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**LAURI PILTER**

The Comic and the Tragicomic  
in the Works of William Faulkner



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## PREFACE

The aim of this doctoral dissertation is to study the methods of application and the modes of occurrence of the comic and the tragicomic in the works of William Faulkner. Serving as the bases for the theoretical approaches are the discussions on the comic by Immanuel Kant, Henri Bergson and Fred Miller Robinson. The emphasis in the work is on the occasions when the comic verges on the sublime. The tragicomic is understood not only and mainly as “the pathetically funny”, but as oscillations of the consciousness on the border of an unexpected blank in cognition, producing, through a higher intellectual feeling, the sensation of the sublime. This broader interpretation of the tragicomic encompasses an important point. The next misleading step after the widespread view of Faulkner as a depressingly tragic writer is to regard him as an irreverent joker with grave themes, or, with somewhat more reason, he is seen as an author solely of grim farces and sombre burlesques. While the latter aspect of his unmistakably exists and serious works of scholarship have been devoted to it, one of the main motives for writing this thesis was the need to show how often Faulkner’s comic carries the imagination into the realms of the noble and the sublime, how much he can elevate the reader’s sensations. The discussion includes pages of comparative reception of Mikhail Bakhtin’s and Wolfgang Kayser’s views of the grotesque, as related to the tragicomic, with the focus on how and in what historically defined sense their arguments can be applied to Faulkner.

The work is divided into an introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion. The direction of the research is from concrete textual studies towards a more generalized treatment. In addition to the comic and the tragicomic, a comedic aspect in Faulkner is observed, as referring to the epic comprehension, social grasp, emotional intensity, pervasive structuralization and the hard-won sense of affirmation of life in his oeuvre. The concept of comedic is based on characteristics of the world-famous “comedies” by Dante and Balzac. The distinction between the comedic and the comic is necessary, as a writer who is comic in specific cases need not be comedic, nor vice versa. It is shown, however, that Faulkner was both. Through the five chapters, the author of this study has been attempting to move towards a synthesis of the comic, tragicomic and comedic aspects of all of Faulkner’s narrative levels, to arrive at an explanation of what gave that analyst of the depths of soul the reason to claim, in his Nobel Award acceptance speech, that “man will not merely endure: he will prevail”.

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# INTRODUCTION

## Faulkner and the (Tragi)comic

This study uses different approaches to look upon the comic and the tragicomic in the fiction of William Cuthbert Faulkner (1897–1962). With the occurrence in Faulkner's fiction of numerous occasions of jokes, tall tales, and comic and tragicomic incidents being an established fact of criticism, his being a comic writer does not need to be proved.

No attempt will be made to pay equal attention to all of Faulkner's nineteen novels, but to the general tragicomic impact of his oeuvre, the best essence of which is seen as lying in his six most definitely established masterpieces, the novels "The Sound and the Fury" (1929), "As I Lay Dying" (1930), "Light in August" (1932), "Absalom, Absalom!" (1936), "The Hamlet" (1940), and "Go Down, Moses" (1942), next to which aspects of other works are treated.

The comic and the tragicomic have been selected as the focal themes of this study about Faulkner, not because they have been lacking critical attention, but because to the author they seemed the two perhaps most crucial elements of Faulkner's achievement, a gateway, so to speak, into a comprehensive interpretation of Faulkner's humanism. In accordance with the views of James Joyce, quoted a few pages below, the comic is an essential, permanent quality of life as a whole. It is no special, incidental occurrence but the very pulse within the circulation of life force. The tragic, too, needs to be seen as an integral part of everyday existence, in minor or major portions always nearby. Looking at the devices of conveying the sense of comic and tragicomic in a writer therefore means an exploration of how relevant his or her interpretation of life is for the life of the readers (or even non-readers, since achievements in the realm of the spiritual and artistic, similarly to technical innovations, do reach the posterity, if only in indirect ways). The comic and tragicomic motifs, plots, characters, utterances, style in Faulkner ought not to be regarded as formulas employed to impress the reader into appreciating the writer's artistry, but as the organic cells of that artistry, aimed to evoke in the readers a joy and wonder at the perception of what new depths and spaces such remirrorings of life can open in the imagination. Faulkner's comedy and tragicomedy serve as a key to his development of the basic human need for meaningful narratives in general. The aim of this dissertation, therefore, is to gain a perspective on what may be called the nature of Faulkner's spirituality *through* the medium of looking on a number of aspects that make Faulkner comic and tragicomic. These two qualities characterize his writings on diverse levels, even as the very logic of the verbal continuity and the texture of his imagery, both of which will be explored.

The very concept of the tragicomic was clearly objected to by such German classics as Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781), who considered it too vague, and his followers Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller

(Kayser 1981: 54). Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), however, used the term willingly, and almost synonymously with his conception of the grotesque, which was twofold, pointing to the original, pictorial and unemotional meaning in some of his works, and agreeing with the by then fortified sense of moral and receptional confusion and turmoil in others (Kayser 1981: 51–53).

Proceeding from F. Schlegel's affirmative recognition of the field of studies of the tragicomic, the main question in this study is, what makes Faulkner tragicomic?

