 'counts us all', but merely counts, a passing, not a capture: for Tate, the classical life-line to the Confederate dead, thrown from the dividing doorway between light and dark and its inherent dialectic defense, echoed by 'leaves whispering in the improbable mist of nightfall' (emphasized by the eye-rhyme 'troughs' and 'sough' — do we see what we think we see?), is the 'knowledge carried to the heart', the dialectic hidden somewhere in the physical world.

(symbolised by the 'singular screech-owl'), an 'invisible lyric' which 'seeds the mind/With the furious murmur of their chivalry', a sowing which dismisses death.

There are many ways of approaching myth: Kenneth Burke's way is the argument that mystery 'thins' a character, removes its 'physicality', because only the known is visible; Allen Tate's way is that the unknown allows unlimited scope, that the inherent mystery of myth provides any number of possible visions, that myth provides a chance to enlarge, not diminish. Nowhere is this idea more apparent than in his story, 'The Immortal Woman'.

We never knew why she came, but it was always in October when the warm days were few, and the fallen leaves under the thick shade stuck to the dampness on the walk that the sun could not dry. It was usually the last of October. We wondered how long she had been here, a round little lady in black holding her head up on the left side and leaning on a heavy black cane. When I saw her I thought: she has already passed several times. Then I remembered that was last year or two years ago. It got so that when I saw her for the first time in the fall, I said: it is another year. 34

Without build-up or hesitation, Tate plunges immediately into the task of creating (or perhaps recreating) his Southern historical myth, utilizing his depth-implying air of mystery: not just 'we didn't know why she came', but 'we never knew why she came'. He immediately intensifies the reader's curiosity by adding, 'but it was always in October' - 'never' and 'always' in the same sentence, finality and eternity, the substance of myth.

34 Allen Tate, 'The Immortal Woman', A Southern Harvest, pp. 137-51 (p. 137). Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
Tate presents the story with all the familiar ingredients of his approach to historical myth: a classical reference tied to its historical counterpart, the use of mystery as a framework for complexity, and the ambiguity of monistic philosophy which points to the use of either prose, or a vocabulary which 'accomodates' the 'fantasy of sensation'. Of this last point, the differing vocabularies of his poetry and prose are highlighted in a comparison of 'Ode to the Confederate Dead' and 'The Immortal Woman', the latter being a good example of standard expression elevated by carefully controlled mechanics, as in, 'When I saw her I thought: she has already passed several times.' The subject is controlled by grammatical presentation, the obvious direction of the reader's attention to a point of importance (the timeless quality of the old lady) is stated in an essentially basic vocabulary, but is emphasised by the use of a colon; nowhere are the 'sough', the 'troughs', the 'riven', which illuminate Tate's poem.

Perhaps it may be said that 'Ode to the Confederate Dead' is obviously a poem without Tate's inclusion of these words, but the somewhat unusual vocabulary is more than a linguistic device to point out that the poem is a poem, per se; their use as near-archaic remnants fulfills other functions, increases the historical immediacy of the work, points to the classical connection through their antique tone, and gives an Anglicized balance to the later appearance of the sharply Hellenic 'Zeno' and 'Parmenides'. Although Tate wished to differentiate between the inherent qualities of prose and poetry, his critical awareness would not have allowed him to have written with a
stylized vocabulary simply to create a consciously 'poetic' poem: still, his inclusion of unusual, near-archaic, and even awkward words (the reader must decide in mid-phrase whether *sough* is 'suff' or 'sow') has an ambiguous effect on his poetic line: on first reading, the practice is troublesome; in retrospect, the use of those words often appears to have been a stroke of genius.

That is not to say that Tate's poetry is subtle while his prose is mechanical, nor that his poetry is consciously 'poetic' while is prose is consciously not, but that Tate's prose exhibits an analytical logic of its own: even its allegories and and creative surprises, like 'She seemed to sink into the faded anonymity of the old street' have a hint of ascetic concentration about them. In his poetry, Tate's words spring from his images; in his prose, his images spring from his words.

Occasionally, he connects the two streams by a word-image such as *leaves*, 'the casual sacrament of the seasonal eternity of death', which speak for the graveyard in 'Ode to the Confederate Dead', and introduce the old lady in 'The Immortal Woman', 'the fallen leaves under the thick shade stuck to the dampness on the walk that the sun could not dry': the leaves are death, eternity, and Parmenides's door between the dark and the light that leads to a kind of immortality. The connection does not appear to be a negation of his monistic theory, but a recognition of the common pool of words in the language from which linguistic difference draws its varied stock; as a classically
educated man, Tate will not or cannot, like Faulkner, redefine words, but he can use his analytical control to gain every vestige of defined connotation and nuance.

It has been asserted earlier that 'The Immortal Woman' is complete on its own, that it needs no knowledge of The Fathers to be successful; in fact, in many ways, it is a better story without that connection, for the Negro boy's mistress 'Miss Jane' and Mrs Dulany's 'Little Jane' tie together tightly as the god Janus, the double-faced head, the spirit literally of 'the gate' or 'barbican', who watches over beginnings, and therefore, the dividing line between light and dark (a reference to Parmenides, again?). The old woman is intentionally presented, also, as one of the Fates, or perhaps 'Fate' itself, since the earliest words for 'fate' in Greek and Latin are moira and aisa (The Iliad. 18. 115-21), 'share' or 'portion', and Homer tells us that the 'portion of all men is death'.

The tale is not an auto-biographic, but perhaps 'auto-ideographic' story, in which Tate's theory of historical myth reaches closest to becoming empiricism, in sentences and phases like, 'At noon there is a moment, filled always with surprise, when the sunlight falls quietly through the trees' (p. 137), and 'it struck me for the first time how she walked - as if she were being propelled from the outside, by a force that she neither knew nor could control' (p. 142), and, again, 'it takes years to understand the easy things'. (p. 143) The ideas
of surprise being caused by the quiet fall of sunlight, of an external, unimaginable force propelling people through their lives, of the complexity of the seemingly simple, all are hallmarks of Tate's writing - poetry and prose. If Ransom is the critic-father of the Southern Renaissance, Tate is renaissance man, active, controlled, complete; like Lytle, he adapts the classic image to his Southern purpose, 'Like carrying water uphill in a leaky bucket', (p. 150); like Warren, he says, 'I am trying, I suppose, to see what she really looked like' (p. 143); like Ransom, he expands his image through analysis: of the old lady, 'with a start I thought how curious it was that she needed a cane. She put little weight upon it and at regular short intervals jabbed the rubber ferule noiselessly against the bricks as if indeed that were her way of testing her distance from the ground' (p. 142). Like Davidson and the rest of the Fugitives, Tate searched far afield for his images and made them Southern; the narrator in 'The Immortal Woman' is a yankee, but not just a Northerner from Pennsylvania, transplanted to the borderline of the Potomac River, his childhood is borderline, and he is paralyzed, wounded in the First World War. He is surrounded by 'monsters in jars', 'South American mummies', 'wax representations of diseases' (p. 140): he has seen people 'as they ought not to be', he has seen whining monsters with only half a face', and he himself is not as he 'ought to be' (p. 146).

John is, perhaps, a kind of Fugitive, living on the edge of a country that is his, yet where he does not quite belong;
he is crippled, a monster, not quite perfect, and he looks for perfection in the old lady, knowing that he will never have more than quick insights, provided by the Negro boy, the doctor, the chorus (Mrs Dulany), and the final glimpse of the old lady's being led away by the strong young man who 'must have stepped out of a fashionable hotel' (p. 151).

He even pretends disinterest wheeling to the window, 'I said to myself: it is to get the morning son. It was to see the old lady' (p. 146); the Fugitive on the spine of the South in Tennessee, hearing the challenge from Mencken, suffering the intolerance of fellow, (but anti-intellectual 'booster-club') Southerners, views the past, present and future through the spectacle of the little old lady in black.

The historical myth is complete in her: frail, ancient, propelled by an external force she does not comprehend, she becomes one of the Fates in reverse: she neither spins, measures, nor snips the thread of life - she gathers the bits, ties them back together and adds them to her ball, weaving the fabric of existence, collecting it in its primal state; she was 'as perfect as a cyclone, as terrible, with the same suffocation vortex inside', drawing breath away from life. She is immortal in a way that the Platonic Fates could never be: dressed always in black, always alone, she goes on collecting other people's lives (the shredded dresses, foil, and bits of string), waiting for what? Is the young man, who comes to collect her at the end of the tale, Death? Or is he something far worse to a woman who combines the South, the Fates,
and (again) the Wandering Jew: is he as he appears, merely youth? Not the chance, but the threat of immortality is Tate's historical myth; he appears to be implying that the South's figurative resurrection always leads back to the ambiguous choice at the gateway, of dark and light and beginning, 'she had merely been put together by all past generations, and saw no need of doing anything about it' (p. 143). John never sees the woman again after her departure with the young man, but realises, 'She could never die nor live' (p. 151). She settles for leaving, like Zeno's dialectic, an ambiguous answer.
Chapter Four: Katherine Anne Porter

In 1974, pondering the ironic twist of her life that had belatedly given her, at 83, financial independence through the publishing and film rights of Ship of Fools, Katherine Anne Porter said of the film, 'Well, I looked at it and thought this is a fast, entertaining Hollywood job, and if it hadn't taken my name and the name of my book up there and disgraced me I would have found it amusing'. It was not amusing, but a 'disgrace', because through the struggle of her life, Mexican revolution, tuberculosis, 'near starvation', long germination and unbroken days of work, she created and preserved one thing, what she herself saw as 'a line that was like steel, and it never was broken, and it never was disturbed, and that was my art'.

If, as enunciated by Alfred Kazin, the Southern poet-critics of the New Criticism were the 'convincing indoctrinators of literature-as-religion', Katherine Anne Porter must be that religion's most ascetic high priestess - singular, withdrawn, consummately devoted to the idea of its perfectibility. She is perhaps one writer to whom the usually overworked and misused word pure may be applied in its complete, ameliorative meaning: she never compromised the fierce sense of responsibility to her name that she felt as simply trying 'to write well'.

Whether or not it was the result of the frontier heritage of individuality (the family link to Daniel Boone), or the Southern heritage of loyalty to personal values, or a combination of both, the insistence of Porter upon her responsibility to 'her name' was the driving force that controlled her distinctive life and, ultimately, that directed her uncommon work. She never capitulated to the false demands of a vitiating 'necessity': her work was never adulterated, and, therefore: it was never shallow yet never overloaded with complexities or excess symbolism, never mechanical, nor unrestrained, nor mechanistic. It was as though the short story genre had found its natural exponent, and she never signed her inviolable name to any lax or mediocre effort.

William Nance said of her, in his preface to Katherine Anne Porter and the Art of Rejection, that Porter's career 'presents an extreme instance of the inseparability of the writer's life and work. In her case life and work combine into a pattern so unusual that one cannot help seeking an explanation for it', that her 'very high reputation' was based upon the 'extremely high quality' of a 'remarkably small quantity' from a 'long life of devotion to writing'. 4 Nance's evaluation, the hypothesis that there is in Porter's life and work a theme of rejection, suggests a possible approach to both.

There is, of course, an element of rejection in every act, every decision denotes a choice for or against something, and the theme of rejection Nance seems to have had in mind, as far as Porter's career is concerned, is her decision to forgo placing herself in situations which she considered potentially dangerous to her art (Hollywood, literary cliques and circles, Roman Catholicism of a Jesuit flavour, Marxism, and so on). In a sense, this 'rejection' is a kind of affirmation—a single-minded dedication which has given Katherine Anne Porter a special place in short fiction for over half a century, as a conscientious prose artist in the tradition of Henry James. Her stories exhibit a mastery of technique and a frank perception of human personality and society that reorder, through art, the disorder of life.

The disparity between the length of Porter's writing life and the comparative scarcity of her writing is regularly noted by critics, although Porter has written more than just a few volumes of short fiction and a novel. It is perhaps a tribute to her ability that we are willing to accept her definitions, especially of what she is willing to accept as writing as her 'art'. It is clear that she considered only her signed prose fiction as art; all the rest—the essays and occasional writings, the journalism, and the hack work—were conversations, commentaries, or unpleasant experiences that she wished to dismiss (she wrote to bibliographer Edward Schwartz that the books which she had ghost-written in New York such as My Chinese Marriage by M.T.F. (1921) —
should not be included in the list of her works). 5

Her art was distinctly hers, she owed her work to no one and to everyone: as she said, 'I never had anything to beat, except my own self into my own shape... and it was quite a job'. 6 If we speak of her writing in the tradition of James or of others, or if we say that a certain amount of her work seems to echo the Old Genteel school or the New Criticism, it is because her accomplishment recalls the best that each has to offer, absorbed by her and converted into her personal perfection as a leaf absorbs and converts sunlight, an exact, deep, mysterious, organic process.

An analysis of her words and the way she used them - grammar, rhythm, and sound - in 'He' and 'The Grave' will serve to illuminate that 'personal perfection', to place it in its relation to successful writers of simplistic or of complicated prose fiction. For example, the beginning of Ernest Hemingway's Farewell to Arms suggests resignation on the part of the narrator, achieved through the effect of compound sentences (independent clauses joined by and) strung together in a manner to suggest a prolonged accumulation that is not fought but accepted,

In the late summer of that year we lived in a house in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountains. In the bed of the river there were pebbles and boulders, dry and white in the sun, and the water was clear and swiftly moving and blue in the channels. Troops went by the house and down the road and the dust they raised powdered the leaves of the trees. The trunks of

the trees too were dusty and leaves fell early
that year and we saw the troops marching along
the road and the dust rising and leaves, stirred
by the breeze, falling and the soldiers marching
and afterward the road bare and white except for
the leaves. 7

Of the four sentences, the last three are compound,
the first is complex (containing a dependent clause), a usage
which is declaratory rather than analytical; the method of
qualification and modification too lends itself to the
familiarly Hemingway-like stark quality: of the sixteen
phrases (one with a compound object), twelve are adverbia, of which eight modify verbs; there are only three single-
word adverbs. Had Hemingway used more single-word adverbs
instead of phrases, he would necessarily have changed the
style of the passage by the inclusion of more polysyllabic
words (all three single-word adverbs are polysyllabic:
'swiftly', 'early', 'afterward' – the longest word in the
passage): 103 of the passage's 126 words contain only one
syllable, twenty-two have two syllables.

At the other end of the scale is Theodore Dreiser, whose

The Titan is characteristically complex,

From New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine had come a strange company, earnest, patient, determined, unschooled in even the primer of refinement, hungry for something the significance of which, when they had it, they could not even guess, anxious to be called great, determined so to be without ever knowing how. 8

7. Ernest Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms (New York, 1929), p. 3.
This sentence is introduced by an adverbial prepositional phrase with four objects; the subject, followed by three adjectives modifying it, appears after the verb; the fourth adjective ('unschooled') is modified by an adverbial phrase, the fifth adjective ('hungry') modifies the subject through an adverbial prepositional phrase ('for something'), an adjectival clause and an adverbial clause ('the significance of which, when they had it, they could not even guess'). Also, the original series of adjectives is modified by an adverbial infinitive ('to be called great'), and a seventh adjective ('determined') is modified by an adverbial infinitive ('so to be'), which is in turn modified by an adverbial phrase ('without ever knowing how').

This confusing grammatical description is used to demonstrate Dreiser's inverted, rhetorically dramatic language, which depends for its effect upon a close study of the broad, complex passage (appropriate language for a description of a titan), in contrast with Hemingway's simple, almost journalistic account. Dreiser, like Hemingway, here uses accumulation, but for the creation of an impression of giant size, instead of for the feeling of resignation.

The rhythm of prose is difficult to analyze: it seldom fits the terminology of poetry measurement, such as dactyl, trochee, iamb, and so forth, because what would be neatly measured feet in poetry are usually part of some longer rhythm pattern, as in this passage from Dean Swift's A Tale of a Tub.
When a man's Fancy gets astride on his Reason, when Imagination is at Cuffs with the Senses, and common Understanding, as well as common Sense, is Kickt out of Doors; the first Proselyte he makes, is Himself, and when that is once compass'd, the Difficulty is not so great in bringing over others; A strong Delusion always operating from without, as vigorously as from within. 9

Of course, these words could be forced into groups of iambics and anapests, but it is perhaps more accurate to capture the larger rhythm pattern. Stresses are placed on fewer syllables than in a verse passage of comparable length, but basic cadence groups are contained with punctuation marks and natural pauses; In this case, primary division (marked here by an asterisk) occurs at the predicate: 'When a man's Fancy gets astride on his Reason'; 'when Imagination is at Cuffs with the Senses'; 'and common Understanding, as well as common sense, is Kickt out of Doors'; 'and when that is once compass'd, the Difficulty is not so great in bringing over others'; 'A strong Delusion always operating from without,'; 'as vigorously as from within.'

Similarly divided, Dreiser's sentences exhibit shorter units, less balanced than Swift's, with brief subject units and longer predicate units, revealing a less authoritative, more withdrawn voice, suggesting that Swift's voice in the A Tale of a Tub passage shows the result of contemplation, while Dreiser's The Titan passage includes the act of contemplation: '* From New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine had come a strange company,'; 'earnest, patient, determined, unschooled 9. Jonathan Swift, A Tale of a Tub (London, 1958), p. 171.
in even the primer * of refinement,'; 'hungry for something * the significance of which, when they had it, they could not even guess,'; 'anxious to be called great, determined to be so * without ever knowing how.'

As with grammar and rhythm, sound draws upon the differences between poetry and prose, although poetic devices such as assonance, alliteration and onomatopoeia stand out in every prose work, such as the assonance in the Hemingway passage: 'house', 'down', 'powdered', and 'moving', 'blue', and 'leaves', breeze, 'we', 'trees': or in the Swift passage: the high proportion of vowels pronounced centrally or forward in the mouth — the many short i and a sounds, perhaps illustrating the thin, rarefied quality of 'madness' about which Swift is speaking.

Throughout the works of Katherine Anne Porter, the reader is aware of her care of suggestion, her choice of grammar, rhythm, sound, and nuance — not that she has gone out of her way to make each piece self-consciously a work of 'art', but that conscious exercise of her controlled expression has unlocked the art inherent in her care of suggestion, according to Robert Penn Warren, 'unsurpassed in modern fiction'.

'He', written in 1927, is more than a mere first attempt to deal with superficial deformity and its effect upon a family or other social grouping; it is, in many ways, the symbol of Katherine Anne Porter's view of the relationship of life to art. The Whipples, a name caught between a 'whip'

and a 'whimper' are the vehicles for Porter's representative account of the artist in the world, an ambiguous, ambivalent mixture of poverty, loyalty, pride, and fear.

The first paragraph contains the essence of the tale, the conditions of life,

Life was very hard for the Whipples. It was hard to feed all the hungry mouths, it was hard to keep the children in flannels during the winter, short as it was: 'God knows what would become of us if we lived North,' they would say: keeping them decently clean was hard. 'It looks like our luck won't never let up on us,' said Mr. Whipple, but Mrs. Whipple was all for taking what was sent and calling it good, anyhow when the neighbors were in earshot. 'Don't ever let a soul hear us complain,' she kept saying to her husband. She couldn't stand to be pitied. 'No, not if it comes to it that we have to live in a wagon and pick cotton around the country,' she said, 'nobody's going to get a chance to look down on us.'

The opening sentence, in seven words, sets the tone for the story; it is a direct statement to the effect that life equals hardship. As if to make sure the reader does not miss this all-important statement, it is echoed three times in the following sentence, food, protection from the harsh weather, and cleanliness are especially difficult to get. Here is an accumulation which combines the resignation of Hemingway's Farewell to Arms passage with the growth of Dreiser's The Titan passage, by the repetition of the word 'hard'. This growth by organic enlargement, a compilation of the factors of hardship in life which expands each succeeding hardship further, avoids being merely repetitive through Porter's use of dialogue. Of the four direct statements

in the paragraph, one is a comment from all the Whipples, the next is a comment from Mr. Whipple, and the last two are comments from Mrs. Whipple, having the effect that the comments are coming from all directions, enforcing the notion that life for the Whipples is indeed 'hard', a consensus which contains a hint that the primary spokesman on such conditions is Mrs. Whipple.

The hardship of life is further enforced by the modification of phrase and single-word adjective: 'hungry mouths', 'decently clean', and 'the winter, short as it was'; the repetition is aided by phrases: 'they would say', and 'she kept saying to her husband', the latter phrase an emphatic introduction to the paragraph's second short, direct, important statement: 'She couldn't stand to be pitied', in its own way, a further hardship of life.

Into the conditions of hardship is introduced 'art', the simple-minded second son, 'He', whom the reader sees throughout the story, and in retrospect, in a struggle for survival. Despite the overt statement that Mrs. Whipple loves her second son better than her other children together, the qualifying second sentence of the second paragraph puts that love into proper perspective, 'She was forever saying so, and when she talked with certain of her neighbors she would even throw in her husband and her mother for good measure' (p. 21). It is difficult to avoid seeing in this introduction an analogy of society's hypocritical attitude towards art and
artists, enforced not just by the knowledge of Porter's own struggle, but by such direct evidence within the story itself as the assonance of this qualifying sentence, full of the 'er' sounds associated with the embarrassed hesitation of the acknowledged lie, offered as a sop to public opinion, 'forever', 'certain', 'neighbors' (Southern: 'neighbors'), 'her', 'her', 'mother', and 'measure'. Also, to society, the artist is a kind of freak, and the pursual of art (especially in the dedicated manner which Porter followed) is, in the eyes of society, a simple-mindedness.

That is not to say that 'He' is a deliberate attempt by Porter to chronicle the role of art in society, or even to present a deliberate analogy of her own position in life, but the fact that many of her works began with an autobiographical incident which she reworked into their final fictional form, suggests that such analogy is possible, especially as her art for her was in a way a supreme form of religion, and the placing of the initial letter of all pronouns referring to the 'simple-minded one' in the upper case suggests that a kind of deity is involved, not a contradictory statement when applied to the description of Him, of his sacrificial role, and of the suckling pig, also sacrificed to opinion.

The first general description of Him follows a reference in the preceding passage to the preacher's saying that 'the innocent walk with God - that's why He don't get hurt', an obvious reference to the process of deification (a magnification of the Whipples's speaking of Him in an almost reverential manner),
He did grow and He never got hurt. A plank blew off the chicken house and struck Him on the head and He never seemed to know it. He had learned a few words, and after this he forgot them. He didn't whine for food as the other children did, but waited until it was given Him; He ate squatting in the corner, smacking and mumbling. Rolls of fat covered Him like an overcoat, and He could carry twice as much wood and water as Adna. Emly had a cold in the head most of the time - 'she takes that after me,' said Mrs. Whipple - so in bad weather they gave her the extra blanket off His cot. He never seemed to mind the cold. (p.22)

This passage, in almost painfully plain sentences, extends the preacher's remark concerning His innocence, and continues Porter's practice of directing the reader's attention to significant points in the narrative by straightforward statements: the paragraph contains not only his description, but a foreshadowing of the crisis, the revelation, and the final catastrophe of the story. Of the seven sentences, the two shortest, most direct, should be the most important: 'He did grow and He never got hurt', and 'He never seemed to mind the cold'. Like Mrs. Whipple's statement about her love for Him, these sentences are qualified in a manner that brings about an ironic change in their meanings. The blow on the head did hurt Him - His speech centre was affected (the artist damaged or silenced by an insensitive world?); perhaps He did not mind the cold, or perhaps it only 'seemed' that He did not mind the cold, but it results in his sickness in February, an omen of His end. A further amplification of 'cold' is Emly's supposed delicate condition (fittingly inherited from her mother) which is not just a susceptibility to illness caused by temperature change, but a hint of frigid mentality, the condition which makes the Whipples 'cold', unresponsive
to Him — to the extent that they fail to recognise His humanity or individuality, they neglect even to assign Him a name, and they remove His protection from the 'cold' (society's lack of sensitivity and imagination, which leaves the artist 'out in the cold')

His description is a conglomerate: He appears in alternating guises — invulnerable ('He never got hurt'), damaged (the forgotten 'few words'), filled with human virtue (His patience and forbearing), and grotesquely inhuman (His porcine appearance and eating habits). His description is a good example of Porter's delicate balance: nowhere are opposing elements allowed to become one-sided, ambiguous, or diffuse; Porter, through the tenor of control, maintains a speculative pathos, a fascinated revulsion, and a trenchant satire.

Here we have exhibited the essence of the tale, multiple significance derived from clarity of style and care of suggestion; the story contains (but is not limited to) direct narrative, analogy, and allegory, existing alongside each other, but not interdependent as in Lytle's 'Jericho, Jericho, Jericho', nor dependent upon classical/Biblical allusion.

An ironic anecdote of self-deception and failure, the direct narrative is effective because the third person presence is never intrusive; narrative tone suggests without emphasis that the hopelessness of His life is the result of selfishness, insincerity, and ineptitude on the parts of the rest of the Whipples, who live and act as though they are
'whipped', beaten by life, and who, in turn, use Him (unconsciously and ironically) as a 'whipping boy'.

Mrs Whipple is so insensitive that she fails to realise that her lip-service to public approval is negated by her obvious disregard of His welfare: she allows Him to climb trees, do more work than He should, handle the bees ('if He gets a sting He don't really mind'), steal a piglet from a raging sow, fetch a dangerous bull, and she takes away His blanket, denies Him warm clothing, and eventually admits to herself, 'Oh, what a mortal pity He was ever born' (p. 31).

In the description passage, onomatopoeic words carry His association in the reader's mind closer to that with animals than with humans: He squats, smacks, and mumbles; also, He 'never seemed to mind', He 'forgot' the 'few words', He 'never seemed to know' - a kind of mindless inhumanity with an inability to feel pain on a human level. When He does have a human reaction, it is a signpost planted by Porter which points towards His kinship to the slaughtered piglet: when Mrs Whipple slits the piglet's throat, He 'gave a great jolting breath and ran away' (as though it had been His throat). The pig's description echoes His: 'the sight of the pig scraped pink and naked made her sick. He was too fat and soft and pitiful-looking' (p. 24).

The central character of the direct narrative is not He, at all; the story is about Mrs Whipple. Vain, insensitive, cruel, and hypocritical, she fights for her normal children, her 'dignity', and her self-esteem by
relegating Him to the status of an animal: a monkey, a pig, a beast of burden, and such a brute that the bull 'lumbered along behind him as gently as a calf' (p. 28). Mrs Whipple's deformity is greater than (though not as obvious as) His; her selfishness is swamped by guilt and covered by self-deception. She cannot decide whether the doctor is mercenary or merely incorrect in his diagnosis, and by dwelling upon such subjects, she avoids the 'blame' and the responsibility for Him. In a way, she is more grotesque than He, because she is corrupt in a whole body while He is in a deformed body through no fault of His own. In addition, she sees no fault in herself, which serves to point out her own deformity the more.

Such is the fineness of Porter's control, however, that even a character like Mrs Whipple is seen to change from an object deserving scorn into a creature of pity. During the drive to the County Home, with a neighbor 'not daring to look behind him', her guilt over His seeming accusation gains her some sympathy with the reader; after all, 'she had loved Him as much as she possibly could' - meaning that the real value of her love for Him, not very much (at least, not enough), was not her fault, in the sense that she recognised that she had a choice; she is trapped by her self-deception.

Of the story's various analogies, the killing and eating of the pig is perhaps the most striking, because of the pig's resemblance to Him, and because of the obviously sacrificial role the pig plays in appeasing the god of Mrs Whipple's
public image. The description of the dinner, of the false air of prosperity and forced good humour is accentuated by Porter's use of qualifying words and phrases which contrast sharply with those used elsewhere in the tale. The essence of this contrast is captured in the final words Mrs Whipple utters before the arrival of her brother, and the words which announce his arrival,

'I'm just all gone before the day starts.'

The brother came with his plump healthy wife and two great roaring hungry boys. They had a grand dinner, with the pig roasted to a crackling in the middle of the table, full of dressing, a pickled peach in his mouth and plenty of gravy for the sweet potatoes. (p. 25)

From the draining emptiness of her life to the robust vitality of her brother's family is a gulf no paragraph indentation can span, and Porter has used this juxtaposition of opposites to the fullest advantage; there is no description of the feast - there is no need: the reader is already aware that the brother's family represent more than just another drain upon the Whipple's meagre existence, more than Mr Whipple imagines when he complains, 'Yes, we're out of three hundred pounds of pork, that's all' (p. 26). In the two sentences which describe the brother's family, the single-word modifiers are listed without commas, as though each modifies the next, compounding the image of a giant, many-mouthed ingestion force, intent upon a locust-like engorging. The brother is not married merely to a wife, but a 'plump healthy wife'; the boys are not just big and hungry, but 'great roaring hungry boys';
the reader can almost imagine hyphens joining the
modifiers and nouns into composite terms for well-fed-
creatures and eating-creatures, 'plump-healthy-wife' and
'great-roaring-hungry-boys', alien beings which descend
like pig-gods to eat a small image of themselves in a
ritual which enlarges, instead of expiates, Mrs Whipple's
sin.

At the same time, He is being eaten, as well, because
of His pig-like appearance, because He supplied the pig
for the meal, not knowing that it was to be so, and because
He too is sacrificed to Mrs Whipple's sin; the meal is a
ritual that recalls another (Christian) ceremony of
symbolic cannibalism.

In 'He', however, the sacrifice of atonement is distorted
as merely an extension of the 'sin'; Mrs Whipple realises,
after all the effort, the loss of three hundred pounds of
pork in the future, and her 'warm and good' feeling, that the
meal was a sham; but, she blames it on her husband, 'Now it's
all spoiled, and everything was so nice and easy. All right,
you don't like them and you never did — all right, they'll
not come here again soon, never you mind!' (p. 26). She
does not realise the irony in her brother's remark at the
table, 'This looks like prosperity all right' (p. 25), a
statement ironic because of its implication for the dinner,
that it only 'looked' like prosperity; it was not, and because
the look of prosperity is all Mrs Whipple cares about, the
reality is never as important to her as is the appearance.
Porter’s appeal to the senses (such as sound – ‘great roaring hungry boys’), as an integral part of her select control, is one of the principal reasons for the effectiveness of her method of constructing concrete images through suggestion alone. The incident of her sending Him for the bull begins with balance and touch (‘felt easy in her mind’, ‘Adna was too jumpy’, ‘You’ve got to be steady around animals’), then moves to visual sensation (‘she shaded her eyes and stared until colored bubbles floated in her eyeballs’, ‘she saw Him’, ‘never looking back or sideways, but coming on like a sleepwalker with His eyes shut’ (p. 27)).

The passage in which he returns with the bull is built upon sound and implications of sound, constructing a crescendo of Mrs Whipple’s fear. In two paragraphs, one preparation (an ‘overture’), and one exposition and resolution (verse, chorus, and cadence), the passage is aural, almost musical. The ‘overture’ paragraph is divided into two sentences with two sections each separated by semi-colons: the second sentence is almost like a musical rest used to heighten the tension before plunging into the theme, the first sentence is purposefully filled with sound-linked words (‘heard’, ‘quietly’, ‘bellow’), alliteration (‘scared sick’, ‘had heard’, ‘pawed...pieces’), and sound-implying verbs (‘pawed’, ‘gored’); ‘pitched’ has a three-fold use – sound-linked through the unintentional pun of its other meaning, part of the alliteration of ‘pitched...pawed...pieces’, and as a verb with an action
resulting in sound. The exposition paragraph moves from the rest: the conductor hesitates before attacking a crescendo that moves from forte to fortissimo, then repetition (coda), and conclusion (cadence),

She musn't make a sound nor a move; she musn't get the bull started. The bull heaved his head aside and horned the air at a fly. Her voice burst out of her in a shriek, and she screamed at Him to come on, for God's sake. He didn't seem to hear the clamor, but kept on twirling His switch and limping on, and the bull lumbered along behind him as gently as a calf. Mrs Whipple stopped calling and ran towards the house, praying under her breath: 'Lord, don't let anything happen to Him. Lord, you know people will say we oughtn't to have sent Him. You know they'll say we didn't take care of Him. Oh, get Him home, safe home, safe home, and I'll look out for Him better! Amen,' (p. 28)

The passage's effectiveness is based upon the contrast between the necessity for silence and the actuality of Mrs Whipple's uproar, punctuated by a vocabulary of noise: 'sound', 'horned', 'voice', 'burst out', 'shriek', 'screamed'. Through it all, He appears as a kind of conductor, 'twirling His switch' leading the bull 'as gently as a calf' through the torrent of sound as might some maestro direct some huge symphony orchestra.

Despite the implied 'orchestration', Porter did not of course intend such an analogy to overtake the purpose of the passage, which is to encapsulate Mrs Whipple's relationship to her simple-minded son; a close reading reveals this technique of what may be termed 'sensual reinforcement', but the overall effect is that of a solid image's emerging through a series of careful suggestions on the part of the writer. The importance of this passage to the story cannot be underestimated,
because it not only reveals Mrs Whipple's true feelings about her second son, but it shows Him in a new light, one which suggests that His position in the Whipple household is really one of strength - here He successfully completes a task which none of the others (save perhaps the father) can do, and not only does He accomplish a job the thought of which, in effect, terrifies Mrs Whipple into a kind of mental paralysis, but He accomplishes the task in style, 'twirling His switch' while the bull 'lumbered along behind him as gently as a calf', despite His limp and His grotesque deformity (p. 28).

In fact, it is in this passage that He comes closest to becoming human: it contains the only instance in the story of the second son's pronoun appearing in lower-case letters, 'behind him as gently as a calf', perhaps an acknowledgement that even such deformity cannot entirely negate the fundamental idea of individual human worth. This lower-case rendering apparently occurs in all editions of the story, certainly the first edition of *Flowering Judas* (1930), its inclusion in Robert Penn Warren's *A Southern Harvest* (1937) - which itself was reprinted by Norman S. Berg (1972) - through its inclusion in the Dell paperback *Great American Short Stories* (1957). Such a consistency implies that the rendering was intentional, and it may not be unreasonable to suggest that Porter used such a subtle device to tie the deformities of Mrs Whipple and her son together - he succeeds while she cowers in fear, praying fervently to her god of public opinion, revealing her own guilt and fault as she tries desperately to shift the blame elsewhere ('Lord, you know...'), almost an
accusation), with the only acknowledgement that she may be
called to account for her dealings with the simple-minded one,
'Oh, get Him home, safe home, safe home, and I'll look out for
Him better'. Again He receives the initial capital letter,
and His individual value, as observed in His ability to fetch
the bull, is smothered in Mrs Whipple's sing-song assertion of
His helplessness, as though she is repeating a magic formula­to
her god, a prayer (curse?) crying for the return of her
innocence and the blameless state which existed before her
selfish fear endangered not Him so much as her public image,
'You know they'll say we didn't take care of Him.'

If the tale is to be taken as an allegory, it must be
interpreted along the lines of implication and suggestion;
Porter only hints, never belabours her point, and we can never
be sure whether or not she intended such an interpretation
to be applied to this or any other of her stories. In her
introduction to the 1940 edition of Flowering Judas, reflecting
upon the ten years since the first publication of the stories
(including 'He') which were first to bring her literary acclaim,
she said, 'They were done with intention and firm faith, though
I had no plan for their future and no notion of what their
meaning might be to such readers as they would find'. As
with most of her statements regarding her prose fiction, she is
reticent, almost secretive; what the 'intention' and 'firm faith'
may have been are a matter for open conjecture, but her
continuing comment that under the threat of world catastrophe,
'the voice of the individual artist may seem perhaps of no more
consequence than the whirring of a cricket in the grass; but the arts do live continuously, and they live literally by faith' seems precisely relevant to 'He', especially as she asserts that the 'names', 'shapes', and 'basic meanings' of the arts 'survive unchanged in all that matters through times of interruption, diminishment, neglect', and that they outlive 'even the very civilization that produced them'.  12

We do know of Porter's own struggle to keep her art alive, under constant attack throughout the greater part of her life, and it is perhaps instructive to note that (without personal reference) 'He' serves as an accurate allegory for the position of art/the sensitive individual in a largely crass, insensitive world, but not so overtly symbolic as the characters of a writer like Carson McCullers. McCullers's use of deformed characters to exemplify her themes has been much discussed by critics of her work, Leslie Fiedler for example says that McCullers uses deformity to symbolise the modern feeling of spiritual isolation. The misfit, usually with some physical peculiarity, represents modern man's inability to understand human contact, and therefore 'love' becomes merely a self-centred escape route from isolation, 'the impossibility of reciprocal love, the sadness of a world in which growing up means only learning that isolation is the lot of everyone'.  13 In 'He', isolation is the lot only of the poor, deformed, nearly anonymous creature whose humanity

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is ignored. Although McCuller's characters are overtly symbolic, perhaps as a device necessary to strengthen a longer work, the novella in which she excelled, they are not archetypes; she incorporates universal, fundamental aspects of human nature in varying ways - in The Ballad of the Sad Cafe, cousin Lymon is a hunchback and Amelia is abnormally tall and masculine; in The Member of the Wedding, Frankie Addams is really not a 'member' (in the sense of belonging) of anything, 'a member of nothing in the world'; she is always out of place, even if it is only the slight awkwardness of adolescence and sudden growth which exaggerates her inability to walk underneath the arbour:

'Even small grown ladies could walk underneath the arbour. And already Frankie was too big; this year she had to hand around and pick from the edges like the grown people.'

McCuller's characters remain, nonetheless, overt symbols. Through Porter, He is finely drawn, more a presence than a character. It is as though Porter increased the aesthetic distance between 'He' and the reader by adjusting the veil which always exists between the perceiver and a work of art, until only the finest elements filter through; the reader is made aware that there is more to the work of art than meets the eye, but is never embarrassed by a forced confrontation with the obvious.

If the 'intention' and 'firm faith' of 'He' is aligned with the 'voice of the individual artist' seeming 'perhaps

of no more consequence than the whirring of a cricket in
the grass', The final scene of 'He' perhaps confirms the
implied allegory. Mrs Whipple's guilt finally catches up
with her in the realisation that 'there was nothing she could
do to make up to Him for His life' (p. 31). And He is
rushed off to the County Home, 'with the neighbor driving
very fast', His life over, at least His interruption of the
Whipple's lives is over, and the impression is that His
presence in the Whipple's lives will have no more consequence
than Porter's 'cricket in the grass',

All at once she saw it full summer again,
with the garden going fine, and new white roller
shades up all over the house, and Adna and Emly
home, so full of life, all of them happy together.
Oh, it could happen, things would ease up on them.
(p. 30)

This passage is not, despite Mr Whipple's realistic
reminder to Mrs Whipple that there will be no cure, an attempt
by Mrs Whipple to reconcile her guilt towards Him. Here,
she has given up all pretense: life will be good, no longer
hard, in the nebulous future, but that nebulous future does not
include Him, only Emly and Adna and her and Mr Whipple. He
has been put completely out of her thoughts. It is this
desperate seeming finality that has caused so many critics to
despair at what they see as Porter's unredeeming pessimism.
L.L. Lieberman, in 'Short Story as Chapter in Ship of Fools',
sees this trait as the major point of imbalance in Porter's
novel; it probably accounts for the mixed criticism the book
received - that, and its violently anti-Teutonic strain. 16

16. L.L. Lieberman, 'Short Story as Chapter in Ship Of Fools',
Criticism, 10 (Winter 1971), 65-71.
What perhaps is overlooked in Porter's writing is her exact distinguishing between the artist and his art: the art may temporarily merge with, but it always extends beyond, the all-too-mortal life of the artist; the artist can be damaged, but his art, a work of art, per se, is never totally destroyed, and, although the artist may be of little or no consequence, his work outlasts the civilisation which beget it. So it is with 'He': Mrs Whipple will never be the same again. She will deliver Him to the County Home, and return to the farm and her deformed existence, but His implied accusation will remain with her, reminding her in her guilt not only of her negligence, but (whether she recognises it or not) of his strength: every time someone else has to tend the bees, haul the wood, or fetch the bull.

Katherine Anne Porter's initiation stories differ from those of Carson McCullers in much the same way as their treatment of the symbolic differs. McCullers's novels focus upon the inner self, a personalised vision of life, concerned primarily with the initiation of the inner self by the conflict between man's self-generated isolation and his paradoxical fundamental need to make contact with others. Porter's Miranda stories deal with the initiation in the act of realising man's need to make contact first with himself: awareness is as much an end as a means - Williams' Spanish and English Dictionary glosses miranda as a Spanish feminine noun meaning 'vantage point' 17 - perhaps 'Miranda' is a reference by

Porter to the Mexican influence on her own perception, what she referred to in D.H. Lawrence's *The Plumed Serpent* as being seen, 'evoked clearly with the fervor of things remembered out of impressions that filled the mind to bursting'. 18

'The Grave' is just such a story, and although it is usually considered with two other initiation sketches in the Miranda canon, 'The Fig Tree' (discovery of death) and 'The Circus' (discovery of leering sexuality), 'The Grave' should be considered on its own; there is a strong case for its examination as being central to the other Miranda tales. 'The Old Order' appears at first glance to be the focal point for the Miranda stories, and historically (the history of the Rhea family) perhaps it is: the Grandmother is the family pivot, and it is her central tale, the Grandmother developed a character truly portentous under the discipline of trying to change the character of others. Her husband shared with her the family sharpness of eye. He disliked and feared her deadly willfulness, her certainty that her ways were not only right but beyond criticism, that her feelings were important, even in the lightest matter, and must not be tampered with or treated casually. 19

The Grandmother, who drops dead after seeing to the changing of her son's life to the extent of moving a fifty foot adobe wall, here is shown at full strength, a description which belies her appearance throughout the tale as a doddering, if kindly crone. Sibilance is crushed


under a torrent of dental and palatal-glottal consonants: 'developed', 'discipline', 'disliked', 'deadly', 'character', 'criticism', 'casually', 'truly', 'trying', 'tampered', 'treated'. The soft 'sh' is used only in the sentence dealing with the husband, 'shared' and 'sharpness'; the Grandmother is firm, unbending, and the only initial 's' sound Porter permits her is in 'certainty'. If the Miranda stories are a growth through initiation to awareness, surely the Grandmother (who, far from being aware, chooses to ignore her disruption of other people's lives) is a strange choice as a focal point: here is no discovery, absorption, or learning, but a rock-hard self-confidence. Her emergence 'into something like an honest life' follows her description as a 'little day-dreamer', who, only after her husband's death in her middle age discovers that she has 'all the responsibilities of a man with none of the privileges' — but there is no initiation, no awareness, merely a statement that she eventually emerged into 'something like an honest life'. 20

That description places the Grandmother closer to Mrs Whipple than to Miranda, a natural place to begin the search for another 'central' tale, even if it were not for the fact that Miranda does not appear in 'The Old Order' (Nance's implication that it is Miranda telling the story works only if the reader is willing to admit that Miranda is Porter instead of a semi-autobiographical starting point for the generating of Porter's art). 21

Of course Porter's stories do not need each other for explication or simple interpretation; each stands alone as a microcosm of Porter's art - in fact, there is perhaps a danger of concentrating too closely on Porter's personal life and the inter-mingling of her stories with each other. What is meant by 'central' in this thesis, when it is applied to Porter's 'The Grave', is that 'The Grave' may be seen to exhibit not only all of Porter's devices for controlling her 'art', but the way in which that control operates, and through that operation the process of the art itself.

The 'art itself' begins with perception, the act of 'seeing' and its accompanying visual references to comprehension, as evinced by the character of Miranda (miranda, 'belvedere, eminence, vantage point'; from mirante, 'one who looks' and mirar, 'to wonder at') \(^{22}\) and the process and scope of her understanding. Without understanding, there can be no art; before there is any attempt by the artist to express an idea, there must be some form of realisation by the artist, a comprehension based upon a more or less organised approach to the material to be dealt with before there is any effective composition: Miranda must understand, must actually become the 'one who sees', a kind of internal communication with 'self', in order to fulfill the act of initiation. As her name suggests, she is already aware of some things, intuitively, such as her father's (and therefore her immediate family's) social demise through lack of money caused by the Grandmother's vindictive will, and she possesses the mark of acute perception.

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\(^{22}\) 'Miranda', Williams Spanish and English Dictionary. p. 390.
sensitivity, with her 'powerful social sense which was like a fine set of antennae radiating from every pore of her skin',

Porter's third-person narrative allows her to exercise a total control based upon a perception that is not so much an Olympian 'view from the mountain top', as it is a circumspection; the first paragraph of 'The Grave' reveals this comprehensive view,

The grandfather, dead for more than thirty years, had been twice disturbed in his long repose by the constancy and possessiveness of his widow. She removed his bones first to Louisiana and then to Texas as if she had set out to find her own burial place, knowing well she would never return to the places she had left. In Texas she set up a small cemetery in a corner of her first farm, and as the family connection grew, and oddments of relations came over from Kentucky to settle, it contained at last about twenty graves. After the grandmother's death, part of her land was to be sold for the benefit of certain of her children, and the cemetery happened to lie in the part set aside for sale. It was necessary to take up the bodies and bury them again in the family plot in the big new public cemetery, where the grandmother had been buried. At last her husband was to lie beside her for eternity, as she had planned. (p. 69)

In five sentences, Porter has set the scene for Miranda's visual confrontation, through a pattern of selection; the image is striking, nothing less than the seemingly constant displacement of that which appears most permanently fixed: a burial place. The removal of the grandfather's remains occurs three times, but because it is such an unusual and unexpected act (especially appearing as it does at the beginning of a story), the impact is greatly magnified.

23. Katherine Anne Porter, 'The Grave', The Leaning Tower, and Other Stories, pp. 69-78 (pp. 73-74). Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
Porter ensures the effectiveness of the opening by the use of contrasting and often contradictory terms: on one hand, the grandfather has been 'dead for more than thirty years, an idea of 'long repose'; on the other, his bones have been moved to Louisiana (presumably from Kentucky), then to Texas, before the final move, action hardly conducive to 'his long repose'. Then, Porter describes the movement as the result of the 'constancy and possessiveness' of the grandmother; 'constancy' usually has an ameliorative connotation associated with the well-being of a loved-one, but here, linked with 'possessiveness', the grandmother's 'constancy' is implied to be directed not to the grandfather, but to herself, a reversal of the usual meaning. This technique of qualification, employed by Porter with success in 'He', is a feature of her style in 'The Grave'; the surprise created by the opening sentence in this respect is echoed by other curious juxtapositions: only 'certain' children were to receive the benefit of the sale of the land containing the burial site of their relatives, 'oddments' of relations came over from Kentucky (an implication that they were 'odd' and that their primary purpose in leaving Kentucky was to be buried in 'about twenty graves' in the corner of the farm in Texas), and the curious dismissal of the death-and-burial taboo ('the cemetery happened to lie in the part set aside for the sale'), as though the grandmother were waving her hand to flick a bit of dust away instead of ordering the removal of twenty graves.
This casual approach to death has a reason: the grandfather was to 'lie beside her for eternity, as she had planned'; here is implied a reversal of the male-female roles in the grandmother's dominance, a contradicting Southern condition which Porter here uses to contrast with Miranda's passive relationships to her brother ('On these expeditions Miranda always followed at Paul's heel's') and to her father ('she had faith in her father's judgement') (p. 71, 74).

The process of selection which directs the paragraph, 'as if she had set out to find her own burial place', is accentuated by these contrasting terms, but the primary technique of selection is reflected in Porter's handling of qualifying phrases, qualification being a major part of the selection process: the grandfather had been twice disturbed ('in his long repose', 'by the constancy and possessiveness of his widow'), his bones are moved through three States - he is buried four times - because it is as if the grandmother 'had set out to find her own burial place' (knowing well she would never return to the places she had left'), the small cemetery in the corner of the Texas farm is qualified ('the family connection grew', 'oddments of relations came over from Kentucky', until 'it contained at last about twenty graves'), part of the land was sold ('after the grandmother's death', 'and the cemetery happened to lie in the part set aside for sale'), the bodies had to be removed to the public cemetery ('where the grandmother had been buried'), and the grandfather
finally rests beside the grandmother ('as she had planned').

The scene for Miranda's initiation is set by the redoubtable old woman from her own grave; the grandmother's intractable presence provides a solid frame for the story's beginning, a frame which is matched by the closing paragraph (also a process of selection, this time for Miranda - 'One day she was picking her path among the puddles and crushed refuge of a market street in a strange city of a strange country'). Together the two paragraphs separate the body of the story from Porter's other stories as though she were enclosing it, a parenthetical statement, an aside to the reader, as though to suggest that 'The Grave' is an explication of some kind. This idea is given credence by the fact that although both paragraphs are structurally solid, neither appears at first glance to make more than a passing reference to the internal story; the grandmother's absence is mentioned, 'It was said the motherless family was running down, with the Grandmother no longer there to hold it together' (p. 75), and the Miranda twenty years on in the closing paragraph is to be reminded of the dead rabbit by a tray of animal shapes, amid 'the mingled sweetness and corruption' (p. 78). It seems unusual that a writer of Porter's control should make such a seemingly unsatisfactory effort in the beginning and ending of this tale; on close reading, however, the presentation turns out be most successful - the matching paragraphs focus the reader's attention (a visual act) on her theory of perception and its relationship to art.
Without knowing that Porter believed the work of art to extend beyond the artist, it is possible, through a close examination of 'The Grave' to discover that the writer was concerned with perception rather than imagination, but control of discovery rather than mere observation, and that this approach to awareness is connected with death, not as finality, but as a kind of sleep, a 'long repose'. Nor is it necessary to know of the writer's early Jesuit education to recognise her familiarity with the Christian idea of death as a form of sleep, with the implication of possible resurrection (the grandfather is symbolically resurrected three times, Paul and Miranda enter graves and leave them: 'His head appeared smiling over the rim of another grave' (p. 71)), and Miranda resurrects the memory of the buried pregnant rabbit. In a sense, Porter tells us: all perception is resurrection; one cannot be aware unless one is awake; and, conversely, all sleep is death, lack of perception is lack of awareness, is sleep, is death. This 'grave' moves with us throughout our existence, from the tomb of our mother's bodies to the tomb of the earth - flowing in and out of each other: to the artist there is no life, no death, only moments of unconsciousness and moments of perception. In this light, we see the story move from the selfish unconsciousness of the grandmother to the perception of Miranda at twenty-nine, a process of resurrection and discovery, control and perception.

To this end, the story centres on the killing of the pregnant rabbit by Paul, for that is the initial moment of perception for Miranda at age nine, the death, skinning
('wastefulness was vulgar'), and the burial of the unborn rabbits in their mother's body. Paul points out this new fact of existence to Miranda, 'there they were, dark gray, their sleek wet down lying in minute even ripples, like a baby's head just washed, their unbelievably small delicate ears folded close, their little blind faces almost featureless' (p. 76). The fact of existence is not the same as the proverbial 'facts of life', because Miranda, at nine has grown up on the land, and when Paul, thinking he has revealed something forbidden says, 'They were just about to be born', Miranda responds that she knows, that they are 'like kittens. I know, like babies' (p. 77). The fact of existence for Miranda, although she perhaps does not understand its implications for twenty years more, is the connection of life to death, of perception with the grave, because the baby rabbits have been stilled before the instant of their 'awakening' to life, and will only be resurrected in Miranda's memory.

Paul's fear of punishment from his father for leading Miranda 'into things you ought not to do' brings about a promise from Miranda that she will keep the day a secret, so she buries the incident in the grave of her mind, where it is 'heaped over by accumulated thousands of impressions for nearly twenty years' (pp. 77-78). Porter's repetition of burial imagery builds to this point; there are many graves: the grandfather's four, the grandmother's in the 'big new public cemetery' - recognition that her power went beyond the grave by collecting to her the twenty from the farm (so that her husband would 'lie beside her for eternity, as she had planned'), the
grave of the rabbit's womb, the rabbit's grave, the rabbit's body which served as a grave for the unborn rabbits after Paul's skinning operation, the grave of Miranda's memory, and the grave from which perception is resurrected by the artist, as in the moment of awareness by the twenty-nine year old Miranda as she places the perception, gained at that initiation when she was nine, into focus ('I want to see'),

It was a very hot day and the smell in the market, with its piles of raw flesh and wilting flowers, was like the mingled sweetness and corruption she had smelled that other day in the empty cemetery at home: the day she had always until now vaguely remembered as the time she and her brother had found treasure in the opened graves. Instantly upon this thought the dreadful vision faded, and she saw clearly her brother, whose childhood face she had forgotten, standing gain in the blazing sunshine, again twelve years old, a pleasing sober smile in his eyes, turning the silver dove over and over in his hands. (p. 78)

Again Porter employs sensual imagery, the smells and heat of the marketplace moving to the visual presentation of her perception which she realises as a fading of a dreaded vision into a clear picture of her brother (again visual - he smiles with his eyes) turning the symbol of initiation over and over in his hands, the coffin screw head in the shape of a dove, its cloven breast an overt sign of spoiled innocence. The perception of the artist, Porter seems to be saying, is in a way a forbidden thing, an awareness that mars innocence: for perception to function, the grave, with its sickly sweet smell of corruption, must always be open.
Chapter Five: Flannery O’Connor

In Flannery O’Connor’s 'The Lame Shall Enter First', Johnson, the boy with an I.Q. of 140, a club foot, and a terrifying home life, goads Norton into hanging himself, thereby joining his mother in heaven; in 'A Good Man is Hard to Find', O’Connor has the Misfit pronounce an unusual view of salvation after shooting the grandmother, 'She would of been a good woman...if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life'; Mrs May, who fails to control her sons in O’Connor’s 'Greenleaf', is gored to death by the scrub bull which has been the symbol of her failure — she is overtaken by her son’s nastiness, Greenleaf’s truculent incompetence, and her own stubbornness, but her final gesture is one of implied secret knowledge, 'she seemed, when Mr Greenleaf reached her, to be bent over whispering some last discovery into the animal’s ear', as though she had become, in a way, an unusual high priestess of violence.  

Although the effects of the many approaches to Christian religion in the South result in the occasional use of Biblical symbolism by some writers, Flannery O’Connor is the only short fiction writer of note whose major themes are regularly taken directly from the themes of the Judaic.

Christian tradition. In fact, O'Connor's fascination with the fantastic and strange symbols of perverted religiosity would perhaps seem an obsession were it not for her mastery of the naturalistic incident and the graphic environmental detail enforced by a clean, neatly-wrought prose, which gives an immediacy to her most grotesque characters and situations, setting them forth in almost hostile realism. That is not to say that her force of language is her strong point: her words never appear to be elevated, she seldom attempts any kind of poetic flow (in the manner of Faulkner, Lytle, Warren, Tate or Porter) - although she had an exquisite ear for the cadences of common every-day speech - and her narrative voice is often uneven, breaking from restrained reportorial comment into Georgia 'cracker'-isms. Yet, O'Connor succeeds as a short story writer, and her influence upon modern Southern short fiction, perhaps because the substance of her stories far exceeds their presentation and form, cannot be ignored. Her characters move in a blinding light, as if in the noon of the midsummer Georgia sun, and her prose, although it would appear awkward and perhaps inadequate in another's hands, in hers becomes both a fierce weapon and a subtle aid to produce effects achieved by few other writers.

O'Connor's prose complements her poetic (in the deepest sense) ideas of character and personality: the impact of the grandmother's character and personality upon the Misfit in 'A Good Man is Hard to Find' is such that it stalls the killer, temporarily preventing his usual homicidal tendencies from
the full force of their horror, but only temporarily, their seemingly interminable conversation can have only one end. The grandmother is the only one who enjoys the car trip which little John Wesley responds to only with, 'Let's go through Georgia fast so we won't have to look at it much'; she seems to respond to it as an occasion, and her tidy appearance, despite the informal dress of the others, is a symbol of her character, and of the theme, a foreboding, 'in case of accident any one seeing her dead on the highway would know she is a lady'. The 'accident' which leaves her dead is when the bond between herself and the psychopathic killer snaps, because, in a perverse moment of exaggerated maternal instinct ('Why you're one of my babies, one of my own children'), she touches the convict on the shoulder; he responds to the physical confrontation in the only way he knows: he shoots the grandmother three times through the chest. As he indicated shortly before the sudden and dreadful incident, his actions are somehow a matter of his irrevocably lost personal salvation, somehow a fault not of himself, but of the central figure of the Christian religion,

"Jesus thrown everything off balance...If He did what he said, then it's nothing for you to do but throw away everything and follow Him, and if He didn't, then it's nothing for you to do but enjoy the few minutes you got left the best way you can — by killing somebody or burning down his house or doing some other meanness to him. No pleasure but meanness," he said and his voice had become almost a snarl.

O'Connor's Roman Catholicism was so much a part of her individualism that it appears to be indivisible with her approach to writing; however, she was not an individualist in the tradition of European Roman Catholicism, but a Southerner born into an isolated pocket of Irish Roman Catholicism surrounded by divergent, often intolerant, evangelical, fundamentalist-revelationist Protestantism. But O'Connor's religion is never romanticised, defensive, or self-pitying; on the contrary, it is hard: any perversion of it (or diversion from it) is violent, grotesque, and terrifying, perhaps the result of her pain from the lupus condition which ended her life prematurely. Whatever the personal conditions of her life, however, she wrote curious, 'blood-curdling stories of human evil', which were almost medieval in their barbaric confrontations of man with nameless horror, yet exhibited a tone which is very like the line from the letter which she sent from Lourdes to Katherine Anne Porter, 'The sight of Faith and affliction joined in prayer - very impressive'.

Her 'Faith' was apparently a very personal, private facet of her personality; she rarely related a story with an overtly Roman Catholic background, 'A Temple of the Holy Ghost' being perhaps the only tale which shows up the influences of that background directly, and they are merged with the imaginative underpinnings of her method of presenting

the facet of the universe she felt as a pervading spirit: 
an anonymous child takes ideas from church ritual, from Alban
Butler's *The Lives of the Saints*, and from the pseudo-folk
sayings of the nuns, and blends them with her own experience
of life in order to come to some understanding of her inner
self and her humanity. Perhaps this picture, without being
autobiographical, contains those things which must have
affected O'Connor to some extent: images brought to the fore
by church history, Bible, and ritual, which pervaded her
experience, to render life full of mystery and spiritual
incarnation; her writing itself seems 'incarnational', a
creation (or release) of primitive forces which are to be felt,
experienced - all matter and energy is the abode of the spirit.
In a sense, O'Connor (perhaps unknowingly) attempted, by this
incarnational process, that traditional 'religious' function
of the artist: to seek out and convey the mystery of man's
existence by means of images.

O'Connor must have seen her stories as parables
illustrative of the violence and destruction resulting from
man's attempt to force a solution to this mystery on his own.
Lack of an accepted (or acceptable) code of behaviour, and
the excessive responsibility taken on by man when he attempts
to impose his small, imperfect, human pattern on existence,
results in madness or fanaticism (itself a form of madness),
which, in turn, results in disaster. The imposition by man
of his small image on the universal 'purity' can be the action
of anything as slight as a passing selfishness; all men are
capable of precipitating catastrophe, and through the resulting world of guilt and misery, the error ('sin'? ) must be redeemed or destroyed in mindless violence; hence the severity of O'Connor's tone, and the unflinching prospect of horror's being imposed by the committing of the slightest pecadillo.

In choosing as the hero of her first novel, The Descendant (1897), an illegitimate poor white man who leaves Virginia to escape the stigma attached to his class and birth, Ellen Glasgow deliberately violated a long literary tradition - by so doing, she became one of the first Southern writers to attain something of a national perspective and a socially democratic approach to life; by choosing the most perverse grotesque characters and situations to demonstrate her approach to sin and salvation, Flannery O'Connor deliberately violated a modern tradition of maudlin sentimentality, allied to unbending Puritanism. Mrs Turpin, in O'Connor's 'Revelation' is castigated by the emptiness of that tradition when her vision reveals to her the awful sight of the 'swing bridge' to heaven through a 'living fire', in which the people like herself, who stood for 'good order and common sense and respectable behavior' were having their 'virtues' burned away, while ahead of them on the bridge were, whole companies of white-trash, clean for the first time in their lives, and bands of black niggers in white robes, and battalions of freaks and lunatics shouting and clapping and leaping like frogs.'

As a revelationist, Mrs Turpin can only be told of her error through revelation, the only symbol for her which signifies reality.

For O'Connor, the symbol is the outward, visible sign of the eternally implied spirit, 'the concrete and living symbol', or, as she said to Robert Fitzgerald, in a discussion about the symbol of the Eucharist, 'If it were only a symbol, I'd say to hell with it'.

It is the relation of the concrete and living symbol to theme, attached to her grotesque characters, which elevates O'Connor's stories above being merely pathological case histories. An example of a character-orientated story in which theme is related through symbol to character change and development is John Steinbeck's 'Flight'. Pepe involves himself in a situation which leads to a stabbing, partly as a result of chance and coincidence, and partly as a result of his desire to prove himself; however, he accepts in a way the consequences of his action, and follows the only course he believes to be honourable, justifiable, and necessary: he takes flight to the mountains, where he proves his manhood is a larger, more significant sense by pitting himself against his environment. Steinbeck's essential theme is that of an individual's realising his potential worth through a moral code which he accepts implicitly and completely; he implies that belief in such a code leads eventually to unquestioning

compliance with the course of action determined by that code - under such a system, man will find the necessary courage, strength, and endurance to persue the goal required by that code. Pepe never considers returning home to turn himself in to the authorities; instead, he concentrates on flight and survival. Steinbeck reveals this theme of 'Flight' through a simple, straightforward plot which emphasises the simplicity of Pepe's moral viewpoint, enforced by the descriptions of the wilderness, which stress a natural order and simple inevitability (reflected in Pepe's own character).

In O'Connor's 'A Good Man is Hard to Find', the theme is decidedly more complex than in 'Flight', and it is open to diverse interpretations; it deals generally with concepts of good, evil, and responsibility, but includes related considerations of retribution and self-destruction - in this instance brought about by a weird and ironic combination of chance, fate, and the decisions and actions of the individuals involved. O'Connor seems to be making a basic series of statements about the good, or lack of good, in man; good, seen here as a kind of concern and consideration for others, appears overtly, as in the case of the grandmother when she wants to avoid getting shot, or it may be completely absent, destroyed by action and circumstance as in the case of the Misfit. The ultimate irrelevance of the self-based form of concern is pointed out by the futility of the grandmother's gesture of concern toward the Misfit; the gesture, even if it

is partially genuine, is basically concerned with the grandmother's own survival, and is therefore essentially superficial. The general theme appears to be that for the corrupted spirit of man, there is no moment of redemption, only a kind of revelation (like that of Mrs Turpin's vision mentioned earlier) before the moment of destruction; in a religious context, the crucified (as the Misfit views himself) will not forgive, but will continue to punish, and no one (as illustrated by the futility of the grandmother's attempt) can really save himself, or anyone else, after the fact. The theme is evolved through a combination of plot development and characterisation (especially of the grandmother and the Misfit) tied to the often paradoxical symbols of man's conflict with man, society, fate, and self: good, evil, redemption, revelation, punishment.

In order to observe Flannery O'Connor's handling of these themes in her work, 'The River', a story directly related to religious experience, will be closely examined along with a story of secular experience, 'Everything That Rises Must Converge'.

In 'The River', O'Connor seems to imply that there is no earthly salvation, that the only resurrection comes after physical, a symbolic purification by water, in this instance. In most of O'Connor's stories dealing with violence, death is always some act of release: some of her characters die by accident, some by design, but all in the symbolic pursual of an earthly (and therefore invalid) redemption. 'The River'

moves in this manner through the traditional Christian path
from innocence, through the fall, the search, the attempt at
earthly salvation, death, and the implication that there is a
hope of resurrection beyond.

Harry Ashfield is a young, spoiled boy who lives with
his parents in a plush apartment where he is left to his
own devices and the care of others as his parents follow their
own self-absorbed lives. Mrs Connin (a suggestion that she
is 'conning' Harry), the latest in the long line of baby-
sitters, takes him from the apartment, a kind of Garden of
Eden where he roams at will (grinding ashes into the carpet,
stealing what he can reach). She introduces him to the world
of evangelical revelationist religion, with its central John-
the-Baptist figure, the 'Reverend' Bevel Summers,

'He's no ordinary preacher. He's a healer.
He couldn't do nothing for Mr Connin though. Mr
Connin didn't have the faith but said he would
try anything once.' ⁹

Summers appears to Harry to attract the kind of attention he
himself has been seeking, and he gets the desired response
from Mrs Connin when he tells her that his name too is 'Bevel'.

Harry-Bevel does not yet understand the implications either
of 'faith' or of Mr Connin's death, but this forewarning
serves as an introduction to Harry-Bevel's own 'healing'
(attempt at earthly redemption) also a type of 'trying anything
once' (particularly ironic in that death can be 'tried' only
once).

⁹. Flannery O'Connor, 'The River', The Southern Experience in
Short Fiction, edited by Allen Stein and Thomas Walters,
(London, 1971), pp. 79-91 (p. 80). Further references to this
edition are given after quotations in the text.
'Will he heal me?'
...'What you got?'
'I'm hungry', he decided finally.
'Didn't you have your breakfast?'
'I didn't have time to be hungry yet then',
he said. (p. 81)

O'Connor's ear for everyday colloquial dialogue brings out
the hesitation and indecision of the young boy, literally
about to take the plunge into a mystical world of disturbing
symbolism and fatal action, the confused, almost garbled,
'I didn't have time to be hungry yet then' is an attempt
to define, to qualify exactly a hunger he does not comprehend:
his 'hunger' is for an exact solution to the unsuitability
of his vague position in the world, hence his attaching the
significant 'Bevel' to himself, and the loading his speech
with tortured qualifiers after the infinitive 'to be hungry'.

His innocence then is a nebulous existence in Eden; his
fall is the result of accident (caused by his own innocence),
allowing the large shoat to escape because he is deceived
by the serpent (Mrs Connin's sons), and the focusing of
his existence which his new knowledge brings. He does not
understand the new knowledge, however, until he is confronted
by 'holy writ', a copy of 'The Life of Jesus Christ for
Readers Under Twelve' which had belonged to Mrs Connin's
grandmother. The story of the madman at Gerasa (Mark 5. 1-20),
illustrated by a picture of 'the carpenter driving a crowd
of pigs out of a man', becomes a concrete symbol for the
boy; his 'knowledge' is an identification with Mrs Connin's
religion - he feels as though the pig's running over him
as it escapes from the Connin's pen is the same as having
had swine driven out of him by a carpenter named 'Jesus',
'if he had thought about it before, he would have thought
Jesus Christ was a word like "oh" or "damn" or "God", or
maybe somebody who had cheated them out of something
sometime' (p. 83), a transformation akin to revelation
symbolised by his taking on a new name (a Christian name?).
As he awaits the healing service, he symbolically comprehends
the kinship as an earthly salvation, a knowledge that he is no
longer just Harry from a place where everything is a joke.

Of course the little boy does not understand the symbolism
as such; he only knows that he is hungry in a way he cannot
fathom, so he steals the book with the picture of the carpenter
and the pigs. The revelation is only symbolic, and the value
of that revelation is transferred into financial terms for his
parents while it remains a complete mystery for him. When he
arrives home after the river-side service, the passage before
he puts his revelation into words ('He said I'm not the same
now...I count') exposes the superficiality of his parents's
approach to life through O'Connor's cryptic dialogue,

'Tell me what happened today,' she said when
he reached her. She began to pull off his coat.
'I don't know,' he muttered.
'Yes you do know,' she said, feeling the coat
heavier on one side. She unzipped the innerlining
and caught the book and a dirty handkerchief as
they fell out. 'Where did you get these?'
'I don't know,' he said and grabbed for them.
'They're mine. She gave them to me.'
She threw the handkerchief down and held the
book too high for him to reach and began to read it,
her face after a second assuming an exaggerated
comical expression. The others moved around and
looked at it over her shoulder. 'My God,' somebody
said.

One of the men peered at it sharply from behind
a thick pair of glasses. 'That's valuable,' he said. 'That's a collector's item,' and he took it away from the rest of them and retired to another chair. 'Don't let George go off with that,' his girl said. 'I tell you it's valuable,' George said, '1832.'

(pp. 88-89)

The reader is immediately struck by the length of the incident, a passing around of the book by O'Connor's stretching out the passage; this style differs sharply from Katherine Anne Porter's concise paragraphs of carefully wrought sentences. That is not to say that O'Connor's sentences are not carefully wrought; they aim at a different purpose, not to indulge in an intentional fallacy (judgement based upon the writer's presumed intentions for the work), but as a search for effectiveness through the making of 'concrete and living symbols' rather than an effectiveness (like Porter's) based upon care of suggestion.