## **The Understatement as a Method of Cognitive Emphasis in Faulkner**

“Timon of Athens” is Shakespeare's bitterest drama. Apart from its structural and stylistic merits, one can admire the extreme sincerity of its message, the depth of its tragic emerging almost as serene. But the fact remains, even for the most sympathetic of receivers, its bitterness is too bitter. There is no compromise, no hint even of the alleviation through love. Dealing with charity turning, through disappointment, into hatred, one might say that its theme is far higher to be able to offer redemption: charity, in the New Testament sense, seen as above the usual sense of love: yet the presumption which any receiver of the drama must take in their own consequent attitudes and actions (including the evolution of its message in their mind, or, if they are authors, in their works), is that the world and its peace cannot rest on love in the form of charity as benefaction alone. Love as charity without the sensuous, the sensual, and the sentient, without, therefore, the factor of biology and its appeals, is as impossible to keep functioning long as any attempted construction of a *perpetuum mobile*.

It is therefore justified to observe the re-elaboration of the message of “Timon” by other authors, as mellowing though as they inevitably seem in comparison with Shakespeare's abysmal cul-de-sac of tragic misanthropy. Sentimentalized, or heroizing the misanthrope in a prohumanist light where the original play featured a fall as prompt and beyond emotional judgment as any fact in the laws of physics; sweetening or even unnaturally oversweetening the original bitterness, such reworkings are nevertheless welcome for studies as they express the unstoppable continuance of life.

While Shakespeare reached the pessimism of this work, written in 1608, late in his life and career, Faulkner whose angst of influence, using a term of Freud, was apparently the greatest in relation to Shakespeare (Blotner 1991: 180, 558) (mediated, though reaching him indirectly, by the reception and interpretations of Goethe and other German classics), proceeded from the same tragic misanthropy as the original point of his oeuvre. An artist, he intuitively knew from the start, is like Timon: pouring the fruits of his talent like Timon his gold as the benefaction to the world, he is met with miscomprehension and

ingratitude, and, if anything, it is finally his laconic bitterness, his invectives or his silence that produce any calm or equilibrium of goodness at all in the world which he is born to face as a subject. Knowing this in advance as a careful reader and thinker, how then, is an artist, responsible for his talent, to develop any artistic career at all?

Is he to regard the sense of his talent as a curse, whose urge it would be a greater good to suppress?

But what greater good than a gift of selfless beauty solely of spiritual and intellectual aspirations would there be to add to a world governed by cruel impulses in a schizophrenic confusion of good and evil, to soar above its main substance like above a senseless thicket? By giving up the service of his talent, the only option would seem, by succumbing every particle of his nature, to become a part of the thicket himself.

Faulkner's response was a mixture of a following of and a counterpoint to Timon's course. His initial relentless misanthropy later turned into gilded benefactory speeches, what was earlier sensuous was now only grand, instead of original hopeless depths he now anchored his visions to abstract beliefs and reasonings about noble ideas; his early hopelessness was as bloody as almost to taste sweet; the later cloyness of his compromises with the half-sincere and half-serious cannot help but leave an unpleasant aftertaste of unacknowledged embitterment. In this, Faulkner's creativity is a Timon of Athens in reverse. But still they possess a parallelism: like Timon, Faulkner, by first pouring out the balm of the gift of his art on friends and "friends" was offering a benefaction disguising misanthropy; and later, as with Timon, by paying the thieves and ravagers for their work with the gold of his revengeful bitterness his was a misanthropy producing unexpectedly benefactory results. The twofold relation of Faulkner in relation to Shakespeare's character is an involvement in two directions: the bitterness of later Faulkner, though gilded, is still a bitterness, but because its misanthropy is compromised, it is not a tragic one, like Timon's, but tragicomic in the end.

The spirit of compromise, not necessarily a shortcoming, for Faulkner was basically a humble man, runs through much of his meandering fantasies. Another kind of answer, to put into words the writerly attitude, is that a source of Faulkner's life-affirming and decay-facing tragicomic sense is his well-developed sense of stylistic and narrative understatement.

A component of literature, the understatement, or various employments of litotes (Estonian *rõhuvähendus*, *meioos*) is a distant analogy in the literature of the West with classical East Asian lyrical poetry. By it, the author diminishes the voice of his or her artist ego, casts doubt on the value or truthfulness of the words expressed and at the same time grows their weight. Words should rather be scant but they should carry life. The hyperbolism, as occasionally very notably in Faulkner, that in a reaction emerges from such understatement like a ferment from a pressed substance, is the more lucid, powerful and convincing, as it has been sieved from random ramblings of fantasy by the author's self-censoring contemplation of the conditions of the environment and the language.

In the Spanish-language world, Gabriel García Márquez achieved such magnificent hyperbolicism through understatement in “One Hundred Years of Solitude” (1967) and several of his short stories; but his next magic realist novel, “The Autumn of the Patriarch” (1975), endeavours to impress through naturalistic overstatement, albeit enclosed in powerful metaphors.

In the Anglophone literatures, hardly anyone in the 20th century literature applied the understatement with such canny consistency as Samuel Beckett in his novels. The philosophical weight behind his apparent prattle illustrates the power of the understatement. He is, by this quality, larger than his century. But he limited his use of understatement to a smaller range of fields than Faulkner; he never attempted it with the folk tale, by the taming of whose excesses Faulkner achieved remarkable results.