The level of conversation, despite the literary appearance of one person ('behind a thick pair of glasses') is strangely elementary, in much the same way as the other conversations in the less sophisticated world of Mrs Connin, as though Harry-Bevel's confusion (two I don't knows) sets the tone for the adults's conversation: 'My God', 'That's valuable', 'That's a collector's item', 'Don't let George go off with that', 'I tell you it's valuable', and '1832'. On close reading, it seems as though O'Connor is painfully (almost embarrassingly) pointing out to the reader her concrete symbols. At the sight of the book, someone says 'My God', a not inappropriate expletive even if it had not been pointed out that 'God' was a word equivalent in that household to 'damn' or
'oh'; 'valuable' is mentioned twice, once because the book is a collector's item, and once because it is old, which implies that it is valuable to the young boy and a valuable clue to the reader. The book's value is also set and magnified in order to contrast with the handkerchief which the mother throws down, the handkerchief echoing one of the 'stages of the cross' recognised by Catholicism, the legendary incident in which the carpenter's brow is wiped by Saint Veronica as he struggles towards Golgotha, and she receives the image of his face upon the kerchief, perhaps a sign that Harry-Bevel is well on his way to a kind of crucifixion. The only thing on the handkerchief given the boy by Mrs Connin is dirt; perhaps a hint from O'Connor that Harry-Bevel's 'stages of the cross' are a perversion.

If the symbols O'Connor used are perhaps a bit obvious upon close examination, their dominating effect is one of power, of a building-up of a wave that will eventually sweep the boy into the river and death. Individually perhaps not as effective as the more austere images influenced by the New Criticism, they are nevertheless a force to be reckoned with when they are massed together. In this instance, they drive the mother to attempt some form of contact with her child, even if it is a futile attempt based upon self-interest, 'What did that dolt of a preacher say about me?...What lies have you been telling today, honey?' (p. 89).

The tone of this passage is one of whispering or half-voice; it is echoed in the mother's whispers, the sexual implications of her attempting her one moment of contact in
the bedroom, leaving him only a brush of a kiss against his forehead, then 'swaying her hips lightly through the shaft of light' as she leaves. Harry mutters, 'My God' is spoken, not exclaimed, the expressions of the book's value are 'said', not emphasised, emphasis is by repetition, the book is examined over the mother's shoulder, George moves away, retiring to another chair. It is as though O'Connor is pointing out the moment of awe in terms of indecision; the people gathered at Harry-Bevel's apartment do not of course understand the value, the true significance of anything going on in the young boy's struggle for 'salvation'; the only accurate reference to the situation is the ironic action of his mother as she holds the book 'too high for him to reach': it is too high for him to reach, as regards his physical height, its meaning to him ('I don't know'), and its implied meaning by O'Connor that he cannot know yet the truth of the matter symbolised by the 'under twelve' words and the curiously confused and simplistic pictures.

O'Connor occasionally finds a poetic flow of words, although it is usually in the chant of a revivalist or a flood at the moment of death; the real Bevel, the revivalist preacher speaks in a 'soft and musical' voice,

'Listen', he sang, 'I read in Mark about an unclean man, I read in Luke about a blind man, I read in John about a dead man! Oh you people hear! The same blood that makes this River red, made that dead man leap! You people with trouble', he cried, 'lay it in that River of Blood, lay it in that River of Pain, and watch it move away toward the Kingdom of Christ.' (p. 85)
In the cadences of jazz music and used-car salesmen and vegetable-hawkers or tobacco auctioneers, O'Connor captures the syncopated lyricism of the working man's South, drawn from the semi-literate sources of salesmen and poverty-stricken clients whose bargaining is a ritualistic washing in sound, because one cannot afford to buy and the other cannot afford not to make a sale. There are three natural pauses and two forced ones; at the end of the first phrase is a rejoinder which becomes a natural pause: 'Oh you people hear!'; at the beginning of the third phrase is a rejoinder, 'You people with trouble', before which comes a natural pause because of the emphasis upon the preceding 'dead man leap!', made obligatory by an exclamation mark. The forced pauses which in effect interrupt the poetic flow of the preacher's harrangue, are interpolations by the narrator, 'he sang', and 'he cried'. 'He sang' is of course not as much of an interruption as 'he cried', because it follows a natural pause, 'Listen', and could in effect be said to provide the pause necessary to get the crowd's attention, were it not for the fact that he had just finished another paragraph about 'this here old red river water round my feet' (p. 85), and the crowd was by that time swaying with every syllable he uttered.

The effect of this unevenness upon the flow of the tale, however, is minimal, because the reader is not held by the undoubtedly magnetic quality of the preacher's voice but what he is saying, equating the red-clay river water with the blood of Christ, with the 'River of Life' where sorrow is laid and
suffering is ended and pain is cured. The preacher is quick to point out that he never claims to cure, especially since apparently two of his failures have shown up to taunt him, the mad woman and the man with the 'purple bulge on his left temple', and he goes into a trance-like state, singing to himself and repeating his spiel all over again, a pointed remark by O'Connor about the effectiveness of revelationist religion, and an opportunity to align Harry-Bevel's error with that of Bevel Summers: they are both lost, both beyond redemption, although the boy takes it as a joke while the preacher is deadly serious (his survival depends, in a way, on his ability to divert the crowd's attention from the rough voice, 'Pass the hat and give this kid his money. That's what he's here for' (p. 85)). That remark ties Summers not to Harry but to Harry's parents; the only value Summers cares about, it is implied, is not the River of salvation but the River of moneu which flows his way when he delivers his spiel.

The significance of Harry's adopting the name 'Bevel' is brought out at three points: the moment of choice, the moment of confirmation, the moment of rejection. The first is his recognition that the name gets him the attention he is seeking, the second is his childishness in the face of the preacher just before the baptism, 'My name is Bevvvuuuuuuuul', an act that has the reader familiar with O'Connor's technique wondering if the preacher will baptise or drown the boy, a reference to the actual outcome of the story, because
just as Harry-Bevel helps reveal the true nature of the preacher, so do the preacher's words help send Harry to his terminal revelation. The third significant point, that of rejection, is brought out by his parents before they discover the book he has stolen from Mrs Connin,

"His name ain't Harry. It's Bevel," Mrs Connin said.

"His name is Harry," she said from the sofa. "Whoever heard of anybody named Bevel?"

The little boy had seemed to be going to sleep on his feet, his head drooping farther and farther forward; he pulled it back suddenly and opened one eye; the other had stuck.

"He told me this morning his name was Bevel," Mrs Connin said in a shocked voice. "The same as our preacher. We been all day at a preaching and healing at the river. He said his name was Bevel, the same as the preacher's. That's what he told me."

"Bevel," his mother said. "My God! what a name."

(p. 88)

Occurring just before the quiet passage concerning the book, this contrasting scene contributes to the following unagitated scene which is rendered 'still' by Mrs Connin's stare as she leaves, 'with a skeleton's appearance of seeing everything' (p. 88). The primary implication is that Harry is stripped of his new 'Christian' name, making it appear that the preacher has merely baptised himself (Webster glosses bevel as 'slanting, hence morally distorted, not upright', and refers to its use with this meaning by Swift and Shakespeare), symbolically negating the first baptism, which brings about Harry's symbolic need to be baptised again.

The passage this time is punctuated with exclamation

marks, 'shocked' voices, snapping Harry out of sleep (albeit only one eye could open), and the embarassement of such an intensely evangelical intrusion into the quietly sophisticated atmosphere of a home in which the greatest physical ill that can be presented at the River is a hangover.

Only twice in the story is the symbol chosen by O'Connor apparently more 'concrete' than 'living', intrusive where there should perhaps be a subtle reference: Harry's last act before leaving the apartment (again as 'Bevel'), and the name of the man who watches both baptisms, witnessing the drowning, appearing to the boy as 'some ancient water monster' whose head 'appeared from time to time on the surface of the water' (p. 91). The final act in his home, one of theft, involves the taking of a half-empty packet of mint sweets which take their names from the ring-like life-preservers (American 'life savers') they resemble; the irony of this act is perhaps a bit forced, considering the fact that he is on his way to drown himself. And, although the inclusion of a 'witness' (an apt gesture to the revelationist religion) enhances the story, the name, Mr Paradise, is somewhat unfortunate. His role as observer would seem somewhat diminished by what would surely be an awkward choice of names, were it not that he appears to be an unbeliever ('He always comes to show he ain't been healed')

O'Connor succeeds in presenting a powerful story of the helplessness of man to redeem himself once he has fallen: the building of Harry-Bevel's character through symbol clearly
leaves the child no alternative but to act in the manner in which he does. The hopelessness of his situation becomes apparent as soon as the reader realises that any revelation the boy has before the point of death will be a futile one. The morning after the incident at the river, the boy wakes in the apartment, wanders around it, finds that the old tricks of tipping over ashtrays and the like are not enough; he cannot return to Eden. All that is left symbolically is salvation, something he does not understand, but feels as a force drawing him to the river where he had been told that if he was saved, he would 'count'. The baptism of the preacher has been taken from him, so there is nothing to do but baptise himself; he intended not to fool with preachers any more but to Baptize himself and to keep on going this time until he found the Kingdom of Christ in the river' (p. 91).

The actual moment comes as a surprise and as the result of an accident; he can only understand at the point of death, because O'Connor has constructed his character so. The moment of revelation comes only at the final point, delayed by a recounting of the traits of his personality by a flow of language that finally purposefully moves towards an acknowledged goal. He pushes his head under the red water and,

In a second he began to gasp and sputter and his head reappeared on the surface; he started under again and the same thing happened. The river wouldn't have him. He tried again and came up, choking. This was the way it had been when the preacher held him under - he had to fight with something that pushed him back in the face. He stopped and thought suddenly: it's another joke, it's just another joke! He thought how far he had come for nothing and he began to hit and splash and kick the filthy
river. His feet were already treading on nothing. He gave one low cry of pain and indignation. Then he heard a shout and turned his head and saw something like a giant pig bounding after him, shaking a red and white club and shouting. He plunged under once and this time, the waiting current caught him like a long gentle hand and pulled him swiftly forward and down. For an instant he was overcome with surprise; then since he was moving quickly and knew that he was getting somewhere, all his fury and his fear left him. (p. 91)

Here the stop-and-go quality of the short sentences and the brief, almost choppy phrases of the longer sentences provide the exact quality O'Connor needed to recreate the feeling of rising and submerging as the boy bobs along the river on his journey into the next world. There are at least twenty-nine pauses in the paragraph, ten full stops, one exclamation mark, and seven other pauses marked by punctuation; unpunctuated pauses for emphasis and phrasing number a further eleven, if all introductory phrases and separate independent clauses are considered. This passage is an especially good example of how writers of modern prose fiction punctuate according to a personal system of emphasis rather than slavishly following grammatical convention; grammatical punctuation is of course adhered to, but in the modern style, immediately noticeable in O'Connor's work, not pedantically (separation of all qualifying words and phrases, and so on), allowing her to identify those words and phrases she especially wanted to call to the attention of the reader, in this instance, 'choking', 'he had to fight with someone that pushed him back in the face', 'it's another joke', and 'it's just another joke'. The 'choking' is not just a gulping of water down his windpipe; in a sense, he is beginning
to 'choke' with rage: the river appears to be rejecting him, like it did when the preacher held him under (a rejection by the river, because the baptism had not worked — his parents had dismissed his 'Bevel' name). The implied thought of the preacher extends to his parents, because baptism, the river, and salvation all suddenly become a joke, leading to real anger ('he began to hit and splash and kick the filthy river').

The river is literally filthy, filled with the mud of red clay, and figuratively filthy, having played a 'dirty' trick on Harry.

Here we see the first point of his revelation (the vision is in two parts), and O'Connor points out the spot with repetition and emphatic punctuation, a colon and an exclamation mark, 'He stopped and thought suddenly: it's another joke, it's just another joke!' Harry's awakening, at the point of his death, is to the futility of all his meagre attempts to redeem himself in the world, to 'count'; his thoughts encompass this point: his 'pilgrimage' is revealed as a hoax, another empty cause for laughter, like his life with his parents. The 'joke' is that he all expected it to amount to something, to help make him 'count', but the book, the name, the incident with the shoat, the baptism by the other Bevel, the handkerchief, and his new identity are implied to have turned out to be superficial and therefore in vain. He strikes out at the river, but is no more effective in his attempt to damage it than in his attempt to force it to accept him, 'he had had to fight with something that bushed him back in the face': he fails to make an impression on
the river (O'Connor's major theme of the inability of man to impose his moral image on the moral pattern of existence).

The final part of the revelation to Harry-Bevel occurs just before his death; his 'fear' and 'fury' leave him because at last 'he was getting somewhere'. The 'long gentle hand of the current surprises him, and he is finally accepted; O'Connor implies that the only redemption ('salvation', acceptance) for the fallen is after death — Harry is in the 'hand' of death, and therefore can receive that final revelation, shared by the reader; that he literally glimpses 'Paradise' is an obvious statement, almost overstatement. In view of the control O'Connor exhibited in the preceding paragraph, perhaps the final two sentences appear to be an anti-climax, but their reference is obviously meant by O'Connor to focus the reader's attention on the criss-crossing nature of Paradise (the pig-like man) and paganism (Paradise as a water monster), the quality and symbol and possibility of earthly redemption versus other-worldly salvation; Paradise has dull eyes which 'stare down the river line as far as he could see' (p. 91) — if he represented the obvious, he could see forever, but he represents the worldly unbeliever, the man with skin cancer who has not been healed, possibly because he would not be healed. His dual nature is probably meant by O'Connor to enforce her 'concrete and living' symbol of the divisionline between futile worldly attempts at redemption and (implied) successful attempts at
salvation after death.

The young boy's character, which drags him to the river, is captured along with the essential tone of the story in a short paragraph while the Conrind boys wait for him to join them so that they can play the serpent to his Adam (the incident with the shoat),

He was coming very slowly, deliberately bumping his feet together as if he had trouble walking. Once he had been beaten up in the park by some strange boys when his sitter forgot him, but he hadn't known anything was going to happen that time until it was over. He began to smell a strong odor of garbage and to hear the noises of a wild animal. He stopped a few feet from the pen and waited, pale but dogged. (p. 82)

This paragraph is directly linked to the drowning scene; each of the four sentences recalls a specific symbol connecting the boy with his end through his character. Although it is a relatively short, complete paragraph (for O'Connor, who usually spread out the points she was trying to make), all four sentences are extended by modifiers which give them a richness of texture and a sense of the boy's attempt to define his way through a nebulous world. The first sentence contains three participles, 'coming', 'bumping', 'walking', which give a feeling of continuous motion, an uninterrupted movement towards an unimaginable something - the 'drowning' passage mentions 'how far he had come'. Although all of his actions turn out to have been futile, here we see an implication that it was in his character to try, nonetheless. The second sentence appears to be a direct reference to the fulfillment of his revelation; when the boys in the park had beaten him
up; he 'hadn't known anything was going to happen that time until it was over': he does not realise the extent of his 'baptism' until it is too late to change his mind, until it is 'over'. He reacts with surprise, then acceptance; this implied lack of reaction in the second sentence contrasts with the motion of the first: he tries, however slowly, but no matter how he tries, his own salvation is beyond his control, whether he wants to be saved from being beaten up or whether he wants to be saved from insignificance. Events catch him unprepared; before he realises what is happening, it is over. The third sentence, of the strong odours and strange animal noises ('wild' to connect with the madness in the Bible story), is an omen of the incident with the pig, reflected in the book's story and picture, and at the end, when Mr Paradise is curiously pictured also as a pig, as though he too were being driven from Harry-Bevel by the river (the 'Kingdom of Christ'), a merging of the young boy's strongest symbols of his attempted significance ('You count now,' the preacher said, 'You didn't even count before.' (p. 87)). The final sentence is the symbol of Harry's attitude, pensive, waiting, 'pale but dogged' - suspended at the moment of his death, in much the same way O'Connor must have felt as she waited for the blood cancer to release her, 'For an instant, he was overcome with surprise; then since he was moving quickly and knew that he was getting somewhere, all his fury and his fear left him' (p. 91). O'Connor's tales seem written around the point of suspension of death or revelation or both, and it
is her superb handling of that moment which gives life to her
grotesque inventions, and validates her prose.

O'Connor's 'Everything That Rises Must Converge' also
contains her themes and her technique of suspension at the
moment of revelation, but outside of a directly religious
context; it is a story of loss of innocence, but loss of
innocence in polarity, through the contrasting roles of
dual protagonists, Julian and his mother. Julian believes
himself 'free' of innocence, and believes his mother to be
'hopelessly' innocent, in reality a shameful ignorance.
The remnant of an impoverished, but once prominent Southern
family, Julian's mother attempts to retain the past through
acts such as a seemingly benign paternalism towards Negroes;
Julian attempts to force his mother out of her innocence
('ignorance') by making her aware of the modern social conditions
which make such paternalism distasteful. The resulting
confrontation of values repeats O'Connor's theme that there is
no salvation this side of the grave, and revelation is never
the result of direct action, but a condition of death.

The death in 'Everything That Rises Must Converge' is
symbolic, not actual, although there is an implication of the
nearness of physical death in the mother's collapse at the story's
end. O'Connor seems to hold this entire story at the moment
of death, in that respect. Julian's mother, as the 'last of
the Chestnys', has never spiritually left the world of the Old
South, 'All of her life had been a struggle to act like a
Chestny without the Chestny goods! 

Symbolically, she is the past of the South, described by Katherine Anne Porter in "Noon Wine": The Sources,

It was not really a democratic society; if everybody had his place, sometimes very narrowly defined, at least he knew where it was, and so did everybody else. So too, the higher laws of morality and religion were defined; if a man offended against one or sinned against the other, he knew it, and so did his neighbors, and they called everything by its right name.

The matriarch at the turn of the century was the mother who had survived the Civil War, and saved her family. If her husband had returned from the fighting, like as not he was wounded either physically or emotionally, and he was forced to rely on the woman; the woman had to learn to run the family without damaging her husband further, which gave rise to a strict rule of 'what was allowed, what was not, what went where', there was a place for everything, and everything (especially the woman) had a place. The woman became the central family figure, and propriety became a way of life in the South; natural longevity insured her position, and she passed her strict belief in 'proper' place and action to her daughters. Julian's mother is just such a daughter, and her ideas of what are and are not proper constitute the force that Julian sees as innocence-ignorance.

11. Flannery O'Connor, 'Everything That Rises Must Converge', Everything That Rises Must Converge, pp. 29-43 (p. 35). Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

In turn, because of her heritage (in many ways O’Connor implies that she is the Old South), Julian’s mother sees any opposition to her notions of propriety as an attack, perhaps a continuation of the war her mother fought, and, in a sense, won; modern society with its drastic social changes must have appeared as an extension of that war her mother survived, and which she, like Mrs May in ‘Greenleaf’ could feel,

‘Everything is against you,’ she would say, ‘the weather is against you and the dirt is against you and the help is against you. They’re all in league against you. There’s nothing for it but an iron hand!’

The remark that the ‘help’ was against her is perhaps the most telling part of this passage from ‘Greenleaf’. In the South, the ‘help’ invariably means the sons and daughters or grandchildren and granddaughters of the former slaves; Julian’s mother is to find her revelation through her ‘iron-handed’ approach to the Negro on the bus, and this passage, by a like-minded woman with the same heritage, is echoed by O’Connor in ‘Everything That Rises Must Converge’ by saying that Julian’s mother (like Mrs May) ‘lived according to the laws of her own fantasy world, outside of which he had never seen her set foot’ (p. 35), and his mother herself reminds him, ‘Your great-grandfather was a former governor of this state...your grandfather was a prosperous land-owner. Your grandmother was a Godhigh’ (p. 31), and she too feels that ‘everything’ is against her, but ‘it was fun to struggle...and when you had won, as she had won, what fun to look back on the hard times’. He could not forgive her that she had enjoyed the

struggle and that she thought she had won' (p. 35). So, Julian’s mother, who could never forget she was a Chestny, is, instead of innocent, already fallen in one sense, literally she is descended from the Godhighs, and has fallen not only materially, but morally as well, although she does not recognise her condition as anything more than a temporary removal from grace.

Julian realises that his mother’s actions and values are wrong, but his are no better, and he has inherited her tendency towards self-deception, to help him mask his own loss of innocence from himself. O’Connor points this fact out in a brief exchange between the two,

’Somday I’ll start making money,’ Julian said gloomily - he knew he never would - 'and you can have one of those jokes whenever you take the fit.’ But first they would move. He visualized a place where the nearest neighbors would be three miles away on either side.

’I think you’re doing fine,’ she said, drawing on her gloves. ’You’ve only been out of school a year. Rome wasn’t built in a day.’ (p. 30)

This passage, prominently placed as a doorway between the Old South and the modern world, a bridging scene as they leave home to board the bus to disaster, appears to be one of O’Connor’s sign-posts. Beginning with Julian’s self-deception and ending with his mother’s, the two paragraphs encompass the characters of the two which are linked through symbol to their catastrophe. Again O’Connor uses punctuation for emphasis, dashes instead of parentheses to indicate an important aside; the dashes act as visual spears to point out the fact that whatever Julian’s delusions concerning life,
deep within him lies the true revelation of his inability
to impress his imperfect image on the values of that life
(as on the bus, when the Negro reading the newspaper ignores
his 'liberated' attempts at communication, and gets irritated
at his inept attempt to start a conversation by borrowing
matches in a 'no smoking' area). He will never make money;
his present occupation is a typewriter salesman, although
he wants to be a writer, and the damming statement of the
woman he and his mother meet on the bus symbolically seals his
fate, as far as his hopes for money and a career in writing are
concerned, 'Well that's nice. Selling typewriters is close to
writing. He can go right from one to the other', to which
Julian's mother responds, 'I tell him...that Rome wasn't built
in a day' (p. 35), recalling her last remark as they leave
their apartment.

Even their apartment plays a part in the development
of their polar (yet at the same time similar) characters.
Julian's mother likes the apartment because it 'had been a
fashionable neighborhood forty years ago' and Julian hates it
for the same reason, although in his dreams and daydreams,
his ideal house appears as the very thing he detests, a
memory of the past, 'where the nearest neighbors would be
three miles away on either side', O'Connor's way of directing
the reader's attention to the fact that subconsciously Julian
is as much a Chestny as his mother, and the old Codghid
mansion he pretends to himself to abhor becomes one of his
frequent dreams, another signpost erected by O'Connor for the
reader's benefit. The passage in which his dream is described is preceded by his mother's reminiscence of the mansion in her youth, begun with the remark, 'Well let's talk about something pleasant', which implies that Julian's true views of the old place are of affection and not as he pretends. The paradoxical mixture of his attempts at creating an image of liberalness towards modern life opposed to his inner feelings is presented by O'Connor just before they reach the bus stop, a buffer-zone of inner emotion before the external forces destroy them.

'Doubtless that decayed mansion reminded them,' Julian muttered. He never spoke of it without contempt or thought of it without longing. He had seen it once when he was a child before it had been sold. The double stairways had rotted and been torn down. Negroes were living in it. But it remained in his mind as his mother had known it. It appeared in his dreams regularly. He would stand on the wide porch listening to the rustle of oak leaves, then wander through the high-ceilinged hall into the parlor that opened onto it and gaze at the worn rugs and faded draperies. It occurred to him that it was he, not she, who could have appreciated it. He preferred its threadbare elegance to anything he could name and it was because of it that all the neighborhoods they had lived in had been a torment to him—whereas she had hardly known the difference. She called her insensitivity 'being adjustable'. (p. 32)

This long, flowing passage has a mystical element and a dream-like quality derived partly from the reader's sympathetic response to memory (fantasy is common to all men), and partly from the way in which O'Connor skillfully reverses the roles of Julian and his mother. Before this passage, it is his mother who is hopelessly tied to the past and Julian who is the voice of modern society; after this
passage, the reader is aware that the subtle displacement of the two characters into each other's state of mind means that Julian can be no longer seriously regarded as a champion for the modern state, and his mother can no longer be regarded as an anachronism. It is Julian who really appreciates the Old South, not at its height, but at the lowest point of its decline, before vanishing into a time when mansions are divided into flats, or allowed to rot away so that only the poorest Negroes will live in them; his mother has become a bona fide member of the modern world, to wit: she had by degrees become totally insensitive to anything but her own feelings and fantasies, 'she had hardly known the difference', and considered herself 'adjustable', a modern concept outside the rigid laws of propriety established by the Old Order. As such, she does not see Julian's position in terms of his relationship to modern life or to the old ways, nor herself to either attitude; she remembers the kitchen smells of her youth, does not ponder the fact that the Godhighs had to be supported by the Chestnys, except for an acknowledgement that they were 'in reduced circumstances', the symbolism of which escapes her. Julian on the other hand, replaces the rotten staircases in his memory, and in his dreams, he wanders through the high-ceilinged hall, the parlor, he stands on the porch listening to the oak leaves (all solid images - 'oak', 'wide porch', 'high-ceilinged hall', which even 'threadbare' maintains an 'elegance'); he is sensitive to the past, at least to the sad declining days of 'threadbare elegance' which echo
his own melancholy. O'Connor's qualifying words and phrases all enforce the image of decline: 'decayed', 'rotted', 'and had been torn down', 'worn', 'faded', 'threadbare'; she again uses a dash to direct the reader's attention to the most significant part of the passage: the places they had lived had, in contrast with the Godhigh mansion, been 'torment to him', but his mother, as indicated by the dash, had 'hardly known the difference', and had dismissed her insensitive modernity as 'adjustability'.

Julian's mother's conscious view of him is much the same as that of Katherine Anne Porter's Grandmother to all progeny in 'The Old Order', in her conversations with Nannie,

'When they are little, they trample on your feet, and when they grow up they trample on your heart.'
This was about all there was to say about children in any generation, but the fascination of the theme was endless.  

Nannie and the Grandmother believe that, 

The young were difficult, disobedient, and tireless in wrongdoing, apt to turn unkind and undutiful when they grew up, in spite of all one had done for them, or had tried to do.  

This implied sacrifice is made into a larger theme in O'Connor's 'Everything That Rises Must Converge' by making it the central weapon in Julian's mother's armoury with which she continues the war; the 'laws of her fantasy world' were based upon one central law of sacrifice, 'The law of it was to sacrifice herself for him after she had first created the necessity to do so by making a mess of things' (p. 35). Her

delusion that she wins the struggle with life is the overt result of the legacy she has received from her own mother of winning through sacrifice in war and post-war days in the South, but as her 'winning' is only delusion, there is no merit in it (the same way the grandmother in 'A Good Man is Hard to Find' bases her attempt at virtue on selfishness).

O'Connor's theme of the futility of false virtue is rewarded similarly in 'Everything That Rises Must Converge'; Julian's seeing his mother's sacrifice as the rule of a fantasy world brings about her downfall, and, in turn, the revelation of his own failure.

The mother's innocence is combined with her sacrifice in the descriptive passage of her 'sky-blue' eyes which were 'as innocent and untouched by experience as they must have been when she was ten' (p. 30), but they belie her nature, a widow who had supported Julian through school and university, and was supporting him still, 'winning' through sacrifice,

What she meant when she said she had won was that she had brought him up successfully and had sent him to college and that he had turned out so well - good looking (her teeth had gone unfilled so that his could be straightened), intelligent (he realised he was too intelligent to be a success), and with a future ahead of him (there was of course no future ahead of him). She excused his gloominess on the grounds that he was still growing up and his radical ideas on his lack of practical experience. She said he didn't yet know a thing about 'life', that he hadn't even entered the real world - when already he was as disenchanted with it as a man of fifty. (p. 35)

The dashes spearing our attention in this paragraph point to the sacrifice and the reality; Julian's mother's sacrifice was not selfless, but based on the fact that she saw Julian
as merely an extension of herself, 'She had brought him up successfully and had sent him to college and ... he had turned out so well', not through any ability he may have possessed on his own, but through her direct action, her 'sacrifice', a 'virtue' based upon a selfish motive. The parenthetical expressions illustrating her sacrifice are also set apart to make sure the reader notices her metamorphosis into Julian: when he is having his teeth straightened, it is really her teeth, when his intelligence is being acknowledged it is her fantasy world which is too 'rational', 'too intelligent to be a success', and when his future is said to lie ahead of him, it is her delusion which has 'no future'. Principally, her delusion, with regards to Julian, is based upon the universal maternal premiss that children in some way always remain helpless babies; she is the one with the experience of the world, and his regard for her as innocent is mirrored in her excuses for his gloominess as a sign of innocence. Of course, neither is correct about the other, she is not innocent but does not know it, and he is innocent and does not know it, and both exchange places and are unaware of the swap: she has 'sacrificed' to rear him; he is as disenchanted with the world 'as a man of fifty'.

The paragraph is really only two brief statements, both saying that neither person's evaluation of the other is correct: Julian's mother has sacrificed, and is therefore not innocent; Julian is not innocent, but already disenchanted beyond his years. All qualifying and modifying words and phrases contribute to the enforcement of the two statements twinned to present the
one idea, symbolically: that there is no revelation of their true nature to be gained by their own efforts. The first sentence is explication (what Julian's mother meant by 'winning'), and the second is correction (Julian's true state is disenchantment); the philosophical tone and theorum-like presentation combines to make this paragraph one of O'Connor's more concise. She includes several philosophical points throughout the story, on history, identity, martyrdom and culture, through comment, not just symbolically, but they do not have the exact presentation and logic of this passage. Julian repeats 'mind' three times, tapping his head for emphasis when he locates the dwelling place of 'culture', but is rebuffed by his mother through her own assertion of the dwelling place of true culture, 'It's in the heart...and in how you do things and how you do things is because of who you are' (p. 33); when his mother reminds him that his grandfather had a plantation and two hundred slaves, Julian reminds her in turn 'There are no more slaves', to which she retorts, 'They were better off when they were' (p. 32). When his mother insists on a worth based on her family name, Julian tells her, 'the old world is gone. The manners are obsolete and your graciousness is not worth a damn...you aren't who you think you are', a most telling statement, as neither of them are who they think they are (pp. 42-43); martyrdom is attached to Julian's suffering his mother's character, 'Julian thought that he could have stood his lot better had she been selfish, if she had been an old hag and drank and screamed at him' (p. 31).

These statements are not meant to be comments by O'Connor,
but by the characters, as means of filling out their positions in the story; her own comments are made in symbols and the overall tale itself. The paragraph on sacrifice which is written like a logical argument is a sign-post in the story; inasmuch as it agrees with Roman Catholic dogma, perhaps it may be said that O'Connor held the beliefs herself, but there is always a possibility of exaggerating the literary importance of those beliefs if they are taken to be the sole purpose behind the stories; it is highly doubtful that she consciously used any of her work as a platform for sounding her private religious views.

In 'Everything That Rises Must Converge' martyrdom has the conventional symbolism of sacrifice, but O'Connor weights that symbol with nuance and connotation which exceed the traditional Christian purpose of such an image. Julian's first appearance in the story is as Saint Sebastian, 'pinned to the doorway' yet waiting 'for the arrows to begin piercing him' (p. 29); throughout the story he is pictured as a martyr to his mother's sacrifice, a mixing of images that very successfully conveys the message of the dual but opposite roles played by the two. After wishing that she would get drunk and scream at him, he gets a glimmer of revelation: 'He walked along, saturated in depression, as if in the midst of his martyrdom he had lost faith' (p. 31); his sacrifice is no more valid than hers - his martyrdom is merely a way of expressing his depression, of admitting that he feels sorry for himself; therefore, throughout the story, from
this point on, his depression and gloominess serves as a reminder that his sacrifice is invalid and his attempts at redemption are futile.

The crux of the story is the confrontation on the bus with the Negro woman of the New South: she will not be patronised, nor be a party to any such action that involves her or any member of her family. Julian's mother's gesture is wasted on the little black boy, named 'Carver' after the great black Negro agricultural pioneer, because his natural childish tendency to accept the nickel is curtailed swiftly by his mother, and the disaster which accompanies the gesture spirals into the end of the tale. It is forecast by the scene in which Julian's mother acts like a child, attempting to play games ('peek-a-boo') with the little boy; just as Julian's attempt to communicate with the Negro man reading the newspaper fails, so does his mother's attempt to get the small boy to play his traditional role fails. The similarity of the two scenes suggests that perhaps the metamorphosis symbol mentioned in connection with the Godhigh mansion is also present on the bus ride; the mother cannot draw the little black boy back into the world of the Old South, but her attempt to contact the Negro child is in a way an attempt to contact modern life, the future. Julian's attempt to contact the Negro man does not propel Julian into the future or the modern world; it only causes him to admit that he never has had success at striking up a conversation, with a Negro. His fondest dream of contacting a Negro is based
on his 'martyrdom', he feels that he must expiate his mother's sin of living in the past, but the closest he can get is imitation: he hides behind the newspaper in the same manner as the Negro man he attempts to communicate with, and he is left to the deception of his dreams,

He imagined his mother lying desperately ill and his being able to secure only a Negro doctor for her. He toyed with that idea for a few minutes and then dropped it for a momentary vision as a sympathizer in a sit-in demonstration. This was possible but he did not linger with it. Instead, he approached the ultimate horror. He brought home a beautiful suspiciously Negroid woman. Prepare yourself, he said. There is nothing you can do about it. This is the woman I've chosen. She's intelligent, dignified, even good, and she's suffered and she hasn't thought it fun. Now persecute us, go ahead and persecute us. Drive her out of here, but remember, you're driving me too. His eyes were narrowed and through the indignation he had generated, he saw his mother across the aisle, purple-faced, shrunken to the dwarf-like proportions of her moral nature, sitting like a mummy beneath the ridiculous banner of her hat. (p. 38)

This is perhaps the most consistent paragraph in the story; for eleven sentences O'Connor exercises an evenness and control that push this description of Julian's childish fantasy into mythic proportions. From the child-like image of his 'toying' with the idea of his mother lying ill, to his grotesque caricature of her as a mummified dwarf, the mood is one of mounting horror, in a tone that Mary Shelley would have been pleased to reproduce. O'Connor achieves this knife-like terror by the accumulation of images linked with horror; Negroes are not by nature terrifying, so O'Connor has to make them appear so to gauge the impact the various scenes would have on Julian's mother: the first image is of
desperate illness linked to a Negro doctor, the second is of
a Negro Civil Rights sit-in, with its associated images of
violent attacks on pacifists (an implication that he cannot
defend himself against barbaric cruelty if he associates with
Negroes), and the third, the threat of miscegenation, as a
dehumanising act, signified by his use of the term 'Negroid',
a clinical-sounding word which conjures up images of deformity
(not a Negro, a human being, but a Negroid-creature).