## **Theoretical Sources**

A thorough categorization of the comic in Faulkner has been offered by Hans Bunge whose classification will be presented below. The influence of Henri Bergson on Faulkner is well known. The French theoretician exerted an influence on him both on the wider scale, through his metaphysics of time, existence, and the individual’s peculiar relationship to being and motion, as well as in the narrower, specifically comic-related sense. Bergson’s views on what constitutes the comic are greatly, though not without modulations, applicable to a theory of comic in Faulkner. The main reservations in this respect arise from the fact that Bergson used French classicist comedy with its genre restrictions as the basis of his generalizations about comic in art. This study uses several quotations from Fred Miller Robinson who in his “Comedy of Language” has provided a deep and innovative Bergsonian interpretation of Faulkner’s comic, synthesizing the Frenchman’s aesthetic arguments with his larger metaphysical theory in a way that shows the comic, though at times difficult to recognize, to be lying at the core of Faulkner’s narrative metaphysics.

According to a thesis in this study, a writer who is comic need not be comedic – and to a lesser extent, the other way round. Faulkner is seen as being both. The somewhat paradoxical statement means that a writer who uses jokes in his works need not be conveying a joyous message on the whole. As the comic and the comedic in this sense are divergent, at most only overlapping qualities, the occurrence of each in Faulkner will be analyzed in different chapters.

The comic in Faulkner is not always easy to recognize, as it often emerges overshadowed by the tragic, or as tragicomic causing a bizarre sense of the hilarious and the terrible. It is therefore necessary to define in Faulkner not merely “what is funny” but to resort to a more generalized, aesthetically neutral, philosophically understood definition of comic, such as provided by Immanuel Kant. On the common theoretical foundation of Bergson and Kant, a number of Faulkner’s short stories as well as passages from some of his

novels are then analyzed, pointing out all the available categories of comic in Faulkner as distinguished by Bungert. A particularly comic episode from one of Faulkner's novels will be viewed as proof of his borrowings from earlier authors, of his powerful connections with the classical comic masterpieces of Europe (in this instance, Rabelais).

Mikhail Bakhtin in the Introduction of his monograph "Rabelais and His World" remarks: "The relative nature of all that exists is always gay; it is the joy of change /---/" (1984: 48). Bakhtin seems insufficiently to have known and appreciated the tight links even the most avant-garde 20<sup>th</sup> century modernist fiction writers often developed between their innovative techniques and the oral traditions of their people (see for example his opposition of the modernist and the realist grotesque, 1984: 46). But his thought was anticipated by such a pioneering modernist as James Joyce. In his book "The Comedy of Language. Studies in Modern Comic Literature" (1980), Fred Miller Robinson quotes Joyce's views on the comic. In a Paris notebook of 1903 Joyce has written:

And now of comedy. An improper art aims at exciting in the way of comedy the feeling of desire but the feeling which is proper to comic art is the feeling of joy. Desire, as I have said, is the feeling which urges us to go to something but joy is the feeling which the possession of some good excites in us... desire urges us from rest that we may possess something but joy holds us in rest so long as we possess something... a comedy (a work of comic art) which does not urge us to seek anything beyond itself excites in us the feeling of joy. (Cited in: Robinson 1980: 25)

Robinson then sums up what made comedy so important for young Joyce:

/I/t is clear at what level of representation /Joyce/ thinks we can discover the comic. For him comedy is a profound sense of and response to the nature of things. Joy carries with it all the resonance of an abstraction. Like pity and terror in tragic art, joy arrests us ("holds us in rest") so that we may apprehend the beautiful. If the apprehension of beauty is joyful, then the work is a comedy. Comedy is a genre of the highest art. Joyce goes on to say that if tragedy excites in us the feeling of joy it can be said "to participate in the nature of comic art," and that in this sense comedy is the "perfect" and tragedy the "imperfect manner" in art. It seems clear that if Joyce were to write a comic novel, it would be more than a comedy of manners; it would aspire to the highest art. (Robinson 1980: 26)

"A profound sense of and response to the nature of things" – such a broad and profound definition of the comic will prove necessary for analyzing the universalistic life-affirmation in the fiction of such modernist classics as Joyce and William Faulkner. Necessary also for understanding the dynamics of humour in fiction are the arguments of the metaphysical theory of comic as presented by the French philosopher Henri Bergson in his book "Creative Evolution" and developed by Robinson.