To this catalogue of horrors is added the green and
purple hat, perched atop a mummified dwarf: the next time
we are shown the hat, the Negro woman, Carver's mother, is
wearing it; in fact, both women are wearing identical hats,
(purchased by Julian's mother at the last moment because
despite its somewhat ridiculous appearance, she would be sure not
to 'see herself coming and going' (p. 31)); what she sees in
fact is a photographic negative of herself, sustained in mid-air
until the moment of symbolic death, when she is knocked to the
ground by her black counterpart while trying to force the nickel
upon Carver. She only has the revelation of her futility at the
moment of death, of the destruction once and for all of her
deception, and is left stranded on the pavement, as Julian
runs off yelling for help; he knows that he is unable to
do anything to help her - that is his revelation - and O'Connor
leaves him suspended at the point of dying, 'postponing from
moment to moment his entry into the world of guilt and sorrow'
(p. 43).
Chapter Six: Eudora Welty

When Eudora Welty in 'How I Write' said, 'I feel myself that any generalization about writing is remote from anything I have managed to learn about it',¹ she was making a statement which was not just another generalisation; she was enunciating a long-held personal belief in (and approach to) writing which defined life and literature in specific terms; a writer should acknowledge the literary achievements of other writers but not be controlled by them, and every short story should be a particularised accomplishment possessing an individual 'presence'. This approach to her art allowed the Mississippi writer to succeed where others undoubtedly failed, perhaps because they were too conscious of the work and stature of William Faulkner, and because she neither imitated nor ignored him, but acknowledged his genius and his presence, while carrying on with her own admirable, distinctive work. Welty is quoted by Ruth Vande Kieft as saying of her position as a writer in Mississippi, as regards Faulkner, 'It's a big fact. Like living near a mountain!';² however, it was a mountain which she felt she neither had to conquer nor avoid - as an individual, she relied solely upon her own originality to produce her singular short prose fiction.

Because she published her first collection of short stories, *A Curtain of Green* in 1941, it may be said that Welty belongs to the 'second wave' of the Southern 'renaissance', which included among others Carson McCullers in Georgia, William March in Alabama, Randall Jarrell, Reynolds Price, and Paul Green in North Carolina, and James Agee, Jesse Hill Ford, and Peter Taylor in Tennessee; William Faulkner, the Fugitives, and Katherine Anne Porter belonged to the 'first wave' of that renaissance, and Flannery O'Connor was a powerful, though solitary continuing force between the two.

The purpose of detachment and perspective in Eudora Welty's life which made it possible for her to thrive in Mississippi, caused her (like Katherine Anne Porter before her) to avoid literary circles and their influences, and to experience a variety of hack work in radio, advertising, and publicity (among other jobs) which she assimilated without herself being absorbed. As Katherine Anne Porter said of her,

Being the child of her place and time, profiting perhaps without being aware of it by the cluttered experiences, foreign travels, and disorders of the generation immediately preceding her, she will never have to go away and live among the Eskimos, or Mexican Indians; she need not follow a war and smell death to feel herself alive: she knows about death already. She shall not need even to live in New York in order to feel that she is having the kind of experience, the sense of 'life' proper to a serious author. She gets her right nourishment from the source natural to her - her experience so far has been quite enough for her and of precisely the right kind. She began
writing spontaneously when she was a child, being a born writer; she continued without any particular encouragement, and, as it proved, not needing any.

Here Porter seems to be contrasting Welty's life with her own varying career in which she did live among the Mexican Indians, follow a war, and experience life in New York; the point of this quotation is however that Eudora Welty was a 'born writer', fortunate enough to appear at the time and place most advantageous to her individualistic artistry. The concept of 'particularised accomplishment' does not conflict with the idea of each story's having a common creative base, implied here by Porter as being the 'precisely' right kind of experience for a 'child of her place and time'; Welty herself admits a debt to 'place' in her writing, 'the place where I am and the place I know, and other places that familiarity with and love for my own make strange and lovely and enlightening to look into, are what set me writing my stories', and 'I do have the feeling that all stories by one writer tend to spring from the same source within him', because however the stories differ in subject and approach, 'however they vary in excellence or fluctuate in their power to alter the mind or mood or move the heart', all of a writer's stories reflect the 'one characteristic, lyrical impulse of his mind'.  


Eudora Welty's mind is, as has been noticed in the chapter on the Fugitives, that 'the story is a vision', and that vision is mainly concerned with the mysteries (in the universal sense) of relationships (man to man, man to existence, man to purpose) as they are generated by the inner life, itself a 'pervading and changing mystery'.

The appropriateness of Welty's remarks about her state of mind during the creative process, and the importance of 'place' in her writing are readily apparent in her work. 'No Place for You, My Love', of which 'How I Write' was intended as a commentary on its genesis, is much closer to the abstract ideology of writing put forth by Welty than it is to her concrete explication of the story as 'the vain courting of imperviousness in the face of exposure'. As it was her contention that analysis was a travelling backwards towards 'vanishing point, beyond which only "influences" lie' (as opposed to writing which worked 'further and further always into the open'), her analysis of her own work is perhaps a limiting commentary rather than expansion which matches the story's scope of the continuing outward drive from the inner self. 'No Place for You, My Love' is in fact an attempt to reach the furthest extension of place (for Welty, travelling as far South as possible,

below New Orleans); her central characters are not Southerners, but a businessman from the East coast and a woman, thirty-two years old, from the Middle West, 'What they amounted to was two Northerners keeping each other company', maintaining Welty's objectivity as she strives to reach south-of-South,

They rode mostly in silence. The sun bore down. They met fishermen... There was nearly always a man lying with his shoes off in the bed of a truck otherwise empty... Then there was a sort of dead man's land where nobody came... Little shell roads led off on both sides; now and then a road of planks led into the yellow green...

There were thousands, millions of mosquitoes and gnats - a universe of them, and on the increase...

More and more crayfish and other shell creatures littered their path, scuttling or dragging... little jokes of creation...

Back there in the margins were worse - crawling hides you could not penetrate with bullets or quite believe, grins that had come down from the primeval mud.®

It well may be that the idea Welty felt in retrospect that she had held in her mind as she wrote

'No Place for You, My Love' was one of 'the vain courting of imperviousness in the face of exposure', but the immediate impression the reader receives is one of the brooding intensity of the sinister atmosphere which accompanies motion towards the boundaries of 'place', which renders any attempt at human contact impotent. The alien, almost repugnant unfamiliarity which in a sense assaults the two as they seek (unsatisfactorily) a site where their

8. Eudora Welty, 'No Place For You, My Love', Understanding Fiction, pp. 530-45 (pp. 531, 533).
relationship may be realised is heightened by their silent ride. It is a motion further and further away from the intimacy of the inner self, and therefore away from contact with each other.

Welty depicts the landscape's becoming by degrees more a condition than a place, in which first humanity dies, then disappears completely, then is replaced by non-human life forms ('little jokes of creation'), then by ancient unspeakable terror ('hides you could not penetrate with bullets or quite believe'); she even speaks of 'primeval mud'. The change is gradual: the shoeless bodies lying in truckbeds are not really dead, but the implication is that in their shoeless repose they are ready for the grave; then there is a 'sort of dead man's land, where nobody came', and if nobody comes to the dead man's land, what nameless terror uses the shell roads and plank roads that lead off into the margins? Finally there are the 'crawling hides' with 'grins that had come down from the primeval mud'. In such a place (condition?), in such 'Degrad ing heat', they cannot function as human beings, they never comprehend the 'mystery'; their attempt at contact is limited to keeping each other company; the kisses, dancing, and attempts at conversation which might have developed into an affair of the heart elsewhere, here seem a ritual partially enacted to ensure their survival. That they eventually return safely to New Orleans is perhaps a result of their 'imperviousness'; without their imperviousness (in a sense they too are 'walking hides')
the reader infers that they may never have been able to emerge from the strangeness of Cajuns and 'degrading' heat and families in which animals (the goose Mimi) are members (which are read to and allowed to wander freely in the home) and deformed 'jokes of creation' scuttle, south-of-South.

The reader senses that the 'imperviousness' of the two is their salvation; the courting is vain, not because they are insulated from each other, but because the place (the 'exposure') forces its way between them. In Welty's 'A Visit of Charity', ostensibly a story of loss of innocence, 'imperviousness' is not applied externally as in 'No Place for You, My Love', but is a condition of the inner self, of Marian the Campfire Girl who, in order to collect merit points, visits an Old Ladies Home; her ideas about old ladies are vague, and her approach to the visit is perfunctory because she will receive only three points for her visit. Here, her insulation from the realities of old age, of charity, is vain 'in the face of exposure', and the fact that she has to 'remove her mittens before she could open the heavy door' to the nursing home is an omen that she will eventually have to shed her internal insulation.⁹

Marian continues her visit as though it is imposed from outside and has no meaning (it means nothing to her except three Campfire Girl points), and she tells the duty

⁹ Eudora Welty, 'A Visit of Charity', A Curtain of Green, and Other Stories (New York, 1941), pp. 218-26 (p. 218).
nurse that she has to pay a visit to 'some old lady... any of them will do'; when the nurse informs Marian that there are two in each room, Welty has Marian answer 'Two of what?' without thinking, far more effective than any qualifying description of Marian could be, and reflected in the manner in which Marian is thrust into a room in which the two occupants appear as robbers in a cave, a sudden awakening which leaves her with the feeling that she has been caught attempting to pry into their lair, and will be murdered - the definitive symbol that her imperviousness has indeed been in vain. ¹⁰

The feature of this 'place' is also one of terror, but a terror linked with discovery (initiation) which provides the central character with an escape, a reverse variation of the means of escape in 'No Place for You, My Love'. Marian's fleeing the two old ladies because they refuse to answer her question concerning just how old they are (captured in her wonder, 'as though there was nothing else in the world to wonder about') is both a fleeing of the terrifying symbolic Eden, and an act of survival when her protective insensitivity is removed. The Garden of Eden theme is reversed, too; Marian's apple is outside the Old Ladies Home, under a prickly shrub,

She ran to meet the big bus rocketing through the street.
'Wait for me!' she shouted. As though at an imperial command, the bus ground to a stop.
She jumped on and took a big bite out of the apple.1

In 'A Visit of Charity', Marian's imperviousness is shown to have been in vain, but the shedding of her insularity has given her a new relationship with the outside world; before her failure to contact the two old ladies, Marian's relationship to the 'mysteries' of life was limited to self-indulgence (symbolised by the Campfire Girl point system - there is no real 'merit' involved), and, by implication, she was an ineffective force in the world; after the initiation which strips her of her insularity, she commands public transportation to halt at her pleasure, and the carefree gesture of the final sentence implies that she has regained her imperviousness, but that this time it is based upon knowledge, not insensitivity: a revelation of her escape from premature old age based upon her seeing 'the old woman in bed very closely and plainly, and very abruptly, from all sides, as in dreams.'12

Eudora Welty implies in 'A Visit of Charity' that the relationship of man to his inner self is a matter of revelation, a vision ('as in dreams') that cuts through insensitivity to touch man at his core, however briefly or

to what extent; the revelation (vision) is connected to 'place', and both form the basis of the story and the creative act behind it. In 'A Piece of News', we may observe internally the creative act in this process (the essence) and in 'Powerhouse', we may observe the external (the symbol), exhibited through powerful insight and subtle phrasing and affectionate humour.

Welty's vision, extending as it does from the inner self, contains only the barest reference to the broad Southern humour drawn from the oral tale, the tall tale of folk epic giants like Davy Crockett, Mike Fink, and John Henry, whose supposed pioneering exploits were so gargantuan that they established a colonial sense of humour based upon gross exaggeration (for instance the tale of Davy Crockett who, on a particularly cold morning, squeezed bear-oil into the axes of the earth to free the cog-wheel which controlled the motion of the sun), the frontier humour of outrage, almost in opposition to the polite literature of colonial times, given further impetus by Mark Twain through an exaggeration and irony which is almost sarcasm, blended with raillery, parody, and lampoon (of the literary tradition). It is difficult to imagine a humour more foreign to Eudora Welty, whose approach to comedy was a direct product of the perception drawn from the revelation of the relationship to the inner

self, divided into 'modes' by Ruth Vande Kieft, among others, who saw Welty's celebrated humour as classical, in the Dionysian sense: 'the resource and insolence of growing things; sexuality, fertility, birth and rebirth, pleasure, fulfillment', and modern in its comic characters who act out their natures in 'humorous, repetitive action', and mannerly, the satiric impulse inherent in public ritual. 14

What each of these modes have in common in Welty's fiction is their development through the revelation of the inner self, the implicit humour in any struggle towards growth and awareness; it is a good-natured humour which is tolerant and almost affectionate, the smile before the guffaw; but it is a humour which, because it is perceptive, soon reaches the dividing line between laughter and scream - it flirts dangerously with terror, until the reader has to pause to consider whether the shriek is the result of jest or threat. It is the natural outgrowth of Welty's unspoken theme that moves from insulation to awareness through vision; the moment of revelation, of perception, although it may make it possible to decipher the personal mysteries, is a moment of entry into the unknown, always a point filled with implied fear and terror.

The moment of perception, of passing through awareness into the unknown is not always one of sustained fear, but

the aura of that entry is one of excitement and wonder and awe: the promise of terror is always there, together with what may be termed the 'significance of fear', and the laughter generated by comedy centred around such a point is not glee so much as it is wondrous anticipation of disaster. It may also be said that humour is based for the most part upon pain, and the connection of misfortune with comedy (the prat-fall, the helpless innocence/ignorance of a stooge) prepares the reader for some distress, whether or not it is handled with affection and tolerance, and whether or not it leads ultimately to terror.

'A Piece of News' and 'Powerhouse' approach the kind of 'poetic perfection' implied as possible by the stories of the first wave of the Southern renaissance: they are 'next to the poem' in the Faulknerian sense, they reveal a concise artistry when placed under Fugitive-like analysis, they move towards a distinctive personal completeness as do the stories of Katherine Anne Porter, and their revelation through subtle development of character and symbol recall the principal literary achievement of Flannery O'Connor's tales. That there are only four thousand or so words in 'A Piece of News' allows the story to be examined textually with much the same attention to detail as in the critical analysis of a
lengthy poem, of course taking into consideration the
inherent differences between verse and prose.

Without forcing the story into what would be for
prose false sections, it is possible to recognise certain
divisions or patterns within the text which contribute
to the aggregate unity of the piece. Not only the
grammatical separation of the text into paragraphs
based on change of emphasis, but natural pauses in
phrasing (through punctuation, meaning, and 'breathing')
contribute to the story's rhythm, and internal patterns of
modification, suggestion, and image-building support the
story's essential atmosphere of strange anticipation,
reveal the plot's ironic course, explore Ruby's
character and her relationships to her inner self and to
her husband Clyde, and support the story's rhythm
through a subtle energy which holds the story at the
edge of apprehension.

It its grammatical presentation, the story has one
double-spaced break, fifty-nine paragraphs - of which
twenty-one have only one sentence (twelve are single-line
dialogue), and the bulk of the remainder contain only two
or three sentences; in many instances, full stops are
used where commas normally would be placed, such as in
Welty's separation of action from the dialogue it follows or
introduces (by employing full stops, colons, and paragraph
indentation). The immediate general effect on the story is that such presentation causes the reader to spend more time on shorter word groups than he normally would, were they punctuated as phrases in more complicated sentences; this technique gives a greater importance to brief, slight, or subtle actions and thoughts, a process which enhances Welty's method of portrayal through suggestion, a deliberate fineness more than a delicate fragility.

The separation of action and dialogue supports Welty's emphasis on the importance of the written and spoken word to Ruby and Clyde: words are given a mystical quality, separate from the normal world they inhabit - a world of little or no communication. This quality of their world refers directly to Welty's concept of relationships and the revelation (vision - a type of communication, with self) of mystery which makes relationships possible; without communication, there can be no vision, or what vision there is depends solely on communication, and if the communication is incomplete, the vision is not whole; hence, Ruby and Clyde, each in his or her own separate way, receive only a piece of news, a fragment of the vision. The whole of the revelation escapes them, and as such, the transfer of ideas (the process of communication, revelation, vision) is too vague to allow Ruby to realise her relationship to her inner self, or to contact Clyde (whose insulation
is shifted minutely when he first reads the passage about the other Ruby Fisher, but never really breached). The story ends in a simple two sentence paragraph about the weather, which reflects the failure of Ruby to contact herself and Clyde, leaving them in a nebulous unsatisfactory state, 'It was dark and vague outside. The storm had rolled away to faintness like a wagon crossing a bridge'. Something has occurred, but the result is 'vague', a receding 'faintness' beyond the grasp of the Fishers.

The failure of Clyde and Ruby Fisher to establish contact with their inner selves and with each other results in a vagueness, but the story itself is not vague, neither is it 'merely a trivial incident, which is meaningless except as it may provoke our amusement', nor is it merely a sketch of atmosphere, 'a world of dreaminess, of the mysterious confusion of dreams' rejected by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren in their interpretation of the story in Understanding Fiction; however, 'A Piece of News' is not limited to their interpretation that the story's primary facet is its revelation by plot of the theme. As has been just noted, theme is partially revealed by the punctuation and grammatical presentation, by such techniques as the division of action from dialogue, such as in the introduction of the literal piece of news,

The little item said:
'Mrs. Ruby Fisher had the misfortune
to be shot in the leg by her husband this
week', (p. 125)

and Clyde's (unconscious) confrontation,

'Don't you talk back to me.
You been hitchhikin' again, ain't you?'
He almost chuckled, (p. 127).

and his denial of shooting her, as he points out the obvious,

He put his big crooked finger on the
paragraph and poked at it.
'Well, I'd just like to see the place
I shot you!' he cried explosively. He looked
up, his face blank and bold. (p. 128)

The separation of 'The little item said', 'He
almost chuckled', 'He put his big crooked finger on the
paragraph and poked at it', and 'He looked up, his face
blank and bold' from the dialogue, by indentations and full
stops and, in the case of 'He almost chuckled', by capitalisation
to point out the beginning of a new sentence, the dialogue,
that is, the written and spoken word, is set apart from the
flow of action, a kind of isolation that directs the
reader's attention to the special nature that words appear
to have for Ruby and Clyde. This isolation also points out
to the reader the importance of all the material contained
in quotation marks in the story, implying that such
material has some special significance in the story beyond
its normal function as dialogue-exchange between
characters, and implying that the separation of dialogue
and action has, as discussed earlier, some significance.
It is perhaps instructive to note that by reading only the material contained in quotation marks it is possible to follow the plot, generally,

'The pouring-down rain, the pouring-down rain'
'sample'
'Why how come he wrapped it in a newspaper!'
'Ruby Fisher!'
'Mrs. Ruby Fisher had the misfortune to be shot in the leg by her husband this week.'
'misfortune'
'That's me'
'You Clyde!...'Where are you, Clyde Fisher?'
'Clyde?'
'Ruby, I done this to you.'
'This is the truth, Clyde - you done this to me.'
'What's keepin' supper?'
'Well, where you been, anyway?'
'Nowheres special.'
'Don't you talk back to me. You been hitchhikin' again, ain't you?'
'Some day I'm goin' to smack the livin' devil outa you'
'A newspaper!...'Where'd you git that? Hussy.'
'Look at this-here'  
'It's a lie.'
'That's what's in the newspaper about me'
'Well, I'd just like to see the place I shot you!'
'Look'...'It's a Tennessee paper. See "Tennessee"? That wasn't none of you it wrote about.  
'It was Ruby Fisher!'...'My name is Ruby Fisher!'  
'Oho, it was another Ruby Fisher - in Tennessee'...'Fool me, huh? Where'd you get that paper?' (pp. 124-28)

Of course this is only a general outline of the story; it does not, for instance, deal with any of the subtleties of atmosphere, action and theme that are obviously apparent when the quotations are left in context, but it does serve to illustrate several things about Welty's handling of
this tale. The logical sequence of the dialogue, for example, suggests that 'A Piece of News' is a complete, well-rounded tale with a formal resolution, not a sketch or vignette in the manner of Katherine Mansfield's 'At the Bay' which, though lengthy, gives the reader the impression of a passing scene, fleetingly captured and released, emphasised by its final paragraph,

A cloud, small, serene, floated across the moon. In that moment of darkness the sea sounded deep, troubled. Then the cloud sailed away, and the sound of the sea was a vague murmur, as though it waked out of a dark dream. All was still. 16

That is not to say that Welty wrote complete stories and Mansfield wrote incomplete sketches; both wrote finely tuned tales revealing a remarkably sensitive awareness. The difference is one of emphasis: Mansfield's stories exhibit a tracery of delicate exquisiteness; Welty's stories, though of equal fineness, exhibit a purposeful definition. The use of 'vague' in the final paragraph of both 'A Piece of News' and 'At the Bay' serves as an example of this difference: the 'vague' sound of the sea in 'At the Bay' is a reminder of the meandering path the story takes before the final confrontation between Beryl and Harry Kember; the story, like 'A Piece of News' is concerned with relationships and contact, but Mansfield emphasises the frustration and

lack of success of her characters through a style which reflects their hesitation and vagueness, while Welty emphasises the vagueness and incomplete communication between her characters through modification, suggestion, and direct action, including direct conversation which is purposely formed to attempt to systematically reveal the story's essence. Mansfield's characters in 'At the Bay' by and large by-in-large avoid any direct conversation (until the confrontation at the end, 'Cold little devil! Cold little devil!', 'You are vile, vile', and 'Then why in God's name did you come?') They are usually locked in prefabicated conversations, 'you might go and see if the porridge is ready, Beryl', and 'you've forgotten the sugar', which contribute to the tension between Stanley and Beryl, but do not seem to have the immediacy (direct relevance?) that Welty's lines have for her characters.

The direct relevance of Welty's dialogue is in a sense a poetic relevance: every quotation is directly related to the theme and plot; there are no awkward, irrelevant, or superfluous statements. All but 'The pouring-down rain, the pouring-down rain' refer directly to the relationship between Ruby and Clyde: the infidelity (references to the newspaper), their roles as husband and wife (references to domesticity), their inability to make contact (references to the other Ruby

17. Mansfield, pp. 63-64.
Fisher); 'the pouring-down rain, the pouring-down rain' is indirectly relevant to their attempt to establish contact by transferring the weather conditions outside (the frightening storm) into the cabin, and directly relevant in that Ruby's infidelity has caused her to be caught in the storm (literally and figuratively), which leads to her lying in front of the fire upon the newspaper, and the discovery of the 'item': 'Mrs. Ruby Fisher had the misfortune to be shot in the leg by her husband this week.'

This quotation brings us to the subject of Eudora Welty's humour, in this case, a combination of the humour implicit in any struggle towards growth and awareness, and the humour derived from contact with the unknown, the unfamiliar, the strange, in which laughter, usually from a self-congratulatory position of superiority acts as a defense against that which is seen to be unusual. As pointed out by Brooks and Warren in their *Understanding Fiction* interpretation of 'A Piece of News', it is not usual for the reader to view as familiar a social culture in which omnipresent guns are normal and newspapers are abnormal, so the reader laughs (perhaps defensively?) at the curious juxtaposition of such an outrageous idea as a woman's being shot in the leg by her husband with the word 'misfortune'. The connotation of *misfortune* is such that it

suggests a much milder happening surely than a man's shooting his wife in the leg, and the reader is reminded of that by the repetition of the word in a context which emphasises the outlandish nature of the 'place' of the story, and which calls the reader's attention to another unusual (and therefore potentially humorous) fact: the semi-literacy of the female protagonist. Ruby has to struggle to read the word 'misfortune' (she saves it until last, in order to speed the meaning of the sentence in which it appears); this act, besides repeating the humorous word which sets off the statement as being funny (an implication that being shot in the leg is a misfortune, indeed), introduces the potentially comic aspect of her semi-literacy, suggests a further level of humour in the joke (not only has she had the misfortune to be shot, but she has the added misfortune of not being able to read about it), and a still further level of ironic humour which exists when someone, particularly the butt of the joke, does not understand the humour immediately.

There exist further levels of this moment of comedy as it moves from affectionate good humour towards being fulfilled in reality (the point at which the laugh becomes a scream); because it was 'unlike Clyde to take up a gun and shoot her', (p. 125) there is an implied moment in which the reader becomes aware of the inherent humour in Ruby's not being able to read immediately that she has been shot, the implied humour that she does not know that she has
been shot until she reads about it. When Clyde returns
from the illegal still and pokes her with the butt of the
gun, however, the humour fades into a kind of fear at the
point of apprehension: he does carry a gun, he even
touches her with it, a suggestion that he has the ability,
if not the intention of shooting her. Ruby is right, of
course, Clyde would never shoot her, and that fact supports
another point of humour in the story, one which is based
again on the unusual aspects of Clyde's and Ruby's social
'culture': the reader, familiar with crimes of passion
based upon the infidelity of one or both partners in a
marriage, must think Clyde's behaviour funny (of
peculiarity and comedy) in the face of Ruby's apparently
continuous infidelity, because he treats it with no more
concern than he would perhaps if he were dealing only
with the prankishness of a wayward child. Ruby's actions
in this light are to some extent comical: she jumps up
and darts away from him when he returns, avoiding the blow
which she, by her code, expects to follow her infidelity,
she dodges Clyde 'mechanically' when he asserts that
'Some day I'm goin' to smack the livin' devil outa you'
(p. 127), an implication from her automatic reaction that
she is always 'hitchhiking' and that even though she merely
receives a slap on each occasion, she spends so much time
'in the shed of the empty gin' that some day Clyde may damage
her physically, (or perhaps succeed in knocking 'the devil' out of her which leads her to 'go out on the road' when 'Clyde would make her blue' (p. 126)).

The most significant point of this humour is that Clyde himself treats it almost as a joke, as evinced by Welty's separation of dialogue from action in,

'Don't you talk back to me. You been hitchhikin' again, ain't you?' He almost chuckled. (p. 127)

The 'almost chuckled' seems to be a cue for the reader to join in the implied joke of Ruby's childish behaviour which results in no more than a slap for what may in other households result in the kind of article which Ruby finds in the Tennessee newspaper, again an indirect reference to the shooting joke of the newspaper, and leading to the final point of humour in the tale. When Ruby shows the newspaper to Clyde, in an aching attempt to reach him, to reach herself, to reach significance, the futility of her action subsides in the humour of Clyde's reaction to the item, not what may usually have been a recognition and wonder at the coincidence of the similar names involved, but a direct defense against what he takes at first to be a serious mistake,

Then he made a sound in his throat and said, 'It's a lie.'

'That's what's in the newspaper about me,' said Ruby, standing up straight. She took up his plate and gave him that look of joy.

He put his big crooked finger on the paragraph and poked at it.

'Well, I'd just like to see the place I shot you!' he cried explosively. He looked up, his face blank and bold. (p. 128)
Of course the situation is not funny to Ruby and Clyde; Clyde's relief, when he discovers that the paper is from Tennessee, and that it cannot be maligning him, is genuine, and Ruby's attempt to reach her inner self through the 'significance of fear', her implied shooting by Clyde, her implied death, hold no humour for the two characters, but the reader can react with superior humour at the obviously simple-minded approach to a coincidental, if somewhat singular occurrence in print.

This somewhat cold-blooded dissection of Welty's humour unfortunately removes some of the life from it, and perhaps can best be justified by referring to the finished product, and the impact of the subtle accumulation of comic points upon the general tone of the story; nowhere is Welty's humour blatant, naked, or undefended. A case in point would be to return to the most obvious humorous remark, and examine it in context,

She pulled her dress down tightly and began to spell through a dozen words in the newspaper.

The little item said:
'Mrs Ruby Fisher had the misfortune to be shot in the leg by her husband this week.'

As she passed from one word to the next she only whispered; she left the long word, 'misfortune', until the last, and came back to it, then she said it all over out loud, like conversation. (p. 125)

The reader is aware that the passage means something that is connected with delight, because the female protagonist laughs at something she has read, then whispers 'Ruby Fisher',
the first appearance of a proper noun in the story; but Welty's covering the girl's implied sexuality by a prim arrangement of her dress before she reads the entire line momentarily diverts the attention of the reader. The passage does, in a sense, refer to Ruby's sexuality, but only indirectly, and in retrospect, and the impact of the joke, 'misfortune to be shot in the leg', is doubly effective because it is completely unexpected. But, rather than allow the reader to mull over what is in essence a ridiculous juxtaposition of words, Welty again diverts his attention with the image of the girl's struggling to decipher misfortune and the joke, an action implying a further joke, as discussed earlier. That joke in turn is prevented from dying under analysis by the surprising, 'That's me' which Ruby pronounces 'softly, with deference, very softly' (p. 125), which is echoed by a roar from the fire as it flares up with a roar (laughter?) that matches the 'deafening' rain on the roof.

Not only does this passage (and series) of humour create a tolerant, affectionate tone sustained to the point of apprehension, then returned to affectionate toleration at the end, it highlights the internal creative act which is in fact the essence of Welty's prose as it strives to enunciate the relationship of man to inner self through revelation, 'vision'. We begin with her characters, in this case, the Fishers; they are in a sense, 'fishing' for that contact through revelation, and
though they (literally) do not 'catch' anything (meaning, significance, or humour), they serve as excellent examples of the possibility of that vision, and the insularity ('imperviousness') which forbids the vision. Their insularity is bound up with their humorous appearance to the reader: they are not perceptive people, the most they can do is 'fish' for contact, and if their luck is not good (as theirs is not), they fail to understand, they fail to receive more than just a piece of news.

Welty underscores the insularity of each not by the mere fact of their isolation from the usual world, but through a progressive attempt by Ruby to contact her inner self through herself, then through Clyde. The conditions of Ruby's character present the first obstacle: her animal nature: she stands 'with her legs wide apart, bending over', she shakes herself 'like a cat reproaching itself for not knowing better' (p. 124), an image of implied double-meaning: she is cross with herself for getting wet; she is full of cat-like reproach for not knowing better than to behave like a cat. She stretches out full length in front of the fire, and when she thinks of her afternoon in the gin with the coffee salesman from Tennessee, '(Here she rolled her head about on her arms and stretched her legs tiredly behind her, like a cat.)' Welty makes sure the reader does not miss the reference this time, including it in parentheses, just in
case, perhaps, the reader has missed the implication of
the grinding motion a gin makes when it separates the
seeds from the cotton bolls (a gin standing empty
because of her husband's preference for making whisky).

Another condition of Ruby's character is her
seeming childishness; it is not necessary to know that
social conditions along the Tennessee border allow the
marriage of girls barely within puberty, because Welty's
description of Ruby includes such statements as Ruby's
watching the newspaper 'like a young girl watching a
baby', and the description of Ruby's hands as having
'small cracked red fingers' (p. 124). In fact, Ruby may
not be a child, because, although Clyde is now bald, she
can remember him with 'wild black hair hanging to his
shoulders' (p. 126), but her actions are such to indicate
either a naturally emotionally young or arrested young
age; this idea is enforced by Clyde's treatment of her as
a child, regarding her infidelities.

The moment of conflict, when Ruby realises that no
contact is going to be made, either between herself and
Clyde, or between herself and significance, is the moment
full of helplessness after Clyde has pointed out the
reality of his not shooting Ruby, despite what the paper
said,
Slowly they both flushed, as though with a double shame and a double pleasure. It was as though Clyde might really have killed Ruby, and as though Ruby might really have been dead at his hand. Rare and waver ing, some possibility stood timidly like a stranger between them and made them hang their heads. (p. 128)

For Ruby, trapped in a marriage in which she is insignificant, to the point that even her infidelities are dismissed as being childish devilment, the only awareness of the significance of her inner self is in a death or shooting which might give her vision the reality of the printed word. She fails in her attempt to reach her inner self through her piece of news because for her the symbol is not enough - she knows that it is not she who has been shot - she must have the essence behind the symbol. So, she attempts to contact Clyde; she shows him the newspaper, perhaps as an attempt to get him to carry out the action in the paper for her. Clyde takes the article as an error, perhaps a threat to him, and he disposes of it, seeing as he does that it is a Tennessee paper, another Ruby Fisher, and only a briefly troublesome coincidence. But, in burning the newspaper, he actually 'kills' Ruby in a way that destroys her vision and her hope of contact.

In Willa Cather's story 'A Wagner Matinee', the narrator's discovery of the power of art through the effect of an afternoon's music on his Aunt Georgiana (a discovery and an effect he does not understand) is reflected in his description of Siegfried's funeral march from the Ring (in words taken directly from the Wagnarian epic),
The deluge of sound poured on and on; I never knew what she found in the shining current of it; I never knew how far it bore her, or past what happy islands. From the trembling of her face, I could well believe that before the last number she had been carried out where the myriad graves are, into the gray, nameless burying grounds of the sea, or into some world of death vaster yet, where, from the beginning of the world, hope has lain down with hope and dream with dream and, renouncing, slept.  

Clark never finds, as Cather puts it, 'what she found in the shining current of it', because he remains outside the power of the art.

In Eudora Welty's 'Powerhouse', everyone is external to the force of art which is Powerhouse himself, yet he (as a fusion of source and symbol) manages to draw everyone into that force, 'Everybody in the room moans with pleasure', because 'Powerhouse is playing!' (p. 478).

Even the reader finds himself caught up in his power through Welty's emphatic, almost extravagant prose, which in its own way possibly matches what Cather felt in Wagner when she had her narrator remark, 'The deluge of sound poured on and on':

Then, Oh Lord! say the distended eyes from beyond the boundary of the trumpets, Hello: and good-bye, and they are all down the first note like a waterfall.

This note marks the end of any known discipline. Powerhouse seems to abandon them all - he himself seems lost - down in the song,


yelling up like somebody in a whirlpool - not guiding them - hailing them only. But he knows, really. He cries out, but he must know exactly. 'Mercy!... What I say!... Yeah!' And then drifting, listening - 'Where that skin beater?' - wanting drums, and starting up and pouring it out in the greatest delight and brutality. (p. 480)

To say that this story is written in the present tense seems somehow inadequate; perhaps it would be better to say 'the immediate present tense', or 'the driving present tense', because the words and music and story and song flood on and on to a cataclysmic revelation.

Welty is supposed to have written 'Powerhouse' rapidly just after having gone to a dance where Fats Waller and his band played;\(^{21}\) the intense performance of the Negro jazz musician, reflected in 'Powerhouse', so affected Welty that the story itself seems almost a work of music - it is so skillfully constructed that it almost appears to have generated itself. The movement and patterns of sound approach the realm of poetry, in a quality and quantity of syllables that are almost melodic; that is not to suggest that 'Powerhouse' is, say, a free verse poem, but that its musical presence extends in a sense beyond 'the relatively relaxed and artless qualities of ordinary speech' in an 'abundance of stresses' (although perhaps not quite the ratio of seven stresses per nine syllables which Karl Shapiro and Robert Beum in their handbook on prosody say is required for poetry).\(^ {22}\) In any case, as pointed out by other

\(^{21}\) Vande Kieft, p. 23.

authorities, poetry and the essence of poetry cannot so easily (or mechanically) be defined. What this thesis is concerned with, however is not the transformation of prose into poetry, but the possible linking of the two through the short story. If there can be a bridge between the short story and the poem, surely its foundations lie in the kind of colour and rhythm, the sounds and organic movement of Welty's prose in 'Powerhouse'.

In 'Powerhouse', we observe externally the creative act in which Eudora Welty again explores the mysteries, the relationships of man, through a vision tied to place. The 'place' of 'Powerhouse' is the evocative 'White dance, week night, raining, Alligator, Mississippi, long ways from home' (p. 485); the vision is a revelation of the inner control of Powerhouse which he transmits to all who come into personal contact with him ('you've heard him on records - but still you need to see him' (p. 479)): in a sense, Welty's story is music, because it is the vision of Powerhouse, and Powerhouse, through a kind of transubstantiation in which the music cannot exist without his presence at its centre, is not just the symbol, but the song.

Welty's 'vision' in this short story is one of constant action and reaction, explored through two types of dialogue: the narrator's almost introspective disbelief

('think of the things he calls himself!' (p. 478)), and the constant contrapuntal accompaniment of everyone who is drawn into the Powerhouse 'song',

'Says in the kitchen, back there putting their eyes to little hole peeping out, that you is Mr Powerhouse... They knows from a picture they seen.'
'They seeing right tonight, that is him,' says Little Brother.
'You him?'
'That is him in the flesh,' says Scoot.
'Does you wish to touch him?' asks Valentine. 'Because he don't bite. '
'You passing through?'
'Now you got everything right.' (p. 486)

Both sets of dialogue are Socratic in their questioning-teaching manner ('"Nigger man"? he looks more Asiatic, monkey, Jewish, Babylonian, Peruvian, fanatic, devil.' (p. 478)); there are, in fact, sixty question marks in the five brief sections of the story: four in the introduction, five as Powerhouse and the band begin to play, seven in the rain-soaked walk back to the dance hall, one at the end, and forty-three in the interval section which moves from the white dance to the black cafe. There are many implied questions and rhetorical questions ('Is it possible he could be like this!' (p. 478)), and the entire story is devoted to wonder and wondering: who (or what) is Powerhouse? What is he doing, how is he doing it, and why?

Powerhouse is that which his name implies: he is an eternal motive force rampant here in lines of classical mythology and African-American fetish. He draws
energy from deep within himself, radiates it to all within his presence, and converts their reactions into energy; he is a dynamo with legs like pistons, and a face like a furnace: life seems to go on only around him: the dance starts and stops at his command, the World (Cafe) comes to life with his arrival (and dies when he leaves, symbolised by the peacock's feather - the evil eye - which dances with breath, but is stilled when he exits), and, when he and his band emerge from the dance hall, 'A hundred dark, ragged, silent, delighted Negroes have come around from under the eaves of the hall, and follow wherever they go' (p. 484). Besides a dynamo, Powerhouse is successively portrayed as the Wandering Jew, a sibyl, Dionysus (surrounded by maenads), a teacher in a schoolroom, Charybdis, a sheik, a demon, a magician, a fortune-teller, a tuning fork, and a volcano. The depiction of the black musician in so many guises is not inconsistent with the poetic flow of this piece, because all are images suggesting power of one form or another: secret knowledge, force and terror of the unknown, a standard which all must obey, and mindless vehement energy. The flow is successful because Welty's experiment in Socratic argumentum is successful: every question posed is answered, and every answer leads to another question, until the ultimate revelation at the end of the last chorus of the final song. Welty accomplishes such smooth transitions from point to apparently unrelated
point through the initial excitement of her introduction, which she then sustains throughout the story by the countless insistent questions as to the identity of Powerhouse, and the matching attempts to define him in terms which depict his outrageous, mysterious energy.

The first image, that of the wandering Jew, begins with a suggestion of hidden knowledge, an exotic presence connected somehow with evil: he is 'on tour from the city', wandering in the countryside, perhaps bringing the corruption and excitement of the city with him; he is accompanied in his wanderings by 'His Keyboard' and 'His Tasmanians' - he is so foreign, in fact, that 'there's no one in the world like him' (p. 478). He cannot be defined: he is not just a black musician, a 'Nigger man', but a strange composite of alien, animal, and evil faces; 'you can't tell what he is', but 'fanatic' and 'obscene' are used twice each in the five paragraphs of the introductory section, and 'Jewish', 'like a Jew's', and 'wandering-Jew eyebrows' are mentioned one each - he is the Wandering Jew, because 'he is in motion every minute', and that makes him not just an exotic personality, but a machine with 'little round piston legs' (p. 479).

The excitement of Welty's opening paragraphs produces a need to actually view, not just visualise, Powerhouse, and the dancers in the story oblige by crowding around him, ignoring (belittling?) the only other attractions lately
worthy of wonder, represented by the posters of Nelson Eddy ('the King Crooner' of his time) and the enlarged hand-written testimonial for the mind-reading horse. Powerhouse does more than merely reads minds; he is 'so monstrous he sends everybody into oblivion'). What the crowd sees, however, is not a monstrosity, but a 'sibyl touching the book', a momentarily passive image which suggests that the active, even ecstatic, quality of sibylline prophecy is about to be repeated (Virgil, Aeneid, VI, 77-102), that a new oracle containing almost primeval mystery speaks when Powerhouse is on the bandstand,

Everybody, laughing as if to hide a weakness, will sooner or later hand him up a written request. Powerhouse reads each one, studying with a secret face: that is the face which looks like a mask - anybody's; there is a moment when he makes a decision. (p. 479)

The dancers are too far below him, literally and figuratively, to actually talk with the oracle; they can submit written requests for prophecy, but that is all. That he reads the requests from behind a 'secret face' recalls the characteristic masks of Orphism used in the worship of Dionysus (and of the masked maenads), not in a simple celebration of wine, but in the elevation of Dionysus as the fount of all emotional religion. (Hesiod, Theogonia, 940)

Of Welty's knowledge of classical literature, Katherine Anne Porter asserts that she was an 'insatiable reader', and,
She had at arm's reach the typical collection of books which existed as a matter of course in a certain kind of Southern family, so that she had read the ancient Greek and Roman poetry, history and fable, Shakespeare, Milton, Dante, the eighteenth-century English and the nineteenth-century French novelists, with a dash of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, before she realised what she was reading. Welty's direct reference to 'the sibyl' and other classical allusions in this story bear out Porter's observation, and lend credence to an interpretation of some of the passages of 'Powerhouse' in the light of her 'insatiable reading' and obvious familiarity with the themes and characters of classical literature.

Powerhouse becomes a teacher in order to command the attention of his 'pupils' (his band), but once, as he puts it, 'serious walking' has started, discipline dissolves in a flood that becomes a whirlpool, and Powerhouse is more than slightly reminiscent of Charybdis as he hails the unwary from the depths of his music. At the interval (intermission), he has to dry himself (from the waters of the whirlpool?), and the towel wrapped around his head metamorphoses him into a 'sheik', announced twice by one of the multitude. To the girl in the cafe, he is a demon, 'setting down so big at my table'; (p. 485) to the others present, he is a magician with 'a million nickels' (he scatters them all, except the last one, which he vanishes), and he is a fortune-teller

using a ketchup bottle as a crystal ball to conjure up yet another vision of Gypsy and her symbolic demise.

Back at the dance, he is a tuning fork more accurate than the piano, which he tunes to himself as he tunes the band,

He didn't strike the piano keys for pitch - he simply opened his mouth and gave falsetto howls - in A, D, and so on - they tuned by him. Then he took hold of the piano, as if he saw it for the first time in his life, and tested it for strength, hit it down in the bass, played an octave with his elbow, lifted the top, looked inside, and leaned against it with all his might. He sat down and played it for a few minutes with outrageous force and got it under his power - a bass deep and coarse as a sea net - then produced something glimmering and fragile, and smiled. (p. 491)

This vision of Powerhouse's tuning the band and even the piano to himself, instead of the band's tuning to his piano, is a remarkable passage of Welty's ability to capture the absolute quality of occurrence and character: Powerhouse is a dynamo, Powerhouse is Dionysus; could he be anything else? This final action of power is one of complete control; the reader gets the impression that without Powerhouse, there can be no music, and rightly so: he controls the band, he controls the dancers, he controls the piano, literally, physically, as though it were alive and had to be tamed to his hand (he 'got it under his power'). Other musicians may be able to play the same notes and rests, but they cannot play them the way
Powerhouse can, and that quality alone means that when Powerhouse plays, it is a different music, a music that cannot exist without him; he is the origin and the creator and the finished product ('Of course you know how he sounds - you've heard him on records - but still you need to see him' (p. 479)). Somehow the phonograph reveals the outline, but not the force of the man himself ('When you heard him like that on records, did you know he was really pleading?' (p. 480)); eventually, Powerhouse becomes a volcano - a recording can only suggest, it cannot reproduce the 'presence' of such a phenomenon. The melody and rhythm are available on records, but it is necessary to be within his actual aura in order to know, 'really' and 'exactly', in order to understand that Powerhouse the man is the music.

If the story is a vision, and the vision is of Powerhouse, and Powerhouse is the music, what is the song? Essentially, it is a love-song, but a love-song which is as different and as difficult to define as is Powerhouse; Welty tells us throughout the story that it is a love-song: Powerhouse kisses it, 'smooch - he loves it with his mouth', (p. 478) he loves his band, 'He loves the way they all play, too', (p. 480) he loves to listen to Little Brother play the clarinet, he 'loves to listen to anything he does' (p. 481); the intermission section is devoted to 'Pagan Love Song', and the finale is
'Somebody Loves Me'. The love-song of the story concerns the proverbial 'triangle', not of Powerhouse, Gypsy, and Uranus Knockwood, but of Powerhouse, Gypsy (who responds to him as a man), and the band, the dancers, and the reader (who respond to him as a force).

Perhaps the story is confusing, ambiguous, and disparate; its experimental aspects of humour, speech patterns, and juxtaposition of references are unfamiliar, and it demands an exact attention to its artistic compression which exceeds that normally required by a short story, but its compression, its humour, speech patterns, and references are a natural part of the 'place' of the vision: 'White dance, week night, raining, Alligator, Mississippi, long ways from home.'

Basically, it is an attempt by Welty to capture the black world, and in a succinct burst of imaginative sympathy based upon an extraordinary ear for dialect and a sensitivity to the qualitative values of occurrence, she has probably come as close to portraying that illusive sphere as has any white writer; her success in this regard is probably tied to the fact that she never attempted to delve within the black soul: although she successfully dealt with Ruby Fisher's inner self in 'A Piece of News', she has been content with showing only the external self of Powerhouse - she views the black world in the narrative role of a sensitive white person, she remains excluded from
the inner workings of the black mind, and makes the
most of that exclusion (common to all who are not
black Southerners) by pointing up its external
differences and exotic nature through humour, ritual,
and dialogue.

Humour is linked directly with speech: 'Come here,
living statue, and get all this big order of beer we
fixing to give' (p. 485), 'Here's a million nickels',
'Now you got everything right', and 'Nickelodeon, I
request you please to play "Empty Red Blues" and let
Bessie Smith sing' (p. 485). The delight in words is
matched only by the delight in terror, 'The girl screams
delicately with pleasure. O Lord, she likes talk and
scares' (p. 485), and the biggest laugh comes when
Powerhouse imagines Uranus Knockwood suddenly realising
that he is walking around in Gypsy's 'brains and
insides' which are scattered over the pavement as the
result of her suicide (p. 488). It is the terror at the
centre of Welty's affable humour which causes the
revelation in this story, and the reference to Bessie
Smith's song 'Empty Bed Blues' as 'Empty Red Blues'
allows Powerhouse to play with a word-phrase (as distinct
from a musical phrase) for humour and for his sheer
delight in the sound of the words, and it allowed Welty
to avoid mentioning the obvious suggestion at the heart
of the tale: whether Gypsy is Powerhouse's legal wife or
not is beside the point; that his bed is empty suggests that he prefers being on the road with his music to being home with her, and with that idea implicit in his wandering life, it can only mean that Gypsy will find an alternative solution to her own 'Empty Bed Blues', leaving Powerhouse to mourn her (in one way or another) and to turn to his performance on the bandstand and in the street. After all, it is not what he says that matters, but how he says it: 'And who could ever remember any of the things he says? They are just inspired remarks that roll out of his mouth like smoke' (p. 491).

Gypsy (as her name implies) will wander, as a reaction to Powerhouse, because he is the Wandering Jew, the perpetual motion machine, because he forces her to be a wanderer by favouring his music; she is not dead, of course in a literal sense, but symbolically she is dying in Powerhouse's life. He tells the waitress,

'No, babe, it ain't the truth.' His eyebrows fly up, and he begins to whisper to her out of his vast oven mouth. His band stays in his pocket. 'Truth is something worse, I ain't said what, yet. It's something hasn't come to me, but I ain't saying it won't. And when it does, then want me to tell you?' He sniffs all at once, his eyes come open and turn up, almost too far. He is dreamily smiling. (p. 489)

The 'truth' doesn't arrive until the last paragraph of the story, but part of the truth is that Gypsy, as
the woman left at home while her man is on the road, is prey to all natural reactions against the empty bed: she will either take a lover, or kill herself, or both. That is the 'Pagan Love Song' which drives the band out into the rain, away from the white dance at the intermission, down into 'Negrotown', to perform for the world in the World Cafe. This passage underscores the pagan element of the tale, and keeps the mystery alive while pushing the telegram play to its outer limits. There is no telegram, Gypsy is not dead, there is no living person named Uranus Knockwood, it all exists inside Powerhouse as a prophecy: he is killing Gypsy symbolically in a way that is worse than her physical death could be ('Truth is something worse').

In the midst of the 'Pagan Love Song' there is pagan imagery and classical myth:

'You know him.'
'Uranus Knockwood!'
'Yeahhh!'
'He take our wives when we gone!'
'He come in when we goes out!'
'Uh-huh!'
'He go out when we comes in!'
'Yeahhh!'
'He standing behind the door!'
'Old Uranus Knockwood.'
'You know him.'
'Middle-size man.'
'Wears a hat.'
'That's him.' (p. 488)

As with the preceding passage quoted from 'Powerhouse', Welty's ear for black dialect appears as an outstanding
quality of her work; she has captured the rhythm of almost sing-song quality, the gutteral acknowledgements, the repetition, and the elipsis of articles, adjectives, pronouns and verbs, in a streamlining of the language which does not regard agreement of number and case as important to basic comprehension and composition.

On the bandstand, one of the inner group (Valentine, Scoot, Little Brother) says, 'Hell, that's on a star, boy, ain't it?' (p. 482), identifying Uranus as the celestial (and therefore classical) lord of heaven. 'Knockwood' denotes the ritual associated with European-African-American superstition; that they are talking about death moves them to 'knock wood' as a precaution against disaster. 'Uranus' is the major symbol here, because it is the obvious play on words associated with being stabbed in the back (or the backside), and with the Southern, probably black-evolved terminology associated with describing a woman as 'your ass', or a 'piece of ass' ('arse'), a name appropriate for a cuckold. This euphemistic colloquialism is enforced by the classical allusion to the god Uranus, who had children by his mother, Gaea (Gaia), the earth (recalling a concise expletive used by Southern blacks to denote a cuckold). Among those children were the Titans, who were responsible for the death of Dionysus (a symbol for Powerhouse); Gaea was
originally the lover of Zeus, the god who destroyed the Titans with lightening bolts, and in so doing provided the soot from which man was formed, suggesting that perhaps Welty meant that Powerhouse (as his name implies) should be associated with Zeus, as well (Hesiod, Theogonia, 132).

Whether or not the complexity of the Uranus myth was at the basis of Welty's choosing the name 'Uranus' for the faceless man who is always around to take care of the women when the men are away, 'Knockwood' is given a certain physical existence in the form of Sugar-Stick Thompson, the local hero who tries to steal some of Powerhouse's glory from the people in the World Cafe. It does not require a knowledge of unpublished back slang to decipher 'Sugar-Stick' as an obvious sexual implication; Powerhouse is confronted with the symbol of Gypsy's probable infidelity as it affects him most: Thompson, through an interpreter challenges Powerhouse at his moment of triumph,

'This here is Sugar-Stick Thompson, that dove down to the bottom of July Creek and pulled up all those drowned white people fall out of a boat. Last summer, pulled up fourteen.' (p. 488)

This is an impressive record for a man who 'can't even swim', and for a moment, it looks as though Powerhouse's prophecy of Gypsy's death will be swept away in the torrent of July creek (the implication being that
entertaining white people is worthy of note, but isn't pulling fourteen white bodies from a creek more exciting and meritorious?) But, Powerhouse (almost becoming Charybdis again) turns, and looks at them all 'with his great daring face until they nearly suffocate', then he resumes his prophesying: 'Gypsy say..."What is the use? I'm gonna jump out so far - so far" Ssssst-t' (p. 489); he announces the end of intermission, and leaves the Cafe ('The feather dangles still' - meaning either that the feather is stilled by his absence, or that it dangles, it is suspended, by his departure), returns to the dance through the rain, as the nickelodeon plays 'The Goona Goo', no doubt a grim pun referring to Gypsy's prophesied ending.

The most important notice that 'Powerhouse' is a love-song, that the central figure is in love with his audience, and that his audience includes the reader is in the concluding word of the last chorus of the final number (Powerhouse has 'as much as possible done by signals' and by numbers - only 'Pagan Love Song' and 'Somebody Loves Me' do not have numbers). For Welty, the ultimate revelation is that the force which keeps the 'Pagan Love Song' going from its beginning in the music just before the interval through its continuation out into the night, down the rainy street, into the cafe,
through the jostle of the world and the challenge by Sugar-Stick, and back again to the dance hall (never missing a beat), is the 'Powerhouse' of art, of 'vision', which examines the 'mysteries' of existence, and reveals the inner self. As when he 'looks over the end of the piano, as if over a cliff' because 'the song makes him do it' (p. 480), Powerhouse explicates, as he lives the final song. That song is 'Somebody Loves Me', the question is rhetorical, 'I wonder who!', and the answer is,

'Maybe...' He pulls back his spread fingers, and looks out upon the place where he is; a vast impersonal and yet furious grimace transforms his wet face.

'...Maybe it's you!' (p. 491)
Chapter Seven: Black Writers

In Katherine Anne Porter's 'The Old Order', Nannie, who was born into slavery, enjoys using, hearing, 'tasting' the word 'emancipation'; although her role seems unchanged from slavery days, the act of volition for her appears to be a justifying and motivating force, 'she was proud of having been able to say to her mistress, 'I aim to stay wid you as long as you'll have me'.' Like Emily Grierson in William Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily', in a sense Nannie appears to 'cling to that which has robbed her', recognising not the paradoxical differences but only the spiritual links between her and the Grandmother, who had been playmate, mistress, deliverer, and judge throughout Nannie's life of one type of bondage or another; she believes that the harsh conditions of her life as a black woman derive from the cruelty of God, and that whatever relief from those conditions has been achieved through the intercession of her white mistress, an idea which the Grandmother herself supports, even in their talks on the after-life,

Nannie wondered simply, and without resentment, whether God, who had been so cruel to black people on earth, might not continue His severity in the next world. Miss Sophia Jane took pleasure in reassuring her; as if she, who had been responsible for Nannie, body and soul in this life, might also be her sponsor before the judgement seat.

Despite Porter's intentional irony, and the mutual responsibility and bittersweet companionship which she depicts

1. Katherine Anne Porter, 'The Old Order', The Leaning Tower, and Other Stories (New York, 1955), pp. 33-56 (pp. 50-51).
in this story, the two women are of the Older Order, viewed through the eyes of a white writer.

Amid the host of ambiguities concerning the South and Southern fiction, the lot of the Negro is the most confusing. Victim and catalyst, the black has given rise to perhaps the most disturbing prose fiction in America - as subject or as writer; from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to *Soul on Ice*, he has haunted Southern life and letters, and his mystifying, even confounding presence is attributable in part to the kaleidoscope of contradictory points of view with which he is, and has been, presented and represented. Through the white eyes of 'Tin-pan Alley', darkies of the Old South sat around happily eating watermelon and playing the banjo; to redress that unrealistic image, black writers (and white writers more sympathetic to the Negro's plight) depicted an Old South where there were thousands of Nat Turners straining at their chains, awaiting the slightest opportunity to strike out for freedom. In the modern South after World War I, white George Madden Martin (with damning good intention) wrote patronisingly of 'dusky children' who were 'sweet and lovable, mystified, baffled and exploited, discouraged and embittered'. Through Richard Wright's black view of the late Depression days in the South, the world became peopled with wealthy 'white trash' and poor, suffering blacks: it sometimes appears as though all white people delighted in maiming, raping, or hanging Negroes, as though all black

people were hopelessly suppressed - there seemed to be no black doctors, lawyers, educators, or other professionals, because they had been systematically excluded from the white world. James Baldwin's black view of America before the 1960s is one in which he is conscious of the social injustice accorded his race, and his complaints are similar to Wright's, but when he expresses himself, he does not employ a loud-hailer; he maintains an artistic detachment, and a certain objectivity: 'The ways in which the Negro has affected the American psychology are betrayed in our popular culture and in our morality'.

The concept of the American (and therefore Southern) black man as writer and subject is ambiguous partly because of the sociological implications derived from the emotive nature of the subject of slavery, its stigma, and its guilt, and partly because of the way that stigma and guilt is assimilated in the various black and white viewpoints. The image of the Negro outside fiction, whether it is a representation from a white or a black point of view, or whether it is the black writer's idea of himself, is central to the confusion about black writing, and Southern black short prose fiction in particular. James Baldwin implies that the image is 'a series of shadows, self-created, intertwining', and that 'one may say that the Negro in America does not really exist except in the darkness of our minds'. In a philosophical sense, that concept is perhaps perhaps


true, but in a literary sense, there are many exact images of the black man in American fiction; whether or not these images are conflicting and confusing, and whether or not they are 'true' (representative of the black man's exact sociological condition) is beside the point. As Langston Hughes says in 'Writers: Black and White', literary validity takes precedence over sociological 'Truth': 'in the great sense of the word, any time, any place, good art transcends land, race, or nationality, and color drops away. If you are a good writer, in the end neither blackness nor whiteness makes a difference to readers.'

If sociological 'truth' were to take precedence over literary validity (to reverse Hughes's statement), there would be no literature as we know it, merely a catalogue of stereotypes; perhaps all fiction would be cast in the manner of television detective plays: a uniform character submerged in standard formula-variations on a standard theme, with only a gimmick as a distinguishing feature from other uniform characters, and so on. Subtlety, depth, perception would be irrelevant: how subtle can a car chase through the streets of downtown Megalopolis be? If anything, the Negro suffers from being stereotyped in the popular imagination, without the interference of sociological comment; should the sociologists wish to exchange watermelon-eater for medical doctor, or pimp for Washington lawyer, the reverse in the popular imagination will not change the standards of literature. In his advice to black writers, Langston Hughes

underscores this fact; of the motion picture *Porgy and Bess*, Hughes says that the stereotyped crap game at the beginning of the film seemed interminable because the Hollywood scriptwriters who adapted DuBose Heyward's *Porgy* 'could not see below the surface of Negro color',

But, the author of the original novel did see, with his white eyes, wonderful, poetic human qualities in the inhabitants of Catfish Row that made them come alive in his book, half alive on the stage, and I am sure, bigger than life on the screen. DuBose Heyward was a *writer* first, white second, and this you will have to be, too: *writer* first, colored second.7

As proof of his point, Hughes himself was a master poet, a first-rate essayist, and a fine short story writer, whose Harlem character 'Jesse B. Simple' transcended the turbulence of the 1950s to secure for Hughes long before his death in 1967, a living as a freelance writer (an unusual accomplishment for a black man in the United States before the 1970s).

'If you want to know about my life,' said Simple as he blew the foam from the top of the newly filled glass the bartender put before him, 'don't look at my face, don't look at my hands. Look at my feet and see if you can tell how long I been standing on them.'

'I cannot see your feet through your shoes,' I said.

'You do not need to see through my shoes,' said Simple. 'Can't you tell by the shoes I wear - not pointed, not rocking-chair, not French-toed, not nothing but big, long, broad, and flat - that I been standing on these feet a long time and carrying some heavy burdens? They ain't flat from standing at no bar, neither, because I always sets at a bar. Can't you tell that? You know I do not hang out in a bar unless it has stools, don't you?'8

This excerpt illustrates the qualities of Hughes's best-known prose; as he says in the 1961 introduction to the collection


of tales in which this passage from 'Feet Live Their Own Life' first appeared in 1950, 'he is my ace-boy, Simple': a colourful, Harlem raconteur who as a character provided Hughes with an opportunity to exhibit his expert control over dialogue, his understanding of the philosophical approach to life of the black man in America, and his dry humour (which is drawn from his own experience in life as a black man). The tales are presented as conversations between a well-spoken narrator (representing formally educated man) and Jesse B. Simple, who, as his name states, represents the 'simple' approach to life; 'simple' here has many meanings. Jesse is 'simple' in the eyes of the world (uneducated and apparently naive); he is 'simple' in his speech (he dispenses with tense, grammatical agreement, and auxiliary verbs); he is 'simple' in his more or less direct approach to any problem, and he is 'simple' in his recommended solution (based upon common-sense knowledge, contrasting with, and overshadowing his interviewer's carefully-reasoned, sophisticated comments - Simple always seems to have the last word). In a way, Jesse B. Simple is a descendant of the American folk hero who through brains managed to overcome the brawn of his opponents; on the other hand, Jesse is without guile; his victory over the sophisticated narrator is by implication that his straightforward common sense is more effective than the narrator's formal training, especially in matters of the black point of view. That in turn implies that the narrator is a product of the white world (his language and training - his sophistication - are European), and the white world is
never in a position to interpret the black world as accurately as it does itself,

'You have eyes but you see not,' said Simple. 'These feet have stood on every rock from the Rock of Ages to 135th and Lenox. These feet have supported everything from a cotton bale to a hungry woman. These feet have walked ten thousand miles working for white folks and another ten thousand keeping up with colored. These feet have stood at altars, crap tables, free lunches, bars, graves, kitchen doors, betting windows, hospital clinics, WPA desks, social security railings, and in all kinds of lines from soup kitchens to the draft. If I just had four feet, I could have stood in more places longer. As it is, I done wore out seven hundred pairs of shoes, eighty-nine tennis shoes, twelve summer sandals, also six loafers. The socks that these feet have bought could build a knitting mill. The corns I've cut away would dull a German razor. The bunions I forgot would make you ache from now till Judgement Day. If anybody was to write the history of my life, they should start with my feet.9

So great is his conviction, that Simple gets carried away with his oration, and includes standing at 'bars', although he has previously attested to the fact that he does not drink in bars where he has to stand. It is as though through accumulation he presents his case for the unique quality of his feet, and the narrator quickly catches him out, 'everything you say is general'. But, Simple responds, as usual, with an inspired perception of the workings of the black mind (as opposed to the black image) when he reveals that only his feet kicked the window out of the white man's store across the street during the Harlem riots, and only his feet saved him from the police, 'Don't tell me these feet ain't had a life of their own.'10 Simple as such is a 'simple'

9. Hughes, 'Feet Live Their Own Life', p. 100.

symbol, not a complex character, of the black man's approach to the world (in the folk hero tradition). Simple, then, is the black man in a white world, lashing out at the symbol of power and authority which relegates him to standing in lines in soup kitchens, queuing for free lunches, social security payments, and work handouts, and walking then thousand miles while he works for (never over or beside) whites. The other side of his nature confesses that he has walked just as far to keep up with the others of his race, but that is incidental to the harsh treatment his feet have received from the conditions imposed by a white society.

That Hughes wrote of his black society in Harlem may seem incongruous with his statement about being a writer first and a black man second, but it is really an extension of that premiss, 'in the end neither blackness nor whiteness makes a difference to readers'. He insists that particularity breeds universality: 'the more regional or national an art is in its origins, the more universal it may become in the end'. He quotes as examples the universality of the Irishman Shaw, the Scot Burns, the Spaniard Cervantes, the Italian Dante, and the Englishman Shakespeare, and declares that universality in writing is the ability to 'step outside yourself, then look back'. Greatness ('or its approximation') will more than compensate for regional idiosyncrasy; Simple is Harlem, but he is also Everyman making a gesture, however futile, against the restrictions externally imposed upon his life by birth, fate, and unjust circumstance.

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Not the least of ambiguous subjects concerning the Negro in modern literature is his position in reference to geographical location: may black writers be included in the literary examination of a region, or are Negroes the sole inhabitants of a black 'spiritual' nation that has no geographical boundaries, merely the confines of the English language and a cultural heritage of reaction against the imposition of a foreign (European) culture upon their already vital artistry? If only Negroes write 'black' literature, where do we place Joel Chandler Harris and the other white writers discussed in Chapter One, who gave the English-speaking world its first taste of black culture? After all, Albert Camus's Algerian background did not prevent his becoming a part of the French tradition, and Dylan Thomas is spoken of as an English poet despite the fact that he was Welsh; and, W.B. Yeats was first and foremost (and almost belligerently) an Irishman, but we celebrate him for his English poetry - he wrote no Gaelic. On the other hand, we cannot seriously examine any writing on the basis of its 'Negritude' alone any more than we may examine a piece of writing for its 'Southern-ness' alone; any work in English is first examined for its literary merit. The regional or special characteristics of a piece of writing may be important to its general impact, however; would Yeats's work have been so successful had it not grown from his Irish background? This question of particularity versus universality will be examined in the final chapter of this thesis; for the time being, it will only be necessary to distinguish between that black writing which is based upon
experience in the South and is directly related to some facet of Southern life, and that which is not: in a manner of speaking, most Negro writers are Southern writers, because it is the South where (albeit in slavery) they came into contact with the European culture and English language which replaced their own African languages and culture.

Langston Hughes, having been born in the American mid-West, and having spent most of his life in the North, writing particularly (in his fiction) about his Harlem environment, cannot be termed 'Southern' except indirectly; it is his poetry for which he is most well known, in any case. On the contrary, Richard Wright, who saw himself as a 'migratory man', and who died an ex-patriot after fifteen years in Paris, founded some of his best work upon the shattering experience of his Southern childhood, and James Baldwin, who was born and brought up in New York, in his pieces dealing directly with the South, reveals a 'Southern-ness' which, although based solely on imaginative sympathy and parallel experience in the North, is perhaps closer to being Southern literature than the prose fiction created by Southern born and educated Rudolph Fisher, who was, for all intents and purposes, a New Yorker.

Fisher's best known short story, 'The City of Refuge', about King Soloman Gillis whose wisdom leads him to avoid ('with the aid of prayer and an automobile') a lynching in North Carolina for the killing of a white man (in all probability a justifiable act, in view of the white man's viciousness) is a story of reverse imagery. The killing is in itself not central to the story, as it 'simply catalyzed
whatever sluggish mental reaction had been already directing
King Solomon's fortunes toward Harlem. The land of plenty was
more than that now; it was also the city of refuge.¹²

King Solomon's downfall is sure: instead of exercising
wisdom, he has faith in the dealings with his fellow Negroes,
because New York has been the Promised Land to him, and because
in North Carolina, he has never been cheated by members of his
own race: they band together against the atrocities of the
white men (who kill their horses by adding ground glass to the
feed). The reader is presented with a Solomon who appears to
be a photographic negative of his Biblical counterpart:
instead of dispensing justice, Fisher's King Solomon searches
for it, and his lack of knowledge (failure to be wise to the
ways of the world) separates him from it. The girl in the
green stockings is his Sheba and the ultimate cause of his
downfall, but not through the lack of faith disrupted by new
religion, but through too much faith in the ways of the old:
Uggam, the dope-peddler from Solomon's home state cheats him,
lies to him, sets him up as a stooge to take the blame for the
dope-peddling racket, and finally denies knowing King Solomon
in order to shift the blame from himself. King Solomon's
personal symbol of justice is that there are 'cullud policemen'
in New York; he wants to be one of those policemen so he can
defend his people against the frustrating brutality he met in
North Carolina, and his sighting of the Negro traffic
policeman on his first day in the city leads him to believe
that he is in fact in the Promised Land.

Negro Literature (New York, 1944), pp. 49–64 (p. 50).
Policemen appear at regular intervals throughout the story's six, short sections, and they are soon tied in with King Solomon's other personal symbol, that of happiness:
'Ain but two things in dis world, Mouse, I really wants. One is to be a policeman. Been wantin' dat ev'y sence I seen dat cuullud traffic-cop dat day. Other is to get myself a gal lat dat one over yonder! 13 The girl is peripheral to the action of the tale, but she is a necessary ingredient for King Solomon's downfall. It is implied by Fisher that she is somehow connected with Mouse Uggam, and therefore with cheating King Solomon: she is there on the day King Solomon knocks over Antonio Gabrielli's apple-cart (he is distracted by her), thereby giving Mouse a change to 'help' him, and she is in the final scene when Solomon is arrested. Without her presence (with her white boy friend), King Solomon would not get into the fight with the two white detectives, and the story's resolution would lose its impact. As Fisher has constructed it, however, symbol becomes reality: the white man never gets to kiss the girl in the green stockings, because of King Solomon's lunge at him, and the black policeman appears in answer to a call for help from the two white detectives. Fisher implies that although he will undoubtedly go to jail for presumably a heavy sentence for peddling dope, King Solomon's faith has been justified, 'the grin that came over his features had something exultant about it', because the girl had been resisting the white man's kiss, and there were actually, in 'his own words like a

forgotten song, suddenly recalled: "Cullud policemans!".\(^{14}\)

Fisher's story, then, is one of reversal and removal, symbolising the black man's 'escape' to the North; the promise of justice is offset by the unlooked-for treachery of King Solomon's own people, the harshness of life in the South, as a white-imposed circumstance, is replaced in the North by harshness as merely a fact of life, spiritual freedom in the North is contrasted with the cramped living conditions (the irony of King Solomon's New York room, 'half the size of his hencoop back home'.\(^{15}\)). The tone and point of view of the third-person narrator reflect an urban awareness removed from the North Carolina of Fisher's protagonist, and it is not necessary to know of the writer's Northern life before his untimely death in 1934 to sense the attitude of distance from the South ('Back in North Carolina'; 'In Harlem, black was white'; King Solomon is out of place, a 'Southern Negro').

The essence of 'removal' in black writing, generally, is perhaps linked with a location more spiritual than geographical; black writing appears to be alienated from an American society which is viewed by black writers as being alternatively restrictive, repressive, or exclusive. The massive migration of Negroes from the South to the North after the First World War did little to redress the actions of European slavers who two hundred years earlier began to separate them from their land, their culture, their language, and their roots, and grafted them onto an alien society in a foreign land, a culture which seemed to be structured to

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14. Fisher, p. 64.

utilise them as machines, but to disregard their humanity. The language of this externally imposed culture was accessible in its entirety to a privileged few of the Negro race, and the vast majority communicated in a patois which slowly merged with English to become various dialects regarded as sub-standard species of the national tongue, and the first 'black' writers were white; these alienating processes resulted in a black literature, when it did emerge, of frustration and escape.