In parts of this masterwork /Creative Evolution/ /Bergson/ describes the paradoxical nature of the operations of language, its simultaneously liberating and confining functions. He makes his most significant remarks in this regard when discussing the idea that the intellect, which needs to fabricate fixed things, nevertheless must always be “*decomposing*” and “*recomposing*” its systems. The intellect sets itself in motion in the very process of seeking static forms. “So a language is required which makes it possible to be always passing from what is known to what is yet to be known... This tendency of the sign to transfer itself from one object to another [and from “things to ideas”] is characteristic of human language.” It is this very “mobility of words” that has made language contribute to the “liberation” of the intellect from its reliance on material objects. The intellect “profits by the fact that the world is an external thing, which the intelligence can catch hold of and cling to, and at the same time an immaterial thing, by means of which the intelligence can penetrate even to the inwardness of its own work.” And yet language “is made to designate things, and nought but things... Forms are all that it is capable of expressing.” (Robinson 1980: 18)

In Bergson’s work “Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of Comic”, discussing the phenomenon in terms of a social theory, the comic was found to be always associated with some rigidity, some lifelessness and inanimate qualities emerging within the fabric of life, the continuous flux of reality: an inertia of fixed forms emptied of their living contents; the failure of failed things to resist the current of existence. Once in his essay Bergson defines the essence of comic as “something mechanical encrusted upon the living” (Bergson 2003). Uniting Bergson’s social theory and metaphysical arguments about language, Robinson sees in all the comic in fiction “the spectacle of something “living” struggling in a linguistic mechanism to express its life, and failing, and yet in the very process of failing expressing its life. /---/ The comedy lies in the interplay of life and automatism, reality and language, not simply in the correction of one by the other.” (Robinson 1980: 19)

Contrary to the traditional assumptions based on the classifications of Aristotle and the doctrines of the theoreticians of the French classicist drama, the line between the comic and the tragic was never very clear even in ancient Greek plays. The speculations of the porter in “Macbeth” and the jokes of the fool in “King Lear” are often referred to as classic examples of tragicomedy, but Shakespeare was not the first one to provoke laughter at sad or terrible scenes or engender fear in a humorous plot. The ancient Greek tragic performances with the trilogy of tragedies followed by a shorter, humorous satyr’s play were intended to meet the spectators’ expectations both for the heart-rending and the humorous. Even such an embodiment of high tragic qualities as Sophocles’s “King Oedipus” includes comic moments, as when the messenger announces the “good” news of the old king’s death to Oedipus in light-hearted rhymes (Lill 2008: 84). The absorption of works of a serious, grave impact in a partly comic spirit has been noted by classics of world literature: Thomas Mann reports Johann Wolfgang Goethe as referring to his “Faust” with the phrase “this very serious jest” (Mann 1999: 723). As a term in

its own right, removed from the definitions of genres, **the tragicomic means the startling, often nearly paralyzing surprise at the recognition of a hidden truth.** Present always in the tragicomic is a feeling of the sublime, which emerges as a reaction to the apparent impression of the grotesque or the farcical. Immanuel Kant in “The Critique of Judgment” has characterized the sublime as a reference by the aesthetic judgment, “springing from a higher intellectual feeling” (1992: 33), and as “being brought about by the feeling of a momentary check to the vital forces followed at once by a discharge all the more powerful”, and thus appearing “no sport, but dead earnest in the affairs of the imagination” (1992: 91). It belongs to the essence of tragicomic paradoxes that such a dead earnest momentary check emerges at the concurrence with the risible.

The question may arise, may not the varying levels, gaps and leaps of Faulkner’s narrations be compared to the structural shifts of such a pathfinder in experimental fiction as Miguel de Cervantes, whom Faulkner highly valued? Discussing the structural levels of „Don Quijote“, most notably the metafictional level change from Part One to Two, as well as the transitions between the elevated, low and ordinary plane handlings of the wise madman’s unprecedented quest, Jüri Talvet finds that „while Rabelais was mainly playing on the stylistic level, Cervantes carried the game over into the structure of his work“ (1995: 105).

In Faulkner, the alterations in the level of structure are mostly implicitly cradled in the stylistic modes of language as speech. They have the twofold character of having the autonomy of spoken rhetoric and yet crystallized in being written. It might be said tentatively that Faulkner less than Cervantes, less even than Joyce meddles with his own voice. The games with structure as changing perspectives of fixed identities, offering views of different sets of circumstances, different chains of perception from different points of cognition, always mirror the author’s own contemplation of the variations in his self-image (as in Cervantes’s ambivalent connection with the fictional Cide Hamete Benengeli, in whom he both masks and demasks himself). Not the least importance may attributed to the fact that Faulkner wrote all his major novels quicker, in a shorter span of time, than it took Cervantes and Joyce to create „Don Quijote“ and „Ulysses“. He correspondingly changed less in the course of his work, and had less reason to ponder the mystery of the procession of his writing self in time. In the same way, he may be contrasted with Laurence Sterne and „Tristram Shandy“, also an explicit experiment in structure. And the one book among his better novels that did take Faulkner a longer time to write, „Absalom, Absalom!“, perhaps comes the closest to engaging the writer’s own levels of identity into sophisticated structural transitions, verging on the semi-metafictive. Explicit structure games involve the author’s deliberation in converting variations of his self-reflections to a combined message. There is less need felt for that when the author implicitly tunes his pen to the ear. Like Homer and Shakespeare, both of whose identities and authorships have been doubted, and both of whom supposedly composed

for oral performance (this, ideally, shows the common ground of the epic poet and the playwright), Faulkner usually, more than Cervantes and Joyce, withdraws his own personality behind the curtains of the imaginary stage of his fiction.

The word “comedic”, other than merely a synonym of “comic” or “laughable”, occurs occasionally in literary articles but is rare to be defined in established sources.

As a term distinct from “comic”, generally “comedic” may be said to designate any qualities of comedies overlapping with or separate from their comic, such as, for example, their structural bases. In the narrower sense, more essential to this study, “comedic” is derived from the mediaeval use of the word “comedy” as a narrative with a happy, positive ending, not necessarily a drama and not necessarily or predominantly a humorous, funny, cheerful one. The towering monument to this mediaeval sense of the term is Dante Alighieri’s “The Divine Comedy”, known first as “La Commedia” and later as “La Divina Commedia” in Italian.

However, the modern narrower definition of “comedic” is more specific and encompasses more than just a narrative with a positive ending. The scope, depth, and encyclopaedic range of information about the contemporary society, along with the emotional intensity, of Dante’s masterpiece turned its title into a symbol of great fictional narratives for future generations. Five centuries after Dante, the French writer Honoré de Balzac gave his mountain chain of novels about French society a title recalling Dante’s, “The Human Comedy” (“La Comédie humaine”). As a grand epic, based on the most productive social theories of the era and carefully, meticulously structured to cover all the layers of the social stage, all the levels of the narrator’s fictional journey with and among his characters, and combining severe realism with hard-won optimism, Balzac’s oeuvre qualifies as a counterpart to Dante’s and is therefore comedic in the sense set by the Italian author.

It is in that sense, applied to these and other similar literary enterprises, that the word “comedic” is occasionally used in modern literary criticism and that it is viewed in this study.

It may be possible to define “comedic” according to its distinct complementary qualities.

The comedic is a set of characteristics of broad narrative canvases, often embracing a whole oeuvre or the essential part of it, that portray a wide range of passions, vices and virtues of a number of real social strata, that give distinct real-life-like personalities and destinies to its numerous characters, that are organized by more or less strict structural principles, and that represent a recognizable progress, a fictional journey through various literal or symbolic realms to a dialectically achieved conclusion in a positive ending, affirmative of progress.

For the wide public, William Faulkner has the reputation of being a writer of the macabre and the overcomplicated – accordingly he is seen as providing little room for the comic and the humorous. Experts of Faulkner have achieved

a different opinion. For most of them, the writer appears not only as a master tragedian but also a supreme humorist, mingling the serious and the laughable in countless surprising proportions and combinations. Doreen Fowler has written in the introduction to “Faulkner and Humor. Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1984”:

The impulse to categorize is a strong one, and among writers of fiction, there appear to be two clear and distinct categories: comic writers and tragic writers. Among the former, Mark Twain, the creator of undying boyhood fantasies, is typically grouped; and often numbered among the latter is William Faulkner, the chronicler of mansions and magnolias in a brooding Southern clime, a modern-day prophet decrying the decay of values in a crass, materialistic, modern world. But such set and exclusive designations can never adequately define or describe writers of the stature of Faulkner or Twain, who explode categories and clichés, and for whom reality is always continuum, a totality in which laughter and tears blend and merge (Fowler 1986: ix).

In his article “Humor as Vision in Faulkner”, James M. Cox challenges widespread viewpoints by saying: “Everyone knows that William Faulkner is a humorous writer, which is far from saying that he is a humorist” (Cox 1986: 1).

According to Nancy B. Sederberg, “among the few early commentators who mention Faulkner’s use of comedy is Aubrey Starke, who in a 1934 article, “An American Comedy: An Introduction to a Bibliography of Faulkner,” *Colophon*, 5, pt. 19 /---/, states that Faulkner’s purpose was to create comedy following the precedent of Balzac’s *Comédie Humaine*” (Sederberg 1986: 92). Sederberg then adds that Malcolm Cowley, who compiled “The Portable Faulkner”, “pick/ed/ up and elaborate/d/ on /Starke’s/ point” (Sederberg 1986: 92). In her own discussion of the comic elements in the novel “Go Down Moses”, she argues against those critics, such as Richard Pearce, who maintain that “Faulkner’s view of life was fundamentally comic” (cited in: Sederberg 1986: 92), even those who apply Malraux’s term *prèsque comique* (“nearly comic”) to “Sanctuary” and “As I Lay Dying”, her own attempt being to treat “the comic elements in Faulkner’s work as part of a unified tragicomic vision.” (Sederberg 1986: 92). Explaining her approach, she says that Faulkner “seldom exploits comedy for its own sake or as “relief” from tragic doings but rather integrates it” within the larger context of reading experience. “The result is a fusion of comedy with the deeper sense of tragedy and pathos which dominates his work” (Sederberg 1986: 79). Thus, although Sederberg questions Faulkner being a comic writer, she casts no doubt on him being a tragicomic one. It might be illuminating to repeat here a statement that Sederberg quotes Faulkner as saying in a 1957 interview at the University of Virginia: “there’s not too fine a distinction between humor and tragedy, /---/ even tragedy is in a way walking a tightrope between the ridiculous – between the bizarre and the terrible” (cited in: Sederberg 1986: 79). John Rabbetts writes: “/O/ften in Faulkner’s work, the face of tragedy is shown to wear a grimace of wry humour when glimpsed from a slightly different angle” (1989: 115).

The scholars Hans Bungert, James Mellard and Ryuichi Yamaguchi have each written monographs about the humorous in Faulkner's novels. Each of them has a distinctly different approach: Bungert rather specifically focuses on the influences of the 19th century low-life tall tale humour; Mellard often bases his approaches on the post-Freudian structuralist semantics of Jacques Lacan; for Yamaguchi, finding support for his arguments in Faulkner's own scant theoretical statements, the central term concerning humour is "bizarre" as opposed to "the terrible".