Perhaps the best example of the bitterness and hate inherent in that literature are the stories of Richard Wright, written when he was working for the Communist press in the 1930s, before turning to existentialism and a life in Paris to become a disciple of Jean Paul Sartre. He wrote in his later years that he felt 'personally identified with the migrant Negro', and his early work was of the frustration and desperation of life for a black man in the South of his youth, and the threat of rape or lynching for all Negroes which left no solution but escape to the North. 'Long Black Song' from his Uncle Tom's Children collection, underlines the complexities of such a life, avoids the generality in the black world which he applied to the white, and attempts in his dialogue a kind of black language that seeks to avoid the white man's English, in spellings which reflect an excision of vowel sounds, a technique which emphasises the frustration of his characters which causes them to communicate only in a stutter of consonants,

Loneliness ached in her. She swallowed, hearing Bang! Bang! Bang! Tom been gone t war mos a year now. N tha ol wars over n we ain heard nothing yit. Lawd, don let Tom be dead! She frowned into the gloam and wondered about that awful war so far away. They said it was over now. Yeah, Gawd had t stop em fo they killed everybody. 17

The language remains English as a kind of phonetic transcription, but even the transcription has inconsistencies: 'nothing', 'everybody', and killed' are left with their final consonants, which would have been dropped in an exact reproduction of the speech pattern of his female protagonist.

'Long Black Song' begins with a lullaby and ends in a scream; the language is the punctuation, for Wright avoids as many commas as possible, and there are no apostrophes, a convention which renders 'he'll' as 'Hell', and so on, perhaps distracting from the impact, initially, but eventually accepted by the reader as he would the presentation of a poem by e e cummings.

'Long Black Song' contains the traditional Wright elements of rape, murder, and degradation, but the writer's outburst pauses for a moment as he has Sarah enunciate the almost incomprehensible terror of being alive, burdened with the threat of irrational, unstoppable death; there is no wonder, no joy, only fear,

Dimly she saw in her mind a picture of men killing and being killed. White men killed the black and black men killed the white. White men killed the black men because they could, and the black men killed the white men to keep from being killed. And killing was blood. 18

That 'killing was blood' implies that killing is life, the mindless impulse to destroy which recalls Flannery O'Connor's


'A Good Man is Hard to Find' and the Misfit who saw no pleasure in anything except pain. Here, in 'Long Black Song', however, there is no implication of salvation, forfeited or otherwise; there is only a purposeless existence of fear and pain, an outlook which eventually led Wright to Sartre. Sarah, who felt that leaving home was a death in itself, cannot conceive of anything that would justify war (symbolically her life), 'Nothing good could come from men going miles across the sea to fight. How come they wanna kill each other? How come they wanna make blood? Killing was not what men ought to do'. Just what 'men ought to do' is never put forward by Wright: there is no resolution except death, if life in the South is nothing but violence, and escape is equated with the end of life (an almost classical view of exile, although not treated classically because Wright's characters prefer to attempt escape rather than nobly die, perhaps because their death in the South is anything but noble, and perhaps because the exile is from a white land which, in the final analysis, is alien to them). James Baldwin and Arna Bontemps, reflect Wright's themes and point of view, but as New Yorker and Californian, respectively; their Southern links are tenuous and indirect (despite a great imaginative sympathy for their fellow blacks in the South) and cannot approach the intensity of life-under-fear bred by the direct contact with the Southern condition; in a sense, their fiction is generally not Southern for the same reason Joel Chandler Harris's is not black and W. H. Auden's poetry is not American. Jean Toomer's 'Blood-Burning Moon' from

19. Wright, 'Long Black Song', p.96
Cane (1923) provides a clue to the Southern black condition; in Louisa, after the grotesque burning of Tom Burwell, Toomer builds an image of the shuddering horror of life, unprotected, but encircled by signs and warnings which cry for sacrificial offerings to nameless gods.

Ghost of a yell slipped through the flames and out the great door of the factory. It fluttered like a dying thing down the single street of factory town. Louisa, upon the step before her home, did not hear it, but her eyes opened slowly. They saw the full moon glowing in the great door. The full moon, an evil thing, an omen, soft showering the homes of folks she knew. Where were they, these people? She'd sing, and perhaps they'd come out and join her. Perhaps Tom Burwell would come. At any rate, the full moon in the great door was an omen which she must sing to. 20

The 'signs and warnings which cry for sacrificial offerings to nameless gods' are found throughout the short prose fiction of black Southerners Ralph Ellison, Zora Neale Hurston, and Diane Oliver; Ellison, born in Oklahoma but living in Alabama until his removal to New York at twenty-two, Hurston, an anthropologist from Florida, and Oliver, a North Carolinian whose career was ended tragically by her death in a car wreck at twenty-three, captured the essence of 'Southern-ness' and 'black-ness' in the kind of control advocated by Langston Hughes; they are writers first. That is not to say that they avoid the themes and subjects of other black writers, but that their primary concern in their stories seems to be with the making of short prose fiction, and their sociological 'message' if anything is enhanced by their artistic, less strident approach. They transform the shout to a suggestion that builds a brooding

terror, an atmosphere more appropriate for rendering sacrifice to nameless gods, and by so doing, shifts the emphasis from fleeing away from the nameless terror to giving it a name, in order to deal with it properly.

The first step in that naming process is the search for self-identity, that the black man must come to terms with himself before he can come to terms with restriction, repression, and exclusion, and that he can only come to terms with himself if he can find a point of pride (in heritage or experience) which he can share with the members of his race. Ralph Ellison began the naming process in his novel, Invisible Man, in which he attempted to show that the image of the black man, conceived in stereotype by the white man, renders him invisible: there can be no identity if the naming process is external - the act of volition (as in Katherine Anne Porter's 'The Old Order') is all-important. Unlike Porter's 'The Old Order', however, volition leads not to compliance with existing conditions, but to discovery which, ultimately, will destroy the status quo. In 'Flying Home', Ellison continues the search by having his young black pilot discover the need for shared experience with those of his race, and a cooperative effort in the search for identity; identity is individual (there have always been great Negro individuals, as in every race), but before individuality can be realised, racial identity must be established which acknowledges a heritage of human worth, the value of humanity denied in the past in order to justify the various types of bondage imposed upon him.

Ellison builds 'Flying Home' on images of perception, because the search for shared experience, heritage and the
value of humanity are built upon awareness. The story is divided into various levels of awareness: the consciousness of the pilot Todd as he revives after crash-landing his plane, the awareness of his safety in black hands, his understanding of the survival of the Old Order in the resolute, wry, but condescending behaviour of the old man, Jefferson, the visual identity of his former life with that of Teddy, and the realisation that his identity and humanity are somehow bound up with Graves's terrifying remark, 'You all know you can't let the nigguh git up that high without his going crazy. The nigguh brain ain't built right for high altitudes....'

The title, 'Flying Home', is in itself a cue to the nature of the comprehension which Todd seeks; he is 'flying home' literally when his plane crashes, he is 'flying home' symbolically to his roots in the South (and the associated imagery of lack of humanity and identity), he is 'flying home' to the discovery of his kinship and heritage, he is 'flying home' to reaffirm his knowledge of the inhumanity of the white man's treatment of the black, and he is 'flying home' to the knowledge, the understanding, of the direction his search must take in order to discover his personal identity.

The first impression of the story is a visual one, 'When Todd came to, he saw two faces suspended above him in a sun so hot and blinding that he could not tell if they were black or white' (p. 164). That he could not tell whether the faces were

black or white is a clue to the story's eventual direction: the theme of humanity, denied by man (white man), but recognised by existence, symbolised by the sun. That the sun is blinding has a two-fold implication: besides the suggestion that nature is blind to the colour of Todd's skin, the fact that the next sentence connects burning with pain suggests that Todd's revelation will not be particularly easy to come by or thoroughly satisfying once he has attained it. This suggestion is further enforced by the hint of terror when the two faces above him speak, because they 'coulda sworn he was white'. His discoverers (themselves engaged in a kind of search) turn out to be Negroes, and his first point of perception is implied in the suggestion that if help is going to reach Todd (on any level), it will come through, or be transmitted by, members of his own race, literally, as in the case of his physical condition after the crash, and figuratively, as in his discovery which traces the pattern of their speech and habits in order to find the proper course to chart in his search for his identity.

He watched them warily, his mind travelling back over a painful distance. Jagged scenes, swiftly unfolding as in a movie trailer, reeled through his mind, and he saw himself piloting a tailspinning plane and landing and landing and falling from the cockpit and trying to stand. Then, as in a great silence, he remembered the sound of crunching bone, and now, looking up into the anxious faces of an old Negro man and a boy from where he lay in the same field, the memory sickened him and he wanted to remember no more. (p. 165).

This passage suggests that Todd was meant to interrupt his flight back to the airfield as a means of fulfilling his search: there is no mention of any crash except that of Todd's to the ground from the cockpit of the plane, as though he were
spun down from the dizzying heights he had piloted above his black brothers (as if to avoid them), and had been saved from trying to become just another white man (his role as Army Air Corps pilot - 'If I tried to explain why I need to fly back, he'd think I was simply afraid of white officers' (p. 167)). There is no mention of plane wreckage; it is merely described as looking like 'the abandoned shell of a locust' (p. 166), and for Todd it is the symbol of his humanity ('It's the only dignity I have....' (p. 167)).

The use of the movie trailer analogy enforces the flashing scene of a tailspinning plane, and the crash occurs in retrospect, as Todd remembers the crunching bone. One further clue to the direction in which Todd should begin to navigate is that Jefferson (the old man) is described as 'an old Negro Man', but Teddy is just described as a boy: Ellison's avoiding repetition in his modifiers suggests that perhaps he wishes to focus the reader's attention upon the difference in the Old Order and the modern Negro tied still to the old ways (the link between Teddy and Todd is emphasised by their names).

Todd is presented with Jefferson's own tale of flying when Teddy is sent for help, and through the old man's rambling story of heaven and Saint Peter and harnesses and one-winged flying, Ellison develops a most explicit irony: Alabama is hell (Jefferson is exiled there by Saint Peter), flight is a kind of freedom beyond its literal soaring (because it places the black men beyond the reach of whites), and flight is no answer to the search for identity, because by acting 'like colored folks will do' (p. 171), Jefferson is thrown
out of heaven ('They rushed me straight to them pearly gates and gimme a parachute and a map of the state of Alabama' (p. 171)). Jefferson's joke is most effective in its irony because of its relevance to Todd's own desire for freedom through the air, but, as Jefferson points out, freedom does not come from flight; what is needed is a re-structuring of the white image of what 'colored folks will do'.

Todd does not understand; the irony of the situation escapes him, and he thinks the old man is merely making fun of him for trying to act like a white man (in itself, an additional bit of irony). Finally, the implication is that heaven is really only for white people: Saint Peter is 'that old white man', Jefferson 'scare the devil' out of old white angels, which results in his being ejected. Todd is embarrassed by the old man's joke, does not realise its implications, and screams at him in pain, then,

Todd shook as with a chill, searching Jefferson's face for a trace of the mockery he had seen there. But now the face was somber and tired and old. He was confused. He could not be sure that there had ever been laughter there, that Jefferson had ever really laughed in his whole life. He saw Jefferson reach out to touch him and shrank away, wondering if anything except the pain, now causing his vision to waver, was real. Perhaps he had imagined it all. (p. 172)

Ellison's visual imagery is strong in this passage: Todd searches Jefferson's face, the place of vision, and his confusion is in terms of his vision wavering, 'perhaps he imagined it all': when vision fails, and as it begins to become confused, it is replaced by the old man's attempted
touch. The touch itself is an attempt to make Todd understand, to 'reach him', and the failure of Jefferson to make contact delays Todd's awareness of the direction his search must take; it also makes him more vulnerable when the white men arrive: not only is he alone in their eyes, but he has severed the thin strand between himself and Jefferson.

It is Jefferson who renews the link, out of his age and ability to survive, out of resilience to fear, perhaps because Todd seeks his face as though Jefferson had become 'his sole salvation in an insane world of outrage and humiliation', and the old man obliges by telling Graves that the Army had told Todd not to leave the airplane. Todd's separation from the other Negroes comes to an end (Ellison uses the word 'isolation' twice in the space of three short paragraphs and three lines of dialogue) through Jefferson and Teddy,

He saw the white men walking ahead as Jefferson and the boy carried him along in silence. Then they were pausing and he felt a hand wiping his face; then he was moving again. And it was as though he had been lifted out of his isolation, back into the world of men. A new current of communication flowed between the man and boy and himself. They moved him gently. Far away he heard a mockingbird liquidly calling. He raised his eyes, seeing a buzzard poised unmoving in space. For a moment the whole afternoon seemed suspended and he waited for the horror to seize him again. Then like a song within his head he heard the boy's soft humming and saw the dark bird glide into the sun and glow like a bird of flaming gold. (pp. 178-79)

The final paragraph of 'Flying Home' is in a way an encapsulation of Ellison's themes and symbols. The white men walk away, leaving the black to look after the black; the communication, the 'new current', does more than re-establish
contact between Todd and Jefferson and Teddy, it returns Todd's humanity to him ('back into the world of men'), it awakes him to the possibilities of a world without fear (there are other birds besides buzzards), and it alerts him to the nature of his search (the black must maintain contact with the black). The flight imagery is exhibited by the lifting of him back into the world of men, by the mockingbird, and by the buzzard which moves from dark (death) to flaming gold (vision); also, Teddy's 'soft humming' suggests the sound of an airplane in the distance, and focuses the reader's attention on the flight symbol of the buzzard's change from a symbol of death to one of hope. That the other bird present in addition to the buzzard is a mockingbird, recalls Jefferson's joke and Todd's reaction; that it is 'liquidly calling' suggests that Todd finally realises that the old man was not 'mocking' him (Ellison employs the word in the scene of Todd's misinterpretation of Jefferson's joke), and that there is, by implication, a way in which they can all fly without being given 'a parachute and a map of Alabama', that together they may discover their composite and individual identities, and that their humanity, revealed by their identity will be enough 'dignity' to preserve them from men like Dabney Graves, whose name records the fact of his deadly nature, 'Everybody knows 'bout Dabney Graves, especially the colored. He done killed enough of us' (p. 176).

The illusive nature of their search is brought out by Ellison in the flashback to Todd's childhood when all of his desire is directed towards attaining an airplane, and his dream appears to be fulfilled when he thinks he sees the plane
of 'some little white boy'; it is all a matter of perception and perspective, however, because the airplane he actually sees is a full-sized reality whose distance makes it appear as a child's toy. His attempts to catch that airplane end in a manner which foreshadows that accident which brings about his discovery of the flight-path to identity,

Seeing it come steadily forward I felt the world grow warm with promise. I opened the screen and climbed over it and clung there, waiting. I would catch the plane as it came over and swing down fast and run into the house before anyone could see me... Giving one last desperate grasp, I strained forward. My fingers ripped from the screen. I was falling. The ground burst hard against me. I drummed the earth with my heels and when my breath returned, I lay there bawling. (p. 174)

This excerpt recalls the manner in which his leg is broken at the beginning of the story, an accident more of his own design than of any natural catastrophe: it is his perspective and perception which cause his downfall on both occasions - the time as a child because he has no idea of distance, and the time as a young man, because he has (symbolically) no idea of direction. He is unsuccessful as a child, because he is so intent upon theft from the white world that he does not realise his gross error of judgement; he is initially unsuccessful with Jefferson and Teddy, because he is so intent upon achieving 'dignity' through somehow becoming white that he fails to make contact with those with whom he can find the way to achieve dignity with no dependency upon the white man. Both errors, as a child and as a young pilot, are mistakes of perception based upon false perspective: the size of the airplane and its distance when he is young, and the meaning of Jefferson's joke
as a young man, in a sense an error of distance, as well: Todd thinks he has outflown his black past, and Jefferson's reminding him of it is a great embarrassment, so much so that in trying to ignore the fact that he has not really placed any distance between himself and his black brothers, he nearly succeeds in just that, which would leave him absolutely vulnerable and at the mercy of the other Dabney Graveses in the world.

A story of what can occur when the black man takes the white man's image of the Negro (and the relative image of the white) too seriously is Zora Neale Hurston's 'The Gilded Six-Bits'. This story is not of the confrontation of white man and black man, but of what occurs when the black man concentrates too hard upon acquiring the vestige of white culture centred upon sophistication. Hurston never points out her theme, never belabours her symbols, but presents a black writer's view of black people in a black world that is tangential to the white. She gives notice of her intent in the opening paragraph,

> It was a Negro yard around a Negro house in a Negro settlement that looked to the payroll of the G. and G. Fertilizer Works for its support. 22

The black man moves in two worlds: one is political and white, one is spiritual and his own; this motion results in conflict between the recognition of the Negro's separate spiritual world and a desire by whites (and some blacks) to have him participate fully in a world which, if not totally alien, is significantly different from his own. That is not to say that the black man

in the South may not consider himself a Southerner or a citizen of the United States; his motivating energy is such that he perhaps considers himself first a member of the black community, in opposition to the white man who, since his race is not threatened by the mere colour of his skin, can afford political allegiance first (Corrington and Williams point out in *Southern Writing in the Sixties* that a white man, before he acknowledges United States origin, 'if he comes from one of the states that were the Confederacy... will very probably say 'I'm from the South''). The separate flow and constant merging of the white with the black in the South are seen in black fiction as the unhappy black man in a white world, or a frustrated black man in a black world which is in reality only a small corner of the white world, dependent upon such white institutions as 'the G. and G. Fertilizer Works for its support'. It is significant that the white man rarely if ever appears in the black world, because the white man intrudes his white world into that of the black by his mere presence. Sometimes the symbols of the white world are enough to represent a considerable intrusion, as in Hurston's 'The Gilded Six-Bits'.

The story is founded upon ritual ('It was this way every Saturday afternoon. The nine dollars hurled into the open door' (p. 65)), and imitation ('Joe spent the time trying to make his stomach punch out like Slemmon's middle' (p.69)): Missie May and Joe have fashioned a home which in some way retains a privacy, a singularity that is their black refuge in a white world; Joe has to work at the Fertilizer works, but when he

comes home, he enters a happy conspiracy with the woman with whom he shares his life: back rubs and special looks, molasses kisses and silver dollars tossed through the front door sweeten the bitterness of living in a white world tied to a Fertilizer Works. The point of intrusion into that privacy comes not at the hands of a white man, but an imitation white man, 'Mister Otis D. Slemmons, of spots and places - Memphis, Chicago, Jacksonville, Philadelphia and so on' (p.68). Slemmons looks like 'a rich white man', but his image is a deception: his 'gold money' is only gilded silver coins, and his sophistication (travel, white girl friends to support him) is a lie as well. Ironically, it is Missie May, who first doubts Slemmons ('His mouf is cut cross-ways ain't it? Well, he kin lie jes' lak anybody else' (p.68)), who is seduced by him, and bears his child. Hurston suggests that part of the reason for Missie May's seduction is that Joe admires Slemmons, and Missie May wants Joe to have Slemmons's gold. Slemmons, true to his name (lemon, in the plural - coming and going - 'no good'), in sneaking over to Joe's house while Joe is working late in the fertilizer works, in order to take advantage of the impression he has made, rips Missie May's and Joe's world apart, not so much by his act of adultery as the successful seduction of both Joe and his wife. The revelation about the real nature of Slemmons comes in stages: first Joe catches Slemmons in the act, Missie May's shame, then the realisation that Slemmons's money is only gilded change, a horrible irony that shames them both. Hurston's description of the first revelation is powerfully succinct,
The great belt on the wheel of Time slipped and eternity stood still. By the match light he could see the man's legs fighting with his breeches in his frantic desire to get them on. He had both chance and time to kill the intruder in his helpless condition - half in and half out of his pants - but he was too weak to take action. The shapeless enemies of humanity that live in the hours of Time had waylaid Joe. He was assaulted in his weaknesses. Like Samson awakening after his haircut. So he just opened his mouth and laughed. (p. 71)

Hurston's phrasing in this paragraph accentuates the amazement of Joe as he views the scene before him: The first sentence calls for a mandatory pause possibly greater than that marked by a full stop; the image of Time as a mechanism which is subject to disruption (if the occasion is great enough) catches the reader almost unprepared for the enormity of what follows. The image of Slemmons struggling to put on his pants implies that this occasion is enough to stop Time for Joe, and that sentence demands another pause before the reader is apprised of Joe's own inability to continue. Then, Hurston speeds up the pace, from inaction to full speed, by a short sentence, a phrase, and a short sentence, separated by full stops. The general effect is as though Joe has had the wind knocked out of him, and that after a shocked period of temporary inaction, he breathes again, but with an incredible speed, as though adrenalin is coursing through his body, forcing him to gasp and gulp air in his disbelief. Under such circumstances, the human body responds by cries of anguish, or, as in Joe's case, by laughter, a particularly ironic action on his part, in view of the extreme pain he must feel.

The seduction and discovery scene occurs a little more than
half way through the story, suggesting that Hurston's tale is as concerned with the effects of the 'white' intrusion into the black world as it is with the intrusion. As Hurston has the narrator state for Missie May, 'No need to die today. Joe needed her for a few more minutes anyhow' (p. 73), and life (or its approximation) goes on in Eatonville, on the edge of the white world. It is only after the seduction and discovery scene that the reader realises the extent of Hurston's irony in placing the Negro settlement under the control of an institution devoted to processing the white man's commercial excrement. Of Missie May's pain and sorrow, Joe encourages her, 'Don't look back lak Lot's wife and turn to salt' (p. 73), but until he gets rid of Slemmons's fifty-cent piece ('the yellow coin in his trousers... like a monster hiding in the cave of his pockets to destroy her' (p. 73)), all the ritual which protected them before Slemmons disappears: 'There were no more Saturday romps. No ringing silver dollars to stack beside her plate. No pockets to rifle' for molasses kisses sweets.

The coin is a barrier between Missie May and Joe, until Missie May is delivered of Slemmons's child, and Joe returns to the ritual of his Saturday throwing of silver dollars through the door and buying sweets. The final irony is in the scene in which he again buys candy kisses, this time, appropriately with Slemmons's gilded fifty cents piece,

'How did you git it, Joe? Did he fool you, too?'

'Who, me? Naw sull! He ain't fooled me none. Know what Ah done? He come round me with his smart talk. Ah hauled off and knocked 'im down and took 'is old four-bits way from 'im.
Gointer buy my wife some good ole lasses
kisses wid it. Gime fifty cents worth
of dem kisses,'

...Joe got his candy and left the
store. The clerk turned to the next
customer. 'Wisht I could be like these
darkies. Laughin' all the time. Nothin'
worries 'em.' (p. 76)

The clerk's statement is doubly ironic, not only because he
does not realise the extent of Joe's misery, and would not
wish to have that 'happiness' thrust upon him at gun-point,
let alone as a gift, because the 'darkies' are miserable as
a result of the white man, even the indirect effect of the
false sophistication based upon gold teeth and gilded change
and lies about white women who support such as Slemmons.
That Joe lies to the clerk regarding his own culpability in
Missie May's seduction and his own seduction by the imitation
white man, is perhaps understandable for many reasons: the
clerk is white, and is therefore not privileged to share the
privacy of a black man's life; the white man has been forced
upon Joe and Missie May, and the resulting seduction does not
need confirmation; Joe does not want to increase the white
man's complicity in the imitation white man's crime; Joe
needs to regain his self-respect; and, as Joe has so counselled
Missie May to look ahead, not behind, he follows his own advice,
looking to the future, not turning to view the destruction of
the past, and avoiding being solidified in salt.

The future does appear a better bet for Joe and Missie May:
with the arrival of the baby (it could be Joe's, but is probably
Slemmons's), Missie May is released from her figurative and
literal burden, her pregnancy, the sign of her infidelity which
changes her shape; although the child becomes such a symbol,
it is curiously absorbed into the family as if it were indeed
Joe's own, eliminating the symbolic shame of Joe and Missie May;
also, the dollars Joe throws through the door increase from nine
to fifteen, a symbol that perhaps their wishes for more money
have been answered in some respect, without the need for either
of them to prostitute themselves literally for the white man's
lies. They still live in Eatonville, however, Joe's wages
still come from the work he does at the fertilizer works, and
they are still a small black corner of the white world, but
they now know better than to trust the white image in their own
lives, and the return of their ritual ('Joe Banks, Ah hear you
chunkin' money in mah do'way. You wait till Ah got mah strength
back and Ah'm gointer fix you for dat' (p. 76)) suggests that
they will be more successful in the future in keeping the white
world from intruding in their lives.

There is one other bit of irony, a subtle reference to the
reality of the world beyond that of the economic necessity of
the G. and G. Fertilizer works, and that is the matter of
Slemmons's gilded coins. The title of the story is 'The Gilded
Six-Bits', and Joe retrieves but four, leaving Slemmons with
his guilded 'quarter' on the stick-pin in his tie, an
implication that perhaps Slemmons (the white man) has really
not been defeated at all; the white will be on top of the
black for some time. It is, however, significant that of the
seventy-five cents in guilded coins, although he did not get
Slemmons's twenty-five cent piece, Joe did get the larger coin,
the one which was attached to his watch chain; so, Joe
retrieved the 'Time' that slipped away from him at the moment
of his betrayal by Missie May, and in spending the fifty cents on her, returns the time to her, as well.

The fifty cents plays a role in the ritual which replaces their 'protecting' play: Joe pays Missie with the gilded four-bits piece for making love to him, 'as if she were any woman in the long house', and from the moment he leaves it under her pillow, the coin becomes a symbol that Joe can 'pay as well as Slemmons' (and therefore the white man) for his wife's affections; also, his touching the coin in his pocket seems to be both a reminder of her infidelity and his own gullibility, and a charm against the recurrence of the white man's intrusion, as when Missie May assures him, in a double-edged statement, that the child will be 'de very spit of you' (p. 74), in his image and spitting at him in contemptuous mockery.

Diane Oliver (a member of the Writer's Workshop at the University of Iowa, a student at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro when Randall Jarrell was in residence there, and guest editor of Mademoiselle magazine two years before her sudden death in 1966) represents a strand in black writing in the 1960s (and late 1950s) which is more concerned with coming to terms with the restriction, repression, and exclusion of the white world than it is with the search for black identity. Oliver's characters exhibit an innate dignity based upon an obvious and undeniable acceptance of their own humanity; they understand their identity as blacks and their relationship to the white world only too well. They are engaged in a struggle wherein the removal of the restriction, the repression, the exclusion will propel them as individuals
in which skin colour has no more social significance than hair colour or the colour of a person's eyes.

In 'The Closet on the Top Floor', Oliver presents a shy young girl who is engaged in the struggle (in this case 'integrating' a Southern girl's college) through no particular desire of her own, but for her father's sake; she is 'the Experiment'. In this, as in other examples of Oliver's fiction, the popular version of the starry-eyed black idealist is replaced with the all-too-human son or daughter who reluctantly carries on with the fight begun by his or her parents; the ideals of the parents are not foreign to the children, but the feeling of urgent necessity is. The generation of blacks in the 1950s and 1960s had not lived through the fear which drove Richard Wright to Paris; to them the struggle was merely a necessary evil: surely white people would awake eventually to the obvious fact of their humanity, and life could then proceed at a more logical pace. In Oliver's stories, the black people even have white friends who respond to them as equals and work with them to attain their goal, so the feeling that the recognition of their basic humanity by all white people will be just a matter of time dampens slightly their enthusiasm to participate in what they view as embarrassing, possibly unnecessary, probably dangerous exercises. In 'The Closet on the Top Floor', Winifred dreads her role as 'the Experiment', but,

Her father had worked hard, petitioning the trustees and threatening a court suit to get her in this college, and she felt ashamed for not

wanting to go. The school had a good reputation of course, but who in her right mind would want to go to a southern girl's college? At least Green Hill was a private school and there would be no photographers hounding her.

That Winifred 'felt ashamed for not wanting to go' is an indication of the subtle level of Oliver's writing: she is not tempted towards presenting a stereotype of the black man's image of himself; Winifred has already made the leap (on a personal level) to a world of universal acceptance, and is more concerned with the ordinary affairs of youth than with the political and social implications of her presence at a previously all-white girl's college in the South. She is embarrassed by all the fuss and bother made over her, she acutely dislikes her privacy being disrupted by the 'hounding' of photographers, she is conscious of the disapproval of her peers ('who in her right mind would want to go to a southern girl's college?'). Winifred finally gives up the struggle, not because of any harassment directed at her as a Negro, but because of the isolation she imposes upon herself as a reaction against being singled out for special treatment because of her colour; a private person under the best of circumstances, she withdraws entirely into a world of her own - the walk-in-clothes closet which she uses as a little study adjoining her bedroom (once her white roomate moves out) gradually becomes her whole world. The white people at the college are sympathetic, if somewhat insensitive (the doctor who tends her after her breakdown keeps 'coming in and asking her whether she minded being the only Negro in the college'), but Winifred fails to

respond to them, on any level ("the best way around the
doctor was to ignore him completely and pretend she was in
her closet - alone"). 26

'The Closet on the Top Floor' is not of course an
autobiographical tale, despite its appearance of first-hand
experience, but Oliver, as does any writer, has taken the
experiences of her life and extended them in her imagination
through theme, language and symbol ("Green Hill" is curiously
close to "Greensboro" - originally the Women's College of
North Carolina where Oliver went to university; Oliver was
herself one of the first Negroes to attend previously all-white
universities in the South). The writer's suggestion at the end
of 'The Closet on the Top Floor' that Winifred is only taken
away from Green Hill for a brief rest from her role as
'the Experiment' joins with the reference at the beginning
of the story to her familiarity with 'hounding' photographers
as a sign that she has been 'the Experiment' before, and that
she will be 'the Experiment' again, an implication that, like
it or not, the blacks of the younger generation are compulsory
participants in a prolonged but necessary process of endurance.

That process of endurance is the principal theme of
'Neighbors', as the Mitchells prepare to send the youngest
member of the family to 'integrate' a white school. The
Mitchells seem trapped in a continuum of suspended violence,
waiting for the sword to fall from some white hand as a
response for their audacity at having asked to be treated like
human beings. The third-person narrative focuses upon Ellie's

listless resignation to the involvement of the family in her younger brother's appointed task; by following the movements of a character which is only tangential to the central activity of Tommy's proposed schooling, Oliver heightens the feeling of ennui which she creates by the tone of the story's first paragraph,

The bus turning the corner of Patterson and Talford Avenue was dull this time of evening. Of the four passengers standing in the rear, she did not recognize any of her friends. Most of the people tucked neatly in the double seats were women, maids and cooks on their way to work or secretaries who had worked late and were riding from the office building at the mill. The cotton mill was out from town, near the house where she worked. She noticed that a few men were riding too. They were obviously just working men, except for one gentleman dressed very neatly in a dark grey suit and carrying what she imagined was a push-button umbrella.

Of the paragraph's six sentences, only two are simple in construction; the accumulation of conjunctions, qualifying phrases, auxiliary verbs, and the use of such words as 'dull', 'dark', and 'grey', presents a heavy, wearying scence, emphasising the time (late in the evening, after a day's work) and the nondescript passengers on the bus (maids, cooks, and secretaries). The single simple sentence is perfunctory, almost an afterthought, 'She noticed that a few men were riding too', none really worthy of note, 'obviously just working men'. Ellie is presented as being tolerantly bored with her humdrum existence: she notices everything, but is impressed by nothing. There is only one other person worthy of her notice, the man in the suit, and he eventually silently chastises her for staring in his direction, a foretaste of what is to come, and a central

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27. Diane Oliver, 'Neighbors', Black Voices, pp. 215-30 (p.215). Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
symbol of the story. Ellie cannot read the headlines of
the paper, because she does not have her glasses and because
the gentleman rebuffs her attempts to decipher his paper
through the haze of her glasses-less world. She has just
come from work, probably as a maid in a white household in
the suburbs (out of town and close to the mill, the white man's
symbol of authority); that she does not need her glasses at
her work implies that she is fulfilling the white man's image
of the black man in the white world: she is only black and
therefore does not need to read (and probably cannot read, in
any case); that she is not allowed to read the gentleman's
paper is further emphasis of the image of illiteracy of
Negroes in a white world - the gentleman's colour is not
mentioned, but it need not be, because black or white, he
represents the white world's exclusion of the black man from
the fundamental right of education equivalent to his own. In
the gesture of his curious gaze as to why she should be
striving so hard to read his paper, he dismisses her (through
her own embarrassment) from the literate world, but more than
that, he dismisses her from knowing about her immediate
family, because what she is trying to find out is whether or
not there is another picture on the front page designed to
disgrace her a little bit more, through her family (like the
picture of when she took Tommy to get his polio shot which
appeared to make him look like he was all mouth, because 'the
flashbulb went off when the needle went in' (p. 216)). She is
not selfish: her major concern is for the welfare of her
little brother, but, like Winifred in 'The Closet on the Top Floor',
she responds with disgust at the invasion of her privacy by photographers (the 'hounds' of the white world?).

The opening paragraph too presents the reader with a view as to why Ellie is so bored; none of the people she sees on the bus are her friends; she is in high school, and although she must work for a living, she still has the urges of youth - constant companionship, approval of her peers - she lies to Saraline's father as a favour to Saraline (also a mark of the rebellion of youth). There are contradictions as well which are introduced by the first paragraph; for instance, the subtle remark by the narrator, 'of the four passengers standing in the rear', refers to the unwritten (and in some places written) law in the South which forbade Negroes the use of the front of the bus, a law bent and broken by Ellie's generation at great cost, but here curiously obeyed by Ellie. Her action in this regard, however, is not so much capitulation to the white man's law as it is a mark of Ellie's independence from any man's image of her as black: she rides the bus in the back because, 'by standing in the back of the bus, she was one of the first people to step to the ground' (p. 216), avoiding having her actions always being directed by the black image of the black man which would stereotype her as a young radical simply because she was a member of the Mitchell family who were challenging the white world by sending Tommy to a white school.