Hans Bungert's monograph in German, "William Faulkner and the Humorous Tradition of the American South", studies points of influence and parallels in Faulkner's fiction mainly with the 19th century tall tale authors, such as T. B. Thorpe and H. C. Lewis, and with Mark Twain. In the study, the author constantly compares and makes generalizations based on comparisons. The specific traits of Bungert's approach to the comic in Faulkner can be found in his article "Faulkner's Humor: A European View", printed in the selection of presentations of the 1984 Faulkner conference, a book titled "Faulkner and Humor. Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1984".

Admitting that "[t]he neat categories and simple typologies one comes across in some unpublished doctoral dissertations on Faulkner's humor prove that some scholars are not aware of this pitfall [of categorizing, rather than analyzing, the comic in Faulkner]" (1986: 141), Bungert states the main problem concerning the topic as being "the absence of a fully satisfactory theory of comedy or theory of humor" (1986: 141). Bungert bases his own approach to Faulkner's humor on the view of the writer as a humanist with a serene look on the world, and using the following definition of humour by the German writer Jean Paul (1763–1825):

It diminishes what is great, but unlike parody, in order to place it side by side with what is small, and enlarges what is small, but unlike irony, in order to place it side by side with what is great, thus destroying both, because all things are equal and nothing vis-à-vis infinity" (cited in: Bungert 1986: 142),

he concludes "that a true humorist sees insufficiencies, inadequacies, and failings *sub specie aeternitatis*" (1986: 142).

The four types of Faulknerian comedy according to Bungert, all but the first of them named so by the German scholar himself, are the following:

- the comedy of "epicized" tall tales (comedy of exaggeration, in Bungert's terms);
- the verbal comedy (the vernacular, including comedy of names);
- the comedy of deception;
- the contrapuntal comedy.

An expert of the traditional tall tale, Bungert delineates two differences between the art of "folk raconteurs" (one of whom some early critics have called Faulkner) and Faulkner's use of tall tale techniques. The first difference is that "Faulkner uses hyperbole in plots and narrative contexts where it comes

unexpectedly” (1986: 143), and the other is that he ““epicizes” tall tales”, that is, “[t]hey do not remain anecdotal and incidental in his fiction, but are epically expanded and integrated into larger thematic and structural contexts” (1986: 143). Thus Faulkner blows up facts and characters to give more emphasis to them, to come closer to truth in his fiction. Bungert also points out that mythicized, blown up characters (such as Eula Varner and Flem Snopes) exist side by side with unexaggerated, ordinary human *personae*.

Faulkner’s verbal comedy, according to Bungert, “is appropriate to the character and results from observing speech habits and transforming these into art” (1986: 144), as he usually avoids dialect and pun excesses (occasionally practiced by Mark Twain, amidst others). Among Faulkner’s favourite comic devices are figures of speech put into the mouth of characters, expressing humour in the vein of folk wisdom and conveyed in the vernacular. The comedy of names can be classified as a part of the verbal comedy; it is not limited to comic name inventions (such as Snopes) but may sometimes even carry the action, as in the short story “My Grandmother Millard” where the success of a matrimony is endangered by the bridegroom’s name causing embarrassing associations.

The comedy of deception appears in novels such as “The Unvanquished” and “The Reivers” in which the juvenile narrator’s inexperienced point of view conveys events and situations in an excited, adventuresome spirit, leaving a deceptively light and humorous impression of serious, even tragic conflicts and dilemmas. A similar kind of quality Bungert marks in the first chapter, “Was”, of the novel “Go Down, Moses”. According to him, such deliberate misleading of the reader is meant “to intensify the non-comic final impact” (1986: 147). Related to this type is the comedy of limited perception, the narrators of which display some kind of disadvantage in regard to the comprehension of truth.

The contrapuntal comedy can be observed in novels such as “The Wild Palms” (in which the story of the tall convict, “Old Man”, forms a symmetrical comic counterpoint to the tragic story of Charlotte and Harry Wilbourne), in “The Sound and the Fury” (in which the third section narrated by the wickedly humorous Jason forms a comic scherzo) and in the overall structure of Faulkner’s “Collected Stories” with the humorous short stories presenting comic antitheses to the tragic ones preceding them.

In the collection “Faulkner and Psychology. Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1991”, Jay Martin has published an article entitled “Faulkner’s “Male Commedia”: The Triumph of Manly Grief”. Using the term *commedia*, Martin attempts to apply the concept as the genre name of a large epic narrative with a happy ending also to Faulkner. With no especial reference to the comic except as a development with a non-tragic outcome, the several *comedias* in world literature are seen as multilevel narrative journeys, or journeys by way of narration, through various stages of the passions, weaknesses and virtues of a given community. As Dante’s “Commedia” occurs in the moral structures of an imaginary spiritual otherworld, more

similarities are usually found between the Yoknapatawpha cycle and Balzac's "The Human Comedy". But Martin argues against the frequent, overly sociological reading of Faulkner that puts him next to Balzac as a social chronicler.

Martin writes: "Faulkner's imaginative achievement was to fuse the formal visions of Dante and Balzac" (Martin 1994: 159). And he finds Faulkner's narrative journey to have occurred and been charted down, first and foremost, in the soul of a man lonely in his maleness:

Deeper than his moral depiction of ethical structures or his humanistic rendering of man's social organizations, Faulkner, in work after work, built a drama of man's movement from the world of women to the world of men; from impotence and romanticism to committed endeavour and finally to manly grief. (ib. 159)

By this line of thought, the ending in "manly grief" is nevertheless happy, appropriate for a *commedia*, as it signifies the soul's final finding of its true place, the acquisition of the ability to endure and survive.

Correspondingly, taking his "masculinist paradigm" (ib. 160) as the basis for the "psychological arrangement" (ib. 160), parallel to Dante's and Balzac's, Martin divides Faulkner's male characters between a *preoedipal* "*Inferno*" (**a realm of impotent rage**; examples by Martin include Donald Mahon and Januarius Jones in "Soldiers' Pay", young Bayard and his twin and Clarence Snopes in "Flags in the Dust" and "Sartoris", Jason Compson in "The Sound and the Fury", Popeye, Red and Pete in "Sanctuary", Joe Christmas and Gail Hightower in "Light in August", Thomas Sutpen and Charles Etienne Saint-Valery Bon in "Absalom, Absalom!" and Flem Snopes in the Snopes trilogy), an *oedipal* "*Purgatorio*" (**a realm of phallogocentric action**, examples including Horace Benbow in "Flags in the Dust", "Sartoris" and "Sanctuary", Quentin Compson in "The Sound and the Fury", Jewel and Darl Bundren in "As I Lay Dying", Charles Bon in "Absalom, Absalom!", Harry Wilbourne in "The Wild Palms", Mink Snopes and Jack Houston in "The Hamlet", Buck McCaslin in "Go Down, Moses" and Gowan Stevens in "Requiem for a Nun") and a *postoedipal* "*Paradiso*" (**a realm of calm grief**, among Martin's examples being the aviators in "Pylon", old Bayard in "The Unvanquished", the tall convict in "Old Man", V. K. Ratliff in the Snopes trilogy, Sam Fathers and old Isaac McCaslin in "Go Down, Moses", Lucas Beauchamp in "Intruder in the Dust", the Old Marshall and the Corporal in "A Fable", Mink Snopes in "The Mansion" and Uncle Ned in "The Reivers").

It is known that Faulkner had studied Henri Bergson (Blotner 1991: 511) whose essay on the comic, "Laughter", with its main reliance on French classicist theories of literature, could definitely outline some but not all characteristics of Faulkner's comic. As a basically self-educated man, Faulkner most likely wrote in a combination of following literary theories and of a surge of spontaneity; beginning with "The Sound and the Fury", his practice of new literary techniques seemed to precede any theoretical calculations.

Immanuel Kant has defined laughter as “an affection arising from a strained expectation being suddenly reduced to nothing. This very reduction, at which certainly understanding cannot rejoice, is still indirectly a source of very lively enjoyment for a moment” (1992: 199). The sensing of comic therefore may be seen as a self-repetitive process of the expectations of the conscious suddenly going blank, falling into a hiatus. The sublime which, when united with beauty, constitutes tragedy (1992: 190), brings along, according to Kant, also a blank in the consciousness – “because the mind has been incited to abandon sensibility, and employ itself upon ideas involving higher finality” (1992: 92) – a blank which leads to the perception of some higher truth.

Combining these definitions in an elementary way, the tragicomic may be defined as an expectation dwindled into nothing and thereby leading to some higher truth.

By the same criteria, the comic, the tragic and the tragicomic all have to do with suspense and the following relief, with climaxes and anti-climaxes.

Most analysts of Faulkner’s comic have pointed out that he very seldom makes a joke just for the fun of it. As an example, R. P. Warren has claimed: “/H/umor in Faulkner’s work is never exploited for its own sake. /---/ Faulkner is not a humorist in the sense /---/ that Mark Twain is” (cited in: Bungert 1971: 135). Thus, Faulkner’s humour is almost always organically integrated into the logical fabric of the general narrative. How, then, is one to understand the statement, also maintained in this study, that comedy and tragicomedy pervade most of Faulkner’s works (and that the comic, as young Joyce claimed, is perfect in its self-sufficiency, not intended to take the reader anywhere but to leave them “at rest”)? The answer lies in that exactly because Faulkner perceives the comic to be an essential attribute of life itself, the comic level in his fiction is less conspicuous than in the works of professional humorists, less strenuously purported for, but true in its varying degrees of perceptibility (from the most overt to the one solely available through theoretical intuition) to its factual proportions in everyday life. Even when Faulkner magnifies a comic occasion through hyperbole, as he often does, the elements evoking a smile or laughter are woven realistically into the narrative reflections of all the opposites of life, including the seriousness of facts. On the factual level, Faulkner is comic inasmuch as he is comedic – a concept too philosophical usually to be associated with joking, indicating, at least in Faulkner’s case, a form of agnosticism of a stoically optimistic kind.