A major contradiction in the story which stems from Ellie's character is her ambiguous behaviour: she feels sympathy for her brother and wonders 'how anyone could be so heartless to a child' when the flashbulbs pop in his face
during the polio shot, but she herself joins in with the other (presumably black) students from her high school in baiting the poor unfortunate creature who 'didn't have but one tooth in her whole head' whom they called the 'Doughnut Puncher' (p. 217). The woman sits shrivelled and hunched against the side of a building, an outcast among outcasts; her colour is not mentioned, but she symbolises the baiting of the white world by Ellie and her family, the intolerance of humanity towards humanity, the mark of fate which stigmatises the unfortunate for life, and the ostracisation of the Negro from the white world. More than all that, however, the woman is in a way a reflection of Ellie, alone on a corner of life, spoken to only when someone could be bothered (or for amusement), and a not very effective weapon against the injustices of world (only one tooth, a 'Doughnut Puncher'). Oliver confirms that the woman is a reflection of Ellie's life by stating that the woman's reaction to Ellie was to ignore her, 'But the woman was still, the way everything else had been all week' (p. 217). Ellie's life, at least for the rest of the story, seems to follow the lines laid down for her in the opening paragraph about the bus ride and the scene with the old woman: Saraline uses her as a messenger, transporting lies she herself cannot tell; the man 'beckoning to her in a grey car', 'nobody she knew', but a friend of her father's uses her for a messenger, transporting word that if violence is needed to avenge any misfortune which may befall Tommy the mysterious man will provide it; she is a messenger between Diane Oliver and the reader, transporting individuality and ennervating boredom in the face of terror
and frustration; Saraline's father uses her as a butt for his bitter joke about the possibility of Tommy's being spit on, 'Spitting ain't like cutting. They can spit on him and nobody'll ever know who did it' (pp. 218-19); and, she is left outside her own house because her father forgets that the screen door has to be latched because of the threats which arrive daily through the mail, and she is further ignored by the men in the living room who are discussing the next day's dramatic possibilities, and sent to the kitchen to help her mother, a grim comment on her role as a black woman: presumably she has been doing domestic work all day, and when she arrives, she is locked out of her own house, then sent to do more domestic work while the men make the decisions which will affect her life. In the light of this occurrence, her dismissal of the men on the bus (only noticing them as an afterthought, and ignoring them as being merely working men) and the rejection of her by the neatly dressed man in the dark suit take on a different aspect which brings an added dimension to Oliver's characterization of Ellie, and therefore the symbolic depth of the story: Ellie's place will be mapped out for her no matter which side in the 'integration' struggle prevails, black or white, and there is nothing she can apparently do to change that fact; whatever the result of Tommy's day at school in the morning, Ellie will still be trapped in the continuum, a dark fly in amber, preserved without change: for her will always be the kitchens, the washing-up, the coffee-making, the oatmeal-fixing (as her mother does in the story's last paragraph (p. 230)), the dusting, ironing, bus rides to and from work, and no escape. Her ennui is real,
beyond that felt by the black race as it struggles in frustration to make headway against the fears and oppositions of an intolerant white world.

Oliver is implying that the individual will never be recognised, never tolerated, never accepted for his or her humanity, until all individuality is acknowledged. That is the real terror; the bomb thrown at them by some hopeless bigot is physical and its action will pass, but the lack of recognition of human worth is living death, and the hopelessness of that cause surpasses that of the mindless bomber,

Ellie looked out of the window. The darkness was turning to grey and the hurt feeling was disappearing. As she sat there she could begin to look at the kitchen matter-of-factly. Although the hands of the clock were just a little past five-thirty, she knew somebody was going to have to start clearing up and cook breakfast. (p.227)

The implication is that Ellie will have to start clearing up, and cooking breakfast, and cleaning, and working while her individuality shrivels away, until she is like the 'Doughnut Puncher' on the corner by the bus stop.
Greek the writer of Oedipus might have been, but Oedipus shakes Booker T. Washington High School. Irish was Shaw, but he rocks Fisk University. Scottish was Bobby Burns, but kids like him at Tuskegee. The more regional or national an art is in its origins, the more universal it may become in the end. What could be more Spanish than Don Quixote; yet what is more universal? What more Italian than Dante? Or more English than Shakespeare? Advice to Negro writers: step outside yourself, then look back – and you will see how human, yet how beautiful and black you are.¹

Langston Hughes's tenet of writing, that particularity breeds universality, implies a kind of literary contrast: in this advice to black writers, that greatness, 'or its approximation', more than compensates for regional idiosyncrasy, particularity seems opposed to universality. In literary terms, the universal may even seem to be totally divorced from the particular, especially when we consider the furthest extent of regionalism which (in its subjectivity) becomes embarrassingly personal, precious, or obscurely private. Such subjectivity appears to be the result of lack of control leading to immature (or incomplete) presentation, incorporating written-down talk, tortured, prefabricated, or inappropriate writing. 'Written-down talk' is that type of language which disregards the fact that written communication has no gesture, facial expression, or tone of voice to complete the meaning or nuance; 'tortured' writing reflects

the knowledge of a difference between written and spoken language, but it errs by producing awkward and ambiguous phrases and sentences, reducing its effectiveness;

'prefabricated' writing is that which consists of easily accessible words and phrases which through mis-use (or repetition) cease to hold their intended meanings;

'inappropriate' writing is that which fails to take the reader into account. This kind of writing is usually that which is associated with poor regional writing; by failing to take the reader into consideration while he is creating his work, the writer does not ensure that there is any collection of shared experience which can be referred to by the reader, nor that the writing may have, for the reader, a connotation and nuance foreign to that which the reader himself holds (in absolute terms) for certain words and phrases: standard dictionary meanings vary by their use in context, tone, style, and suggestion. In a sense, all the meaning of the words employed by the writer should be based upon experience if not shared with, at least acceptable to, the reader; otherwise, a kind of writing results which is introverted, subjective, and ineffective.

The more a writer exercises his control in such a manner as to establish his art objectively in the eye of the illusive, general, 'literate reader', the more his writing is said to be universal. Of course there is no formula for discovering the body of such 'shared experience': it is something obtained through the personal relationship of the artist to his art.
William Faulkner said that a story must be written 'in the way people can understand it', that the writer must use 'a language which is accepted and in which everybody agrees on', but Katherine Anne Porter, in a letter to the editor of *The Yale Review*, said, 'I discovered a law for myself, and have put it in a little axiom, and I tell it to my writing pupils, and I have never found a single exception to it. Here it is: THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS AN EXACT SYNONYM AND NO SUCH THING AS AN UNMIXED MOTIVE'. In her short commentary "*Noon Wine": The Sources", she said of the conscious act of the creation of 'Noon Wine' out of 'apparent incoherence, unrelatedness' (so that she could feel that it was "true" in the way a work of fiction should be true') from the assimilation of incidents with 'separate life and reality' into 'a living new being':

But why did this particular set of memories and early impressions combine in just this way to make this particular story? I do not in the least know. And though it is quite true that I intended to write fiction, this story wove itself in my mind for years before I ever intended to write it; there were many other stories going on in my head at once, some of them evolved and were written, more were not. Why? This to me is the most interesting question, because I am sure there is an answer, but nobody knows it yet.


Both writers were primarily concerned with what Porter called 'real fiction', as opposed to 'a thinly disguised personal confession which better belongs to the psycho-analyst's séance': 5 Faulkner's language was 'accepted' not so much for its standard meanings as for his diction which created a self-defining connotation and nuance, and Porter wrote with what she called 'old fashioned noble words in their prime sense', 'irreplaceable names of Realities' which take place in the human condition 'long and long before we know the words for them'. 6 In one sense, it appears that these two writers are caught in the Platonic cave of contrast between the ideal and the real, but in another, stronger sense, they are artists who have created universally accessible works by finding the door to universality through some act of imagination which began with the most particular kind of regionalism, the immediate familiarity of personal experience.

To Eudora Welty, this 'immediate familiarity of personal experience' is identified exactly as 'place', and 'place' opens the door to universality through an act of imagination which moulds the impression gained from 'place', 'according to present mood, intensification of feeling, beat of memory, accretion of idea, and by the blessing of being located - contained', a process of personal 'regionalism' which is the basis of 'what's called regional writing',

Place is surely one of the most simple and obvious and direct sources of the short story, and one of the most ancient — as it is of lyric poetry — and, if I can presume to speak freely here for other regional writers too, the connection of story to place can go for ever so long not even conscious in the mind, because taken for granted. The regional writer's vision is as surely made of the local clay as any mud pie of his childhood was, and it's still the act of imagination that makes the feast; only in the case of any art the feast is real, for the act of the imagination gives vision the substance and makes it last.?

To that extent, every writer is a regionalist, and writers who share the same 'place' (location, experience, condition) exhibit certain similarities in their stories, whether it be theme, subject, tone, language, or suggestion; still, it is the manner of presentation of those stories which, beyond style (or perhaps incorporated within it) distinguishes every writer from every other writer: 'Englishness', Negritude', Southern-ness' are important to the creation of the respective work and are therefore observable characteristics of those works.

Regionalism also enables those in pursuit of literary merit to assign stories to convenient groupings which by their characteristics give the critic a starting point, a generalisation from which to make specific comments; and, what better generalisation to start from than that which the writer began his story, the region, the place, the immediate familiarity of personal experience?

It was noted in the first chapter of this thesis that
the nature of the short story is more important than its

form (a piece of prose fiction, short and complete), and that its nature is one of poetic concentration, vividness and density which encourage the expression of the writer's background special interests and attributes, and compactness and immediacy which demand the reader's close attention; every short story success is, in essence, a breakthrough beyond that which is systematic. Six of the most successful approaches to the modern short story in the South were chosen to outline the pattern of Southern short fiction, a pattern which reveals more than just a regional flavour, a suggestion of 'Southern-ness', but also a dedication to literary craftsmanship. In the South (though of course not only in the South) the prose of the finest short stories approaches the discipline of poetic concentration, building a bridge between the poem and the novel.

William Faulkner, the Fugitive poet-critics, Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty, and black Southern short story writers have each in his or her own way made a significant impact upon modern short fiction in the South. They have together established a tradition of individualism in modern letters which is as important in its own way as the New England individualists of the last century were in theirs. The innate energy of Faulkner's personalised diction, the academic discipline and formal stylistic values of the Fugitives, the purity of Katherine Anne Porter's care of suggestion, the image-building of Flannery O'Connor, the humour, poetic effect, and technical improvisations of Eudora
Welty, and the pervading irony and challenge of the South's black writers present a standard of literary excellence against which other Southern writers may be measured. Although there is perhaps today no recognisable intuitive genius on the scale of William Faulkner, the modern South has produced and is producing a formidable array of short fiction writers, not the least of which are Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, Peter Taylor, Julia Peterkin, Doris Betts, and young black writer Alice Walker, whose stories may serve as a sounding board for the ideas of Southern fiction extracted from our six approaches to the short story.

Alice Walker, like many modern writers, has attached herself to a university (Tougaloo College, Mississippi, as writer-in-residence) to sustain the flash while the spirit soars; and her story 'Her Sweet Jerome' contains an undercurrent of the ambivalence with which education is regarded in the black world and in the South generally. Walker's female protagonist's emotional bond is based upon her husband's education, the point of her attraction to him, and the moment of her separation and destruction.

Her troubles started noticeably when she fell in love with a studiously quiet school teacher, Mr Jerome Franklin Washington, III, who was ten years younger than she. She told herself that she shouldn't want him, he was so little and cute and young, but when she took into account that he was a school teacher, well, she just couldn't seem to get any rest until, as she put it, 'I were Mr and Mrs Jerome Franklin Washington the Third, and that's the truth!' 8

8. Alice Walker, 'Her Sweet Jerome', Red Clay Reader, 7(1970), 18-21 (p. 19). Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.
The woman is un-named throughout, a suggestion that she does not really exist apart from her husband, 'Mr and Mrs Jerome Franklin Washington the Third, and that's the truth!', with a ring of false confidence which is revealed in retrospect as an omen of the ironic treatment of the relationship by the writer; that relationship is brought about by the woman's fascination with Jeromé's status as a teacher, and slowly destroyed by the obvious nature of the man as he is linked to his profession, a concept which completely escapes her (or her father, who ironically leaves his money - the source of Jeromé's interest in his wife - to "the school teacher" to share or not with his wife, "as he had learnin' enough to see fit"). 'She' is presented as 'a big awkward woman, with big bones and hard rubbery flesh', a sharp almost opposing contrast to the 'intellectual' appearance of Jeromé, whose silent control, slight physique, and intensity is blown out of proportion by her thinking him 'so little and cute and young'. In fact, he is so 'little and cute and young', that the only way she can justify marrying a man ten years her junior is on the grounds that he is a 'school teacher', and is therefore endowed with knowledge, understanding, and stature beyond his appearance (a ritualised idea of mystique descending by association from and with the white world). That her 'troubles started noticeably when she fell in love with a studiously quiet school teacher' is a forewarning of the desperation of her life and her destructive conclusion of her relationship; that forewarning is emphasised
and strengthened by the preceding paragraph, a description of her in almost bestial terms, an implication that any form of relationship for her with a slight-framed school teacher would be a collision, not a meeting.

Her short arms ended in ham hands, and her neck was a squat roll of fat that protruded behind her head as a big bump. Her skin was rough and puffy, with plump mole-like freckles down her cheeks. Her eyes glowered from under the mountain of her brow and were circled with expensive mauve shadow. They were nervous and quick when she was flustered and darted about at nothing in particular while she was dressing hair or talking to people.

(p. 19)

Her description is grotesque in the extreme, because of a Swiftian-like exaggeration of her features: her hands are not merely thick, they are 'ham hands', her neck is not just fat, it protrudes 'behind her head as a big bump', her brow is mountainous, and her eyes are not made-up, but circled in mauve as if she were a clown, despite (or perhaps accentuated because of) the expensive quality of the eye shadow. Walker uses alliteration and homophones to direct the reader's attention to the grotesque quality of the woman, feature by feature: 'ham hands', 'behind her head', 'big bump', 'rough and puffy', 'glowered...mountain...brow', and the accumulation of deformed features give the woman a demented appearance (again forecasting her response to Jerome and the story's insane ending): even her freckles are magnified into malignant growth-like protuberances, 'plump' and 'mole-like', 'down her cheek'. It is implied that the most important feature is her eyes, because Walker devotes half the passage to their description, in a manner which suggests to the reader that Mrs Washington is a clown who cannot focus for
any significant amount of time upon anything of consequence, because they are 'quick and nervous' when she is 'flustered', and they 'dart about at nothing in particular' whether she is working in her beauty shop or merely engaged in a conversation, implying that she is 'flustered' all the time, that she cannot concentrate, and that her work and ability to communicate are adversely affected by her lack of concentration. When her 'deranged and cunning way' leads her to burn women in her 'beauty parlour' as they are 'sitting underneath her hot comb', it seems not so much the result of a deliberate malevolence as an extension of her lack of concentration, enforced by her new frustration - the same lack of concentration which prevents her from any meaningful communication with even her best customers after she begins her 'shameless and hysterical degeneration into insanity' (p. 20).

Walker's emphasis on the visual aspect of her central character is a deliberate signpost to the story's major theme, that of the lack of perception of the female protagonist of all that should be important to her as a modern black woman, as evinced by her unfortunate misunderstanding of the nature of her husband's profession. In a sense, this story is one of the progress of education, and its attendant themes of the relationship of the Negro to the traditional idea of imitating the ritual image of white education and the relationship of the Negro to the new idea of the discovery of black education as an original, non-imitative force in the black world (and thence the white). The progress
of blacks in the modern world towards self-sufficiency through education is viewed in terms of Mrs Washington's 'search': ostensibly she searches for her husband's supposed lover; symbolically, she pursues another, and in a sense, larger kind of knowledge, that which is a favourite theme of black short story writers: the search for identity. Clearly that is what Mrs Washington is attempting to find, for she has no identity of her own; she is 'invisible' in the sense that Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, and Richard Wright use the term: because she does not understand who she is, she is merely a nonentity called 'Mrs Washington' in the old black (and therefore white-linked) world, and she is invisible, except as a joke, in the new, black revolutionary world (when, expecting to find Jerome with his 'lover', she bursts into the meeting, she is ignored by all but one person, a woman who 'laughingly asked if she had come to "join the revolution".' (p. 21)). She does not have a given name (or even a Christian name - unusual, considering that she is a church-goer), and each time she is mentioned, Walkèr makes her appear as unpleasant a character as possible, to contrast her with the 'sisters' in Jerome's group who wear 'short kinky hair and large hoop earrings' and call one another 'by what they termed their "African" names' (p. 20). She is variously fat, ridiculous, 'oily', 'flabby', with a 'thick coarse mouth', 'short hairy legs', and she smells 'bad from mouth and underarms and elsewhere' (pp. 19-21). She does not fit, in any way, the 'black and beautiful' image of the Negro from the late 1960s onwards; she is presented as an animal (or object)
to be despised (her husband beats her constantly), tormented ('your cute little man is sticking his fingers in somebody else's pie' (p. 20)), ignored (as in the meeting), or laughed at (her clown image and ridiculous attempts to achieve status in a white-linked society, such as her one-woman parade to church on Sunday mornings - 'her husband laughed at her high heels as she teetered and minced off' (p. 19)). It is as though Walker produced a characterisation for the unfortunate woman based upon James Baldwin's image of the Negro in white America as 'a series of shadows, self-created, intertwining'; her picture is an extract from a scathing comment by a black artist viewing the white man's image of the Negro, sub-human and grotesque, merely aping the motions and manners of the white world, and through her serious, purposeful mimicry, allying herself to the white world in an attack upon the black. She is invisible because she has no black identity (symbolised by the 'African' names of the 'sisters' in Jerome's group), she attempts to be stylish, 'and was in her fashion' (an imitation, in pale taffeta, of the white man's fashion, and a mockery of the black man's), she supports the white man's religion (none of Jerome's group go to church), and she operates a symbolic 'reverse' beauty shop, where 'hot combs' symbolise the unnatural straightening of Negro hair to conform to white fashion and notions of beauty. She is a parody of the

white world, and an outcast from the black, because by the late 1960s, an answer had been found in the search for an agreeable solution to the restriction, repression and exclusion of the white world, an answer which the black man could with dignity accept: there would be no attempt made to conform to the white world, there would be only black education for blacks on black terms in black terminology - there would be no more 'niggers', 'nigrahs', 'nee-grows', 'Negroes', or 'coloureds' - there would be only black and beautiful people, full of the pride and wonder of their new found humanity, to be based upon an ancient African dignity.

The new black world is a harsh answer to white repression: it is revolutionary (no longer are young blacks allowed the luxury of 'not wanting to go' as in Diane Oliver's 'The Closet on the Top Floor'), and the 'Experiment' (the black man in white education) has confirmed the necessity for a revolutionary approach that eliminates any cooperation on white terms, there is no compromise. Characters like Zora Neale Hurston's Joe and Missie May are no longer allowed their insular (and vulnerable) privacy: there is no longer room for even someone like Langston Hughes's amiable raconteur Jessie B. Simple, because 'brothers' and 'sisters' must be full-time revolutionaries whose irony is almost humourless, not frustrated part-timers who kick out the occasional white man's store

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window in what is an almost amusing act of defiance. And, if the new black world is demanding, it is also as intolerant in its own way as the white world has been in its way: anyone who does not recognise the new black world and does not become educated in the new black manner receives no leeway; a new reaction to naivete (which echoes the penalty resulting from the innocent ignorance of Rudolph Fisher's King Solomon Gillis in 'The City of Refuge') comes to the fore, as though it were a distillation of all the hate and bitterness in the stories of Richard Wright: there is no pity for the nameless, invisible woman of Alice Walker's 'Her Sweet Jerome'. Yet, with all of her ugliness, all of her intractability in the new black world ('she was fond of telling school teachers (women school teachers) that she didn't miss her "eddicashion" (p. 19)), and her almost truculent lack of perception, Mrs Jerome Franklin Washington III becomes a figure of sympathy: her insanity is a response to her environment, as is Emily Grierson's in William Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'; but, Miss Emily's insanity is because she understands the injustice of her world, and Mrs Washington's insanity is because she does not. Like Flannery O'Connor's characters, revelation does not come to her until the point of destruction: she burns to death as she destroys the trace of her husband's 'lover', the words which symbolise his black education in which he builds his image of African dignity, a 'dignity' which isolates her as a clown, a sub-human object of scorn. That Walker has Jerome use his wife's money and attempts at affection in a manner which speaks
of betrayal calls into doubt the effectiveness of his personal black 'solution'; by portraying him as a peripheral character, Walker seems to imply that Jerome's group, his 'African' name, and 'black' education are merely passing fashions which further isolate the majority of black men and women trapped in a white world; in a sense, Jerome and his group also imitate the white world, by copying the white world's most insufferable attitude towards the black: intolerance.

Alice Walker, writing in the late 1960s and early 1970s, exhibits a fundamental shift of emphasis in black writing generally: no longer is the black man victim of inhumane forces discovered in the South alone; it is the white world at large which holds the black man back from realising his potential of human worth, and the black short fiction writer in the South has shifted his or her stories's emphasis accordingly. There has always been a tendency in black writing in the South to echo the social forces which separate the Negro from the white, by creating a literature which is black first, then Southern, but by the end of the 1960s, this separation has become almost complete: Alice Walker's story, 'Her Sweet Jerome', although set in the South, deals with black versus white worlds rather than black versus Southern white, representative of the focus of black fiction in the United States, beginning, in essence, with the work of Richard Wright, but maturing as a non-regional concept beginning with the work of Diane Oliver, who chose to portray Southern intolerance as a symbol of the entire white world's attitude towards the black.
A Southern writer who continued the tradition established by the first wave of the Southern renaissance, who may in fact be termed a member of the 'second wave', is Peter Taylor, who followed hard on the literary heels of the Fugitive poet-critics in work and artistry. His close association at Kenyon University with John Crowe Ransom, and his work at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (which became the centre of the New Tradition in Southern writing after the dispersal of the Fugitives from Vanderbilt University) followed the initial success of his low key control of the short story genre. 'Rain in the Heart' (selected alongside Robert Penn Warren's 'Cass Mastern's Wedding Ring' for inclusion in Martha Foley's The Best American Short Stories 1945) exhibits Taylor's method of what may be termed 'writing by restraint', which gains him a place in Southern fiction somewhere in the general area of Katherine Anne Porter and Eudora Welty. The deceptive flatness of his prose covers a wealth of substance dealing with the major concerns of Southern writing, but peripheral in a manner which highlights their relevance to his characters' specific personal development.

'Rain in the Heart' provides an example of Taylor's 'writing by restraint' through the story of the sergeant's attempt to find philosophical continuity in his existence, 'He was left with the sense that no moment in his life had any relation to another'.

some twenty-five years before Alice Walker's 'Her Sweet Jerome', employs the same technique of constructing a story around a nameless character - whose life is confusing, scattered, and frustrating - but for different reasons. Walker's protagonist is at odds with her world because she lacks a corresponding cultural identity based upon perception - 'eddio ashion' (understanding her role as a black woman), and Taylor's protagonist is not so much at odds with his world as he is out of synchronisation with it (he feels 'a terrible unrelated diversity in things' (p. 300)). Revelation finally comes to Mrs Washington in 'Her Sweet Jerome' (although not until the point of her burning to death), because she finally understands the symbolic meaning that education has for her husband and for herself, bringing a kind of solution for her, and a resolution to her story; there is no revelation, no solution for the sergeant in Taylor's 'Rain in the Heart', because he merely moves in his life from one impression, one image, to another, some worse than others, some 'much better now', but all washing over him and running off him as though they were only rain - passing, ultimately unimportant, incidents (even his marriage 'could not now seem so large a thing (pp. 301-302)).

Perhaps the sergeant's perception has been deadened by his relatively short experience in the military of the coarseness of men thrown together in an unfamiliarity that causes each to present his lowest level of communication, but his experience of the world generally, and of its
occupants, is one of a bludgeoning of the spirit into insensitivity: the rough, concrete yet abrasive quality of the men in their older English expressions contrasted with the smooth Latinate quality of the sergeant's thoughts, and the extraordinary machinegun-like speech and interruption of the cleaning woman at the streetcar stop have only a momentary effect upon him.

The lukewarm shower poured down over the chest and back of the drill sergeant. This was his second year in the army and now he found himself continually surprised at the small effect that the stream of words of the soldiers had upon him. (p. 285)

Taylor's use of water as an image not of cleansing the sergeant of some symbolic ill, but rather as an ineffectual occurrence in his life (as is all else) emphasises the coarse quality of the world about him and the ambiguity of his nebulous position in it: he is 'continually surprised' that the soldiers's words have such little effect upon him, a paradoxical quality of Taylor's sergeant that proves most effective in his portrayal of the man's alienation from the flow of his life - drill sergeants are known for their almost legendary ability to quote Anglo-Saxonisms, yet Taylor's sergeant 'blushes' frequently at the slightest suggestion of crudity, and even impropriety embarrasses him, though, as anything, never for long. That the shower is 'lukewarm' suggests that it has little or no effect upon the sergeant's chest and back, and the description of the soldiers's words as a 'stream' ties their conversation directly to the 'lukewarm shower', enforcing the notion that the words have 'small effect' upon him.
The rapid-fire conversation of the cleaning woman who gives him the flowers too rolls over him without making more than an uncomfortable impression, yet when he tries to concentrate, to focus upon some point in the haziness of his life, it is her hands he sees, an irony in that at the precise moment of his recalling them he is attempting to prepare his mind for his connubial encounter with his new wife, as he looks at his wife's arrangement of the flowers,

Up there the flowers looked somehow curiously artificial and not like the real sweetpeas he had seen in the rough hands of the woman this afternoon. While he was gazing thus, he felt his wife's eyes upon him. Yet without turning to her he went to the window, for he was utterly preoccupied with the impression he had just received and he had a strange desire to sustain that impression long enough to examine it. He kept thinking of that woman's hands. (p. 299)

His problem is not that he cannot concentrate, but that in so doing he becomes so absorbed in the image projected in his mind that he cannot escape it; he is 'utterly preoccupied', as he is later 'hopelessly distracted by this new sensation' when he again hears the streetcar's rumble as he prepares for bed (p. 301). It is not that the impressions of his life have no effect whatever upon him, but that they seem to have little effect beyond returning to him as disassociated thoughts, with an emphasis upon the coarse quality of his existence,

And again there were the voices of the boys in the barracks. Their crudeness, their hardness, even their baseness - qualities that seemed to be taking root in the very hearts of those men - kept passing like objects through his mind. And the bitterness of the woman waiting by the streetcar tracks pressed upon him. (p. 300)
These two passages capture the tone and theme of the story succinctly in their qualification of the water image that is found throughout the tale: from the water in which the sweetpeas are standing, Taylor builds the image of the woman's hands in the sergeant's mind, a harsh image which knifes through the haze of his world to present itself so concretely that it captures the sergeant's wife so that she asks, 'Why did you look so strangely at the vase of flowers? What did they make you think about so long by the window?' (p. 301)

It is only the crudity of life, the disruptive force of being thrown into a war in a world which he does not understand, in a manner and time which has no concern for his values and therefore destroys or ignores them: he is a university graduate who has just married the young girl he met at college (p. 295), and the coarseness of a life suddenly thrust upon his contemplative existence has disrupted it. He recalls the 'voices of the boys in the barracks', 'their crudeness', 'their hardness, even their baseness', and 'the bitterness of the woman' assaults him upon his symbolic wedding night. His wife spells out his alienation, 'These hours we have together are so isolated and few that they must sometimes not seem quite real to you when you are away' (p. 300), but she does not realise that he is 'away' even then, that nothing 'matters' in the traditional sense, that life is so intensely crude that the sergeant's only response is to let it wash over him.

When the sergeant does seek for a solution to his lack of continuity, it is through history and imagination, the book which has to be returned to the library by his
wife, the book which has been with him in the barracks while
his wife sleeps alone, the book into which he attempts to
project himself as a sergeant in the Confederate army, 'If
he and she had been living in those days he would have seen
ever so clearly the Cause for that fighting. And this
battlefield would not be abstract' (p. 300). That he sees
his predicament in concepts that require words such as 'abstract',
'unrelated diversity', and 'Cause' (with upper case emphasis)
reveals that he grasps the fundamental problem of his life
(unlike Mrs Washington in 'Her Sweet Jerome' by Alice Walker),
but he appears powerless to rectify it: he moves from one
set of sensations to another, momentarily 'utterly preoccupied'
but never associating one moment of preoccupation with
another, only lumping all bitterness and crudity together
'passing like objects through his mind', examined perhaps
at length, but with no attempt to understand their relevance.
As he turns from his wife's question about the flowers
he goes to the window to contemplate the cleaning woman's hands,
it is because he has 'a strange desire to sustain that
impression long enough to examine it', and the examination
appears to be all that he is interested in; no decision comes
from it. In fact, the sergeant seems moved by some external
force: he reacts to the symbols in his mind with little result,
but they do provide some motive force; however, the really
strong motions of his life seem to depend on external, perhaps
pagan, at least primitive urges. The streetcar is a curtain
first drawing his 'other life' to a close so that its coarseness
does not interfere with his 'isolation' with his wife, then, when he hears the streetcar again, it is as if the curtain is again opened, and, although the streetcar moves beyond his hearing,

he could visualize it casting its diffused light among the dark foliage and over the white gravel between the tracks. He was left with the sense that no moment in his life had any relation to another. It was as though he were living a thousand lives. And the happiness and completeness of his marriage could not now seem so large a thing. (p. 301)

The streetcar is some kind of primitive monster or god signalling the motion from his coarse life to his married life, from the barrack-room jokes of women as sexual adjuncts to masculinity to the bridal-like quality of his wife, with all implied symbolism of purity, innocence, and delicacy, which contrasts so strongly with the harshness of the soldiers in the barracks and the bitterness of the woman waiting on the streetcar, who takes a malicious joy in pointing out her harsh approach to life, symbolised by the flowers, 'I don't want 'em. I hate 'em. The sight of 'em makes me sick'. (p. 295)

The meeting with the cleaning woman proves to be singularly important to the sergeant, and the vision of her hands becomes the strongest image for him, because, as the link between the worlds on either side of the 'curtain' drawn by the passing of the streetcar, she is the only consistency in a diffuse world. The sergeant does not realise that there are two distinct worlds (as the story is presented to the reader), he is merely aware of changing incidents as unrelated units (themselves nebulous) as he successively encounters the streetcar, the white rooming house, the flowers, and the
cleaning woman. Cynical and full of rancour, she becomes the voice of the nameless sergeant as she damns everything that passes by in the street (or in their decidedly one-sided conversation): she voices (and represents) all of the criticism of the boorishness of an insensitive world which the sergeant feels but cannot enunciate, she magnifies his distaste for the vulgarity of mechanical sexuality—somehow more vile in her pretended modesty than the gutter-whore she denounces, and she connects the private world of his wife (and rooms in the white house with the 'fantastic lacy woodwork'—another intricacy to confront him (p. 296)) with the gross world of the barracks (and the brutishness which proceeds from it) by giving him the flowers which she pretends not to like, until by degrees she actually begins to detest.

The rain is in her heart as vitriol, and she passes that acidic rain to the sergeant who, in turn, passes it on to his wife (although the rain is his heart becomes more like that of the 'lukewarm shower' than acid): when the rain begins again outside the house, as a literal occurrence it becomes a kind of primitive force which washes the lukewarm shower and any trace of vitriol from his heart, and sends him to his wife's bed (the final action of the inevitable force which goaded him from the barracks to his part-time home), but only as a temporary action—things are only much better 'now' (p. 302), indicating another probable change and a further diffusion of his world.
Doris Betts, another exceptional teacher of fiction in the line of New Tradition writers who served apprenticeships at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, a direct descendant from the Fugitive poet-critics in her belief in and practice of total intellectual control in writing, endorses the concept of Regional writing as 'the immediate familiarity of personal experience' in her work and in her critical analysis,

To think of oneself as a Southern writer is to come by hindsight and to pick up the characteristics everyone else applies to you. I'm a Southern writer in the sense that this is the landscape I know, and the climate, and the people, and I'd be a fool not to make use of that. But I'm not so certain that people are that different in one part of the country, from another. I can't as a matter of fact imagine my people set down in Indiana, because Indiana is only a word to me; I don't have any... any hills, or temperature to go with the idea. But I'm not aware of being anything except someone who writes from the things she has seen and heard.12

Her 'The Proud and the Virtuous', a work in which imagination has extended the 'temperature to go with the idea' far beyond the 'place' of the originating personal experience which initiated the story, contains an immediacy akin to the work of Flannery O'Connor, a familiarity which matches that in the work of Eudora Welty, and control through suggestion which seemingly could be drawn from Katherine Anne Porter's work. That is not to say that Betts's writing is pastiche (nor even that it is significantly derivative), but that in her own way, her work exhibits the best qualities of the six approaches to Southern short prose fiction examined in this thesis.

In 'The Proud and the Virtuous', Betts's control is similar to Katherine Anne Porter's in 'A Piece of News', although Porter's story moves through the sensation of imagination towards revelation of the female protagonist's inner self, while Betts's female protagonist appears to be mainly interested in the sensation of imagination for its own sake. At first glance, Mildred Stuart appears to be a superficial characterisation, but that is merely the effect of Betts's flat prose, which (like Peter Taylor's 'Rain in the Heart') is tuned to her protagonist's apparent shallowness; the character appears to have little depth, initially, but the characterisation is solid throughout the story, in its unerring portrayal of the momentary fantasy of a modern Southern farmer's wife, left alone in her house on the day when a chain gang is working on the highway at the bottom of her front field. The fantasy is constructed on the mental and sexual frustration of Mildred, the Southern chivalry myth, and the inordinate fears of her neighbour, Carrie Nash, who rings her on the telephone constantly.

Carrie was always anxious; she lived in a world where the catastrophe was always just about to happen - blizzard or accident or heart attack. Perhaps it was having eight children that made her feel that way, as if one were more divided up, susceptible.13

Mildred, who is bored with her housework and glad to receive the telephone call from Carrie (although it is the third of the

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morning), is frozen in Betts's imagery of Carrie's anxiety, 'catastrophe was always just about to happen'. The introduction of 'blizzard' into the mid-morning summer heat would be a catastrophe to a farmer's wife, especially to Mildred, the wife of 'modern' George ('farmer' in Latin) who is concerned with 'Oriental farming methods' (p. 20) and 'experimental wheat' (p. 23). The juxtaposition of 'blizzard', 'accident', and 'heart attack' increases the pejorative aspects of 'accident', and suggests a pause, an interruption to Mildred's day. The division is made more definite by the extraordinary image of Carrie, split between her eight children, vulnerable (or, as Betts says, 'susceptible', bringing in the suggestion of disease to add to blizzard, accident and heart attack), and 'heart attack' is a definite stop.

The dividing line separates the boring reality of the morning's housework from the excitement of Mildred's fantasy; before Carrie's call, Mildred's choices of 'entertainment' are 'extra things: the back windows, or trying out a new recipe, or the bathroom fixtures', of which she chooses the most mundane, 'She supposed she really ought to do the bathroom fixtures', enforcing the atmosphere of boredom and Mildred's resignation to it (p. 19). Before the dividing line of Carrie's telephone call, Mildred observes the convicts in veiled curiosity, 'She could just move the edge of the blue ruffled curtain in the living room and look down the long brown field to the highway', with some distaste,
Their soundlessness made her think of ants moving; she knew they must live and communicate and move toward a purpose (completion of the highway), but they remained to her some distant, strange and very tiny species. Some kind of bug, she thought with distaste, and her white flesh crawled at the thought. (p. 19)

The momentary curiosity is replaced by a glance at the clock and a dismissal of the convicts as perhaps maggot-like crawling things, creatures which she, as an efficient homemaker, would never allow near her house; after Carrie's call, the fantasy begins, and the distaste turns to fear, then fascination, then attraction, which moves her not only to approach the convicts, but to invite them to her back door (through the guard) for iced water.

The fantasy begins with the image of Carrie's fear, enforced by images of 'Thieves and murderers and the good Lord knows what all' (p. 20), and a conversation about guns (p. 21) which leads to Mildred's husband, the symbol of the second building block in Mildred's fantasy, her frustration. George appears to be misnamed, because he is a 'fairly awkward man' who 'generally did manage to upset something, looking woebegone about the whole business' and he does not appear to be successful as a farmer, despite his interest in modern methods and experimental crops (or perhaps in addition to his interest, as though it gives him an excuse for his ineptness), and the quotation from the history book which Mildred thinks 'described George perfectly' ('"After the crisis is over," it said, "the farmer or peasant is the first to revert to conservatism."') refers more to the peasant in George than the farmer (pp. 22-23). George is variously described as
clumsy, animal-like (he makes a sound of disapproval 'like a mule drinking, having suddenly got water up his nostrils' (p. 23)), and insensitive ('Sometimes she had the feeling that if she should squat in the hall of an evening George would come through and drop his coat upon her without noticing' (p. 23)). He seems only interested in new farming techniques; anything 'experimental' in farming attracts him more than his wife. Inside herself, she reacts strongly to this rejection. Of her fears about the convicts, aroused by Carrie, George responds logically, but to Mildred, insensitively,

'They've got a chain gang working on the road today,' she said.
'That so? Needs it on that bad curve. Putting on shoulders, I expect.'
'I expect so,' said Mildred, and waited.
'Well, anything else?'
She could have throttled him with the telephone wire. 'Nothing,' she said dryly. 'Not a thing, George. Enjoy your wheat seed.' It sounded rather as if she were speaking to an out-of-sorts canary. (p. 24)

The telephone call is the only appearance of George per se in the story, and it informs the reader that the view presented by the narrator is an exaggeration of him based upon the frustration of the female protagonist. His slow, almost careful behaviour, his tendency to repeat homily-like advice ('What kids ought to learn in this world is to purely mind their own business' (p. 21)), and his common-sense approach to life which clashed with her romantic notions, particularly her 'whole philosophy that no one would harm a person who had trusted him',


(Here she recalled angrily that George was forever comparing this attitude to the old theory of staring a wild animal in the eye to avoid being bitten; and how this was probably all right if the animal had read the same book you had....) (p. 24)

This is also an example of George's connection with humor, as though he is for Mildred some kind of clown: three of the four obvious points of comedy in the story concern George, this analogy about wild animals and trust, the 'out-of sorts canary' and Mildred's image of herself lying dead for George to find her, 'Chilling delicately on the kitchen linoleum, her trim feet pointing mutely at the ceiling' (p. 20).

This parenthetical expression about George's reaction to her philosophy of trust, as an aside in her reverie brought about by her recalling Carrie's suggestion of Mildred's death for George to find, introduces the final stage of the story and the fantasy by its reference once again to George's un-chivalric manner. The last sentences enclosed within the parentheses are: 'She could remember George comparing the two completely unrelated things, just as he had that horrible afternoon to the vacuum cleaner salesman. And the salesman such a gentleman, too, and so complimentary...something George would never think of being... (pp. 24-25); Mildred looks to other men to supply the excitement of romance in her life, because George 'would never think' of being a gentleman, of indulging in her romantic notions. In order to find excitement and romance, Mildred projects herself into the Southern myth of chivalry, picturing herself walking past
the convicts, smiling 'distantly the way she did to working people, grocery boys and things', causing them to take her up as some great symbol ('A real lady, she was'), 'a symbol of mercy and decency' around which 'one sensitive-eyed young man who looked like Montgomery Clift' would 'build a whole new life around that momentary inspiration she had given him on a summer's day' (p. 25). The movie star imagery enforces the unreal quality of Mildred's fantasy (she sees herself as Gene Tierney) and projects her into an overtly sexual role when she actually walks down to the highway,

she realized that the sun was behind her and everything must be transparent (the lacy nylon slip and the thin brassiere and pants) so that all of them could see her - the swell of stomach and the curve of breast and the shadowy suggestion of nipple, naval, triangle. (p. 26)

Of course the guard does not respond to her invitation for cake and ice water for himself and the prisoners at Mildred's back porch door, because he has duties to perform, and perhaps realises that she is merely acting out her fantasy (not a point of perception on the part of the guard, because Mildred's action is so openly - and naively - provocative), and upon her return to the house, she is left alone in the fear of her realisation that her actions towards the men could bring the reality of disaster (Carrie's catastrophe), which turns to anger ('The scum. The filthy scum') at the refusal of the guard and convicts to join in her fantasy, requiring her to pour out the iced water ('like a teen-ager cheated out of a party'), the ice cubes to melt in the sink as the symbol of her failure to realise her romantic idea,
her 'whole philosophy' of life (pp. 30-31); Mildred Stuart
would rather be raped than ignored, the fourth point of humour
in the story, the one the convicts realise and snicker at
behind her back.

Betts has written novels (Tall Houses in Winter, The Scarlet
Thread), but she sees herself as a short story writer, 'I am
an artificial and contrived and forced novelist'. She does not
define the short story, but says, 'I would steal from the letter
of Chekhov in which he said, "I can speak briefly on long
subjects".' 14 The 'long' subject of 'The Proud and the Virtuous'
is (as signalled by the title) the curious interplay of morality
and romance: the boredom of Mildred's housework and the
uninteresting face of reality symbolised by George's common-
sense 'conservative' view of life versus the dishonest, but much
more interesting world of Mildred's movie-star fantasy in which
her sexual and mental cravings are disguised as virtue and her
naivete parades as pride.

Finally, we come to an examination of what may be termed
'particularism' in Southern short fiction, as exemplified by
the works of two women who have been both dismissed as 'local
colourists', and awarded Pulitzer and other prizes for their
long (and short) prose fiction: Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings,
author of The Yearling, and Julia Peterkin, author of Scarlet
Sister Mary. Each writer found her 'postage-stamp' corner of

the South, and created highly individualised fiction from it (concentrating on the short story), but not gaining the public success of their contemporary William Faulkner. Perhaps there is a point in the journey from the particular to the universal at which the reading public balks, perhaps on the line from an experience so localised as to render its presentation null and void, whatever manner or genius that presentation exhibits, or perhaps the reading public is slow to accept art which presents images which are inconsistent with those of themselves. Whatever the social:logical forces which may or may not govern the success publically of short fiction, a close reading may determine the artistic success, here of Rawlings's 'Benny and the Bird-Dogs', and of Peterkin's 'The Red Rooster'.

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's stories are so entertaining, so filled with a pine-winey, back-woods, folk-wisdom, earthy humour, that the control she exercises in her tales may perhaps be overlooked in the sheer enjoyment of the tale; 'Benny and the Bird-Dogs' is such a story,

You can't change a man, no-ways. By the time his mammy turns him loose and he takes up with some innocent woman and marries her, he's what he is. If it's his nature to set by the hearthfire and scratch hisself, you just as good to let him set and scratch. If it's his nature, like Will Dover, my man, to go to the garage in his Sunday clothes and lay down under some backwoods Cracker's old greasy Ford and tinker with it, you just as good to let him lay and tinker. And if it's his nature to cut the fool; why it's interfering in the ways of Providence even to quarrel with him about it. 15

Clearly her first purpose is to entertain (as was Faulkner's), and (like Faulkner's A Rose for Emily') her first-person narrator is a member of the community around which her story is set. The 'pervasive poetic quality to be found in most contemporary Southern fiction'\(^\text{16}\) is here found in the back-woods cadences of Florida 'Cracker' speech. No Faulknerian language is evident in the plain speech patterns of the narrator, nor are there any contemplative passages of philosophical literacy as in Faulkner's comment upon the perception of time in 'A Rose for Emily'; however, the narrator's speech is consistent with, and contributory to, the flavour of the story, and its anecdotal quality does not preclude the narrator's often profound insight into the nature of male-female relationships on an elemental level; in fact, the insight is often made profound by its primitive enunciation — not the 'ways of Providence' (echoing the Southern version of Calvinist pre-destination as 'pre-determination') but such statements as 'Uncle Benny Mathers is beyond rules and sayings' (p. 253) (beyond 'pre-determination') the story's central theme of man's free will, underscored by its indirect presentation in a home-spun critique meant to stand as an aphorism for all the Uncle Bennys in the world. Uncle Benny is not Everyman, nor should he be identified as such; he is, in a sense, a supreme regionalist, the symbol of individuality, founded in American colonial pioneering, and outraged by the confines of a modern world which encroaches upon the limitless

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\(^{16}\) Robert Penn Warren, A Southern Harvest, p. xvi.
nature of his freedom. His presentation by Rawlings often approaches mythic proportions, lifting Uncle Benny from the category of 'local character' to make him almost a folk-hero. Otherwise, the story could perhaps not stand up to the strain of his 'shenanigans' (a word employed by Rawlings to keep the reader's attention focused upon Uncle Benny's satyr-like appearance, and 'devilish' behaviour),

He's small and quick and he don't move - he prances. He has a little bald sun-tanned head with a rim of white hair around the back of it. Where the hair ends at the sides of his head, it sticks straight up over his ears in two little white tufts like goat horns. He's got bright blue eyes that look at you quick and wicked, the way a goat looks. That's exactly what he looks and acts like - a mischievous little old billy-goat. (p. 252)

Uncle Benny's behaviour, however, far exceeds that of merely 'a mischievous little old billy-goat': he not only goes to square-dances twenty miles away in the flat woods', stays out all night, 'cutting the fool', he 'rambles' in his topless Model-T Ford, accompanied by seven pied bird-dogs, like some primitive god surrounded by animal attendants. Rawlings begins Uncle Benny's elevation symbolically to folk-hero status only two paragraphs after describing him merely as 'a mischievous little old billy-goat', a signpost to the reader that Uncle Benny is perhaps meant to be more than is promised by his introduction: his 'just rambling' in the Ford 'as long as his gas held out' (p. 252) is soon given a different perspective by Rawlings.
It was seven years ago, during the Boom, that he bought the Model-T and begun collecting bird-dogs. Everybody in Florida was rich for a while, selling gopher holes to the Yankees. Now putting an automobile under Uncle Benny was like putting wings on a wild-cat - it just opened up new territory. Instead of rambling over one county, he could ramble over ten. And the way he drove - like a bat out of Torment. (pp. 252-53)

Here the elements of oral tradition applied to the description of a Paul Bunyan or Pecos Bill magnify Uncle Benny into extraordinary proportions: he wins by his wits (selling gopher holes to Yankees, akin to the facet of European fairy-tales which spilled over into frontier humour as Jack-the-Giant-Killer exaggeration), he is given unbelievable animal attributes (a flying wild-cat), he is associated with the Underworld and its forces (a reminder of his similarity in appearance to popular notions of the Devil), and his boundaries are pushed back ten times in a multiplication which suggests that his limitations are far beyond that of mortal man, a suggestion of the supernatural which is confirmed a few lines later by his wife, the Old Hen, 'Moonlight nights he's the worst. Just like the varmints' (p. 253)

Although her narrator's speech is that of piney-woods Florida, Rawlings manages to control the language of the story as skilfully as though it were patterned in standard speech and grammar; the give sentences of the above paragraph are arranged in such a manner that their structure contributes to the modification of Uncle Benny in the reader's eyes without qualifying (limiting) him. The two dashes increase the implied
extension of Uncle Benny's abilities beyond that of the normal use of commas, and to act as pauses before especially important modifying statements ("it just opened up new territory", and "like a bat out of Torment"); all five sentences contain modifying clauses or phrases, and in each instance the most important part of the sentence is the last, final driving home by accumulation of the five most important points: 'that he bought the Model-T and begun collecting bird-dogs', 'selling gopher holes to Yankees', 'it just opened up new territory', 'he could ramble over ten', and 'like a bat out of Torment'.

Uncle Benny proves that he is 'beyond rules and sayings', and justifies the premiss that he represents some primitive god, 'it's like a bird in the air or a fish in water - there won't no harm come to him from it' (p. 253), by disrupting Old Lady Waller's funeral by chasing 'the drunken nigger in a Chevrolet' in and out of the procession, finally shooting him to keep him from running when he leaves his car, by setting the Old Hen's field of pindars on fire because she nags him to clear the weeds (she didn't say not to clear the pindars and guinea-hens there as well, so he uses fire), when he convinces Doc that he has trained the Model-T Ford to carry him safely home when he is drunk, and when he is stopped by the barricade when Doc tells everyone that Uncle Benny is 'cold-out crazy'. Each of these points of Uncle Benny's elevation is based upon humour which is painful, outrageous, and cruel;
it is reminiscent of the most biting of Mark Twain's humour, and coarse frontier humour which preceded him, as evidenced by the perhaps apocryphal story told of Twain to illustrate his delight in squelching braggarts, about his fire-fighting heroics when he purportedly had to save a man stranded on the fourth floor, and there were no ladders long enough to reach,

'Suddenly I had an inspiration. I found along coil of rope, climbed up the ladder, and flung one end up to him. "Tie it round your waist," I shouted. He did so, and I climbed down the ladder to the ground and braced myself for the appallingly difficult task before me.'

There was a pause while the author struggled with his pipe.

'What then?' said a listener at last, impatiently. "Then I pulled him down," said Twain.17

As the man trapped by the fire is merely an agent for Twain's humour, so is the poor unfortunate who gets shot by Uncle Benny in his capacity as constable ('We figure it keeps him out of worse trouble to let him be constable' (p. 252)). In fact, none of the characters in 'Uncle Benny and the Bird-Dogs' appears to be three-dimensional (including the narrator), as though each is reduced to a cardboard cut-out in relation to Uncle Benny's exaggeration to mythical proportions. Even the bedside scene after Uncle Benny's crash at the barricade is an extension of Rawlings' humour to enforce the suggestion that, on top of everything else, perhaps Uncle Benny is immortal,

Killed him? Killed Uncle Benny? It can't be done until the Almighty Himself hollers 'Sceee!' Uncle Benny was messed up considerable, but him nor none of the bird-dogs was dead. (p. 266)

Uncle Benny is not dead, because as a symbol of individuality he cannot die, and his first words follow a drink of moonshine, as his 'wicked blue eyes' dance when he asks Doc, 'How will I get home when I'm drunk, now you've tore up my trained Ford?' (p. 266)

Even the Ford is not allowed to perish, because the motor is transferred, to a 'new second-hand body put on the chassis and around the engine' (p. 267): Uncle Benny gets the money for its recovery from another folk-hero ruse: he sells the bird-dogs to a 'daggone bootlegger in a truck going from Miami to New York' (probably a Yankee, and therefore fair game), and the footsore dogs return, 'I figure they busted loose just above Lawtey' (pp. 267-68).

In a sense, 'Benny and the Bird-Dogs' is a fable; the central characters are animals and mythological beings, and the moral appears to be that the spirit of individuality cannot be suppressed. That Uncle Benny will not die 'until the Almighty Hissel hollers "Soeey!"' is another hint that Rawlings intended him to represent some primitive animal-associated force, to die (go 'home' to heaven) when he is called only by the supreme force ('Soeey' is a Southern cry traditionally used to call hogs - and sometimes goats - to shelter or feeding).

The general literary impression is one of the strong links of 'Benny and the Bird-Dogs' to the oral tradition of the tall tale, yet it's control is distinctly literary; even the 'Cracker' speech of the narrator is weighted with suggestion and implication more literary than anecdotal. It may be argued that any storyteller in the anecdotal strain of short fiction must create an interest by the words he uses, but, as demonstrated
earlier, the kind of control Rawlings exerts in this tale is consciously literary without being self-consciously so.

If 'inappropriate writing' is that which does not rely on shared experience with the reader, but subjectively recites its experience of isolation in obscurely private, embarrassingly personal, or precious terms, the objective literary (and effective) presentation of some personal experience completely isolated from the experience of most readers must be described in terms of special literary merit. That Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings was able to effectively present her backwoods Florida Crackerland is meritorious; that Julia Peterkin was able to present her Southern plantation Gullah Negroes in a viable and convincing way is laudable - that she was able to effectively and realistically portray them in 1921 in a manner that is effective today is perhaps close to being miraculous. She was one of the first Americans to write about Negroes without the sentimental distortion of the plantation tradition, yet she herself was mistress of a Southern plantation who, as a Southern white woman, was somehow able to merge her consciousness with those of the black men and women on Lang Syne, and to project not only their 'Negritude' (or 'soul') but the characteristic flavour of their almost unintelligible (to English-speaking whites) tidewater South Carolina Gullah dialect, a mixture of seventeenth century English and African languages and dialects. Her biographer, Frank Durham, says
that 'Julia Peterkin was neither a Shakespeare nor a Henry James',\(^\text{18}\), (perhaps because her language is direct, almost simplistic), but her work reveals a singular imaginative sympathy which she was able to pass on to the reader, because she was a natural storyteller, whose style was appropriate to the story, exhibiting an economy which places her as at least the equal, in her mastery of form, of those six approaches examined here.

Peterkin's work is often considered as belonging in the Southern Gothic tradition, and it is true that her stories are 'grim, sometimes horrifying narratives of death, cruelty, and austere tragedy', but they are stories drawn directly from the grim reality of survival on the land. The terror which broods in Kildee's mind in Peterkin's 'The Red Rooster', seen in symbols of an arcane religion, is the natural, unguarded phenomenon of life dependent upon scratching a living from the soil in a hostile environment, which is an alien contradiction of the European idea of Nature, as expressed by the English Lakeland poets, for example. Peterkin's stories were not the products of 'a diseased imagination nor a desire to shock for the sake of shocking', but 'things Peterkin saw with her own eyes', stories of,

> cutting a mouth for a baby born without one, of a rooster mistaking an infant's eyes for berries, of a man's toes coming off and floating gaily in the water, of dogs digging up and eating the bodies of newborn babies.\(^\text{19}\)


\(^{19}\) Durham, p. 14.
People who lived next to the land in the South of the 1920s were aware of the complications of life and death as daily, inconsistent occurrences. They were not shielded from the reality of having to bury the dead deep enough so that animals, wild and domestic, did not dig up the bodies for food, nor were they spared the certainty of disaster brought by hail, flood, unseasonal frost, or the constant threat to life and limb which, in some cases, resulted in an almost obsessional reliance on firearms. Katherine Anne Porter says of her own youth,

"Country life, ranch life, was rough in Texas... It was quite a matter of course that you opened a closet door in a bedroom and stared down into the cold eyes of shotguns and rifles, stacked there because there was no more room in the gun closet."

Of course, Peterkin's characters are not concerned with guns; their survival is in other terms, 'Too appalling in their nature for any established magazine, even the old Mencken and Nathan The Smart Set', although Mencken was apparently among the first to encourage Peterkin, according to Emily Clark, who was editor of The Reviewer in Richmond, Virginia, at the time.

'The Red Rooster' provides an excellent example of the simple, almost sparse style Peterkin employed in her stories; had she relied on more complicated language, the stories would have been melodramatic, but the drama of the events themselves

21. Emily Clark, Innocence Abroad (New York, 1931), p. 120.
seem to carry the stories. That is not to say that Peterkin was merely reporting occurrences on her plantation; the stories are not journalistic in any way: their stark quality complement her subject, and provide easier access to the Gullah dialect of her characters than if it were embedded in a matrix of 'higher' language. As it was, she was so effective in her short prose fiction that she was denounced publicly by women's clubs in her home state for daring to write of the Negroes as she had, 'with a black heart',

she - a Southern lady - had violently broken the local codes of gentility and racial inferiority. She had put in black and white things that no Southern lady was supposed to know, much less write about. She had dealt unashamedly with the love and lust, birth and death, trials and aspirations of the Southern Negro as a human being and not merely as a comic figure or a layal retainer from a lower order of creation.23

If her descriptions clash with black image of 1977, it is because her characters were more concerned with survival on the land than survival in a white world; in a sense, she was the white intruder into a black world, until she came to terms with it through imaginative sympathy. Nowhere in Peterkin is there an 'axe to grind', for her imaginative sympathy even allowed her to employ the Gullah dialect in indirect transcription which retained the flavour (a feat which Stoney and Shelby felt they could not duplicate (Chapter One)); Donald Davidson, who praised her artistic use of Gullah dialect in her novels

said, Peterkin's first problem was to adapt this dialect to literary purposes, and her rendering, whether or not it is actually near to the Gullah talk itself, is unobtrusive and effective.²⁴

'The Red Rooster', with its horrible subject, hints at the occult, and at man's hidden nature through the character of Kildee; in a world which seems pitted against him, Kildee moves through each day in a constant battle to overcome the grass which is killing his cotton. His mule Mike is too old, and his only help in the struggle against the grass is a little girl, Missy; Peterkin begins this grim tale with an accumulation which echoes the ceaseless struggle Kildee has against the natural forces which seek to destroy his meagre crop, and, by implication, destroy him and his family: the abruptness of the paragraphs add to the feeling of 'one thing after another' attacking Kildee,

The night was hot. The heavy fragrance of the blossoms in the china-berry tree near Kildee's cabin door thickened the air and made it more difficult to breathe.

The red rooster sleeping high up on one of its limbs stirred uneasily and crowed in a dull hoarse voice.

Kildee lying beside Rose inside moved restlessly. He tried to keep still. He didn't want to wake Rose. She went hard as she could at her work all day long. When night came, she was tired. Worn out. Glad to go to bed and rest. He must keep still and let her sleep.²⁵


The pace of the story is guided by the brief paragraphs, sentences, and phrases marked off by full stops instead of commas; the paragraphs are short throughout the tale, never much more than four or five lines, and at the end, quickening to two and three lines on the printed page, matching the adrenalin flow raised by the horrifying action of the rooster. These three paragraphs serve as a good example of Peterkin's economy; the brief sentences and phrases contain all that is necessary for an introduction to this story, and a good deal more than is readily apparent: the tone of the story, the atmosphere and the pervading uneasiness are established concisely with no waste. That the 'night was hot' is the initial sense that it is difficult to breathe.; that 'the china-berry tree near Kildee's cabin door thickened the air and made it more difficult to breathe' suggests a type of suffocation repeated by the short paragraphs (a reversal of being 'long-winded'). The uneasiness engendered by the implied suffocation is realised as Kildee moves 'restlessly', and is increased by the fact that he must 'keep still' beside Rose, who had worked so hard, 'and let her sleep'; thus, Peterkin creates a restlessness which must be contained, an uneasiness that itself brings forth a brooding, waiting sensation in the suffocation of the heat and 'heavy fragrance of the blossoms in the china-berry tree'. This passage also introduces two of the symbols of arcane religion which leap from nature as
a grotesque intrusion in the lives of Rose and Kildee, the china-berry tree and the red rooster - obviously linked because the rooster sleeps in the tree, 'high up on one of its limbs'.

That the appalling climax to the story is attributable to a series of oversights on the parts of Kildee and Rose (because they are so exhausted by merely surviving) does not matter; to Kildee, the loss of his baby's eye is the result of his looking at the new moon through the china-berry tree (a sign of a curse, of misfortune) carried out by the symbol of some occult god through the animal impulse of the red rooster. In a sense, the primitive forces of the land are the agents which exact such terrible retribution (for the crime of surviving?), because the land causes Kildee's weariness and Rose's ill health, which leads to their disregarding the rooster's feeding and leaving the baby unattended in the cabin.

Peterkin's description of the rooster's quest for food which results in the story's hideous climax is neither overtly dramatic, filled with sickly fascination, nor squeamish in its approach; it is a singular description of a hungry creature's search in animal terms for something to fill the void left by his being disregarded in Rose's and Kildee's worry, exhaustion, and depression. The search lasts for several pages of the story, while the rooster investigates various possibilities and is chased away from the cabin by Rose who whispers angrily and ironically at him, 'Git on off!',
Some time I wish you was dead! You won' let nobody sleep een de night wid you' crowin'! Now you keep wakin' my baby up! Quit you doin's! I got work fo' do! I ain' got time fo' be runnin' you 'way f'om de do'! Shoo! (p. 214)

That Rose whispers implies that she is speaking almost reverently to the red rooster, as though he were some physical manifestation of some evil, unspeakable force; her insistent order is followed by an explanation which in a sense endows the rooster with a quality beyond the animal level, a type of perception to which he ironically responds, as though he understands Rose's 'I ain' got time fo' be runnin' you 'way f'om de do!', and acts on that information, bringing about the catastrophe. His investigation of the cabin is in stages which lead him past fire and tasteless threads scattered on the floor to little Sis's cradle. Sis, the baby, awakened by the sound of the rooster's croak of disgust over the threads, is delighted by the sight of 'the red rooster's glossy, bright feathers and his scarlet comb', cooing with delight, which in turn attracts the rooster, an accumulation of irony preparing the reader for the shock of what the rooster is about to do. Peterkin maintains the sense of animal search up to and including the climax, never relaxing her tight, necessary control.

The red rooster leaned a little closer. The child seemed harmless enough.

He was hungry. He had not had a single grain that morning. Not a crumb. Rose and Missie and Kildee had all forgotten to feed him.

The hens were scratching for worms, but it was very hot. They had to hold their wings out away from their bodies while they scratched. A tiresome thing.
Maybe these two, bright shiny eyes would be good to eat. He would have to be quick to get them. They didn't keep still like blackberries. No, but maybe they tasted better.

His yellow beak was sharp and his long neck was strong, and he gave a swift peck. (p. 216)

All of Peterkin's subtle preparation is for this moment which distracts Rose into mindless feelings of vengeance and leaves Kildee speechless, but with only one answer, obeisance to the arcane gods, 'When he killed the rooster, he'd cut the damned tree down too' (p. 217).

Julia Peterkin had to transcend Southern traditions which were stumbling blocks to many of her fellow Southerners; that she was able to project her 'postage-stamp' corner of the South past those traditions implies that perhaps she was a kind of revolutionary. Frank Durham claims,

She was not. She was innately a genuine Southern lady. With a keen eye, a compassionate heart, and an increasingly skilled pen, she simply told the truth as she saw it. Her subject was human nature itself. It was an accident of fate that the human beings she wrote about were black.26

Whether or not Durham's personal appraisal of Peterkin's character is true, it is a happy 'accident of fate' which led her to reach the universal traits of 'human nature itself' through the 'microcosm of the world' which she discovered, understood, and projected from her isolated region of the tidewater South.

26. Durham, p. 44.
Of regionalism, and thence by implication the future of the particular region of the Southern United States, Julia Peterkin, in 'Seeing Things' spoke of the personalised perception of the individual and the fact that no two people ever see things alike.

The impressions given us by our senses may be accurate or false; they may be a record of absolute truth, or a jumbled confusion of mistakes... We must each make our own environment and mold our individual universe... There is no way out of it. All well-being depends on seeing things. The more things we see clearly, the more interesting is the exclusive world that we must make for ourselves.27

The idea that the artist moulds his or her own universe based upon perception appears to be a good definition of not only the regional writer, but every writer, because each writes from the particular world of personal experience. Of course the more limited the access to the experience, the more particular the 'regionality' of the writing, but the artist's ability to make the most isolated experience accessible to the reader is what makes his art 'universal'. The six approaches to the short story in the South examined by this thesis contain the essence of that universality attained through the total intellectual control of imagination: Faulkner's personalised diction (which approaches Shakespeare's genius), the careful academic obeisance to form and the classical foundations of writing by the Fugitives (represented by Tate, Lytle, and Warren), the tight insularity and challenging work of black writers (notably Ellison, Hurston, and Oliver), the superb and firmly
distanced control of Katherine Anne Porter, the construction of concrete and living symbols by Flannery O'Connor, and the poetic effect achieved by Eudora Welty. These six avenues of approach to the short story are reflected in the work on their contemporaries and successors, among whom Alice Walker, Peter Taylor, Doris Betts, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, and Julia Peterkin 'mould' their own universes based upon perception.

As for the future of Southern short fiction, perhaps it will last longer than the South itself; many people see the end of the traditional South in the influx of industry to what is now euphemistically termed 'the sun belt'. Only fifty years or so have passed since the advent of the Southern 'renaissance' in writing, yet in another fifty years, such considerations as the economics of population growth and food production, ease of access to other areas, and speed of transport may create an atmosphere and culture in the South to generate a writing which might appear to be science fiction to a reader in the 1970s, especially as the traditional use of the land shifts from agriculture to factory (or agronomy to hydroponics?).

Speculation along these lines, however, assumes that the only important influence upon writers in the South is the traditional agrarian nature of its economy, a premiss which is contradicted by the impact upon Southern writing by those who first enunciated the theory of a modern
Southern agrarian society. By their own literary successes, the poet-critics of the Fugitive-Agrarian movement provided an influence upon Southern letters based upon academic rather than agrarian ideals. More and more Southern writers have become attached to University faculties as teachers or 'writers-in-residence', perhaps signalling a shift in emphasis in the South away from isolated individuals writing from plantations or from back in the pine-winey hills, especially when writers are called upon to teach 'creative writing'.

Doris Betts casts some light on the effects of such teaching upon her own work, commenting that her own style has been changed by her university work 'a great deal', and that one of the changes is 'I am writing more snide humor than comes naturally to me. And I am enjoying that'; her writing has, through university teaching and contact, 'Become more experimental', because university life has prevented her from 'writing in a box'. She says 'I may be more careful about each sentence', but 'freedom is greater'.

What effect Southern university life generally will have upon Southern writers, and short prose fiction writers in particular, remains to be seen (George Garrett's short fiction gave way to the novel, Death of the Fox (1971) while he was writer-in-residence at the University of South Carolina, yet his successor William Price Fox,

refused to follow Garrett's example - or the coincidental literary suggestion in the title of Garrett's novel, and concentrated more intensely upon the short story). F.R. Leavis suggests that the university's position in any society is 'a focus of consciousness and human responsibility' and 'a guarantor of a real performance of the critical function - that critical function which is a creative one'. If his statement is correct, then perhaps the Southern university writer will prevail beyond the South itself. Should the South eventually disappear under the asphalt and aluminium of international corporations in the future, the chances are good that its death will be well recorded before the traditional land-linked themes are replaced by tales of Southern Babbitts trapped in the concrete canyons of New Atlanta. On the other hand, the 'publish-or-die' attitude existing in American universities, as a rule, may foster an attempt to popularise Southern short fiction to match the modern popular interest in the South, augmented by the election of the first Southerner (since ante-bellum days) to the office of President of the United States. Such an attempt may change the nature of the Southern short story before a change occurs in the South itself.

The 'change' may not be the pejorative one implied by the term 'popularise', with its attendant connotations of the formula television script, the brief newspaper article,

and the abbreviated magazine 'conditioning' associated with (but not necessarily the result of) the New Journalism. Neither may it be a change associated with what C.P. Snow calls 'Two Cultures' (the scientific and the literary), nor what Leavis, in qualifying Snow, regards as the 'threat' of 'a general impoverishment of life' which, 'ironically, accompanies the technological advance and the rising standard of living'.\(^3\) Jack Lindsay, in his most recent collection of essays on literature, *Decay and Renewal*, perhaps comes nearer the mark, when he says,

> We may say that in all culture after early tribal days there is a deep and ceaseless conflict between the alienated consciousness and the consciousness of alienation... Now at last the two elements can fully combine, the realistic criticism and the utopian dream - the former robbed of its limiting factors, the latter robbed of its fantasy-aspects.\(^4\)

Lindsay speaks of art which is based not upon a culture separated from any facet of the human condition (scientific, literary, or otherwise), but upon every facet of human consciousness - and upon even the dividing lines between the facets. Applying Lindsay's symbol of the conflict of awareness (the alienated consciousness *versus* the consciousness of alienation), the major irony in Leavis's statement is revealed as being that perhaps the 'threat' of 'a general impoverishment of life' itself becomes a point of artistic creation, an enrichment.

\(^3\) Leavis, p. 13.

\(^4\) Jack Lindsay, *Decay and Renewal* (Sidney and London, 1976), pp. 443-44.
Thus, we are presented not with a division of culture, but a cycle of culture based upon the continuing renewal of the origins of art: 'progress' brings change, change brings the threat of 'a general impoverishment of life', which, in turn, becomes a point of the begetting of art, an enrichment of life. Art is perhaps that element of the human condition which remains vital because it avoids stasis, by courting the 'conflict of awareness'; it is alive because it is built upon change.

In 1937, Robert Penn Warren spoke of the Southern 'renaissance' and its 'new literature' as being part of a 'general ferment' and a 'process of self-scrutiny and self-definition' built upon social and historical 'collisions',

This is, rather, to say that the writers have been trying to explore in the human terms of their art the same materials which have engaged, in other terms, the historian, the politician, the labor organizer, the banker and the sociologist: and to say that the writers have in their best work rebuked, perhaps unwittingly, the ledger, the table of statistics, the slogan, and the blind prejudice. 32

Forty years on, the Southern 'renaissance' continues, as has the South itself, creating its art out of the 'conflict of awareness': of Lost Causes, of an exile's cultural isolation (though an exile no longer), of a 'spiritual nationalism', of threats of reconstruction, and of individuality. When the change occurs which shifts Modern South to Future South, the Southern short story writer will be ready: in a sense, he has always been waiting for the apocalypse.

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Part I lists short prose fiction by modern Southern writers as cited in the text; Part II, poetry and prose fiction alluded to or directly related to the text; Part III, critical works by or about Southern writers, as cited in or directly related to the text; Part IV, critical works about short prose fiction and writing, generally, as cited or alluded to in the text. Short titles have been added to each section.

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Chapters Two through Seven examine successively six approaches to the writing of modern short stories in the South: the way that William Faulkner controlled the language through a personalised idiom drawn from an environment which included such influences as the King James Version of the Bible, Mark Twain, and Sir Walter Scott; the influence of the Fugitives upon Southern letters, in particular their advancement of the themes and ideas of their classical training and the controlled artifice of their writing form, as shown in stories by Allen Tate, Andrew Lytle, and Robert Penn Warren; the firmly distanced control of Katherine Anne Porter which made her the natural exponent of the short story; Flannery O'Connor's use of imagery in explaining her often disturbing symbols; the technical improvisations, structure, tone, poetic effect, and characteristic humour of Eudora Welty; and, the direct and indirect relation to Southern short fiction of black writers Ralph Ellison, Zora Neale Hurston, Diane Oliver, Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, and James Baldwin.

The final chapter includes an examination of universality and regionality, the impact of the six approaches upon Southern short fiction, the changing face of the South, and possible directions of future Southern short prose fiction.