## **Comic in the Tradition of American Literature**

The most important native source of influence common to Faulkner and the compatriot writers that directly influenced him or to whom he bears the greatest affinity, such as Sherwood Anderson and Mark Twain, is the American frontier tale tradition.

The often formless and immoderately voiced folk or half-folk stories of the illiterate South are not wholly of the native birth, there appearing trans-modified echoes of the tales of Baron Münchhausen, and even mediaeval European folk narratives.

Robert Penn Warren has claimed that “the most important strain of humor in Faulkner’s work is derived from the tradition of frontier humor” (cited in: Bungert 1971: 74). This may well be true; and the location of Faulkner’s native area in the Deep South, on the former frontier, may have shaped the kind of marginal, but sharp, perspective on history that characterizes Faulkner’s oeuvre, to a significant degree, with the thinness of the traditions of the formal art of literature being counterpoised by the richness of oral folk narratives, as much as the relatively short span of recorded history of the area was contrasted with the *intensity* of the historical experience. However, since the profound influences of Southern tall tale writers on Faulkner have systematically been explored by Hans Bungert and others, the focus of this study rather lies on Faulkner as a conscious, modernist aesthete, absorbing influences, both native and foreign, from wherever he can find parallels with his own artistic problems.

Nevertheless, as the following chapters predominantly use a focus notably located in international aesthetic theories, the more important it is, in the Introduction, to receive a sense of the lore of Faulkner’s locality, the way it affected the writer.

Of more or less direct borrowings of motifs, Bungert lists the anonymous Southern stories about Davy Crockett, whose influences are notable in Faulkner’s novels “The Mansion” and “The Unvanquished”. Also present, especially in the prose parts of the novel-drama “Requiem for a Nun” and in the essay “Mississippi” (both dating from the 1950s), is the impact of the “Longstreet School” of humour writers.

A typical motif from the older tradition, found in those works but also elsewhere in Faulkner, is that of a ferocious *fight*. In those works of Faulkner’s, a strong preacher beats the villains until they abandon their wicked ways – a story earlier developed by John Lamar, as well as an anonymous author. But often the frontier men also engage in fighting just for the excitement of it, as does Thomas Sutpen in Faulkner’s “Absalom, Absalom!”. Especially comic, in Faulkner, are the fights between Boon Hogganbeck and Butch Lovemaiden in “The Reivers”. Senator Clarence Egglestone Snopes in “The Mansion”, before launching on his political career, has terrorized the environs with his gang: “he /---/ really liked fighting, provided the equality in size was enough in his favor” (cited in: Bungert 1971: 84).

The episode with the village school teacher Labove in the novel “The Hamlet” (with him falling desperately in sensual love with his pupil Eula Varner, and, when he finally dares to touch her, being rejected with the words: “Stop pawing me. /---/ You old headless horseman Ichabod Crane”) bears, as Bungert demonstrates, direct resemblances to Washington Irving’s story “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”. Moreover, Bungert finds in the hypersexual Eula Varner a similarity to Sicily Burns, the sweetheart of the eponymous hero of

George Washington Harris's "Sut Lovingood Stories". When Faulkner describes young men swarming around Eula "like wasps about the ripe peach which her full damp mouth resembled", the image here, according to the German scholar, corresponds to the style of "Sut Lovingood".

In general, *courting* is another motif in which Faulkner seems to owe much to old Southern humorists, with whom it was one of the favourite topics. Bungert lists among the Southern humorists who described courting rituals, authors like W. T. Thompson, G. W. Harris, J. S. Robb and H. C. Lewis. The type of the shy lover, earning both mocking and sympathy from the traditional story-tellers of the "Longstreet School", is represented in Faulkner's "Light in August" by Byron Bunch.

Closely connected to the theme of courtship is that of *rivalry*. In the second book of the Snopes trilogy, "The Town", the Harvard-educated lawyer Gavin Stevens and the mayor Manfred de Spain vie for the love of Eula Snopes – a rivalry involving show-offs with cars and dirty tricks. The men finally engage in a bloody fight. Bungert points out that whereas such fights were a thing to be expected from the simple men in old Southern tall tales, this kind of behaviour is especially comic in the refined intellectual Gavin Stevens, with a flower always in the button-hole of his frock.

Also about a rivalry for a woman is the short story "A Courtship", set on the frontier at the beginning of the 19th century. Ikkemotubbe and David Hogganbeck remain gentlemen, even on friendly terms, in their various mutual fights, only to find their sweetheart finally won over by a third, entirely unheroic man. Such mutual combats, both physical and spiritual (but without the accompanying gentlemanliness) were a common motif in the old tall tales about backwoodsmen.

Among other comic motifs which Faulkner is likely to have borrowed from older native authors is that of a *swap* and, related to that, of a *battle of wits*. The novel "The Hamlet" includes various instances of swapping. Another example is the short story "Shingles for the Lord", to be analyzed later in this study. A variant of the story of swapping is the episode, set in hell, in the second part of "The Hamlet", appearing as a vision of Ratliff's. Claiming that he never has had any soul to be condemned to flames, Flem Snopes outdoes the Devil ("The Prince") in the latter's own scheming and thus usurps the throne in the underworld. That episode could be interpreted as an innovative development of the legends about the pact with the Devil, dating back to the Middle Ages (and a parallel to it can be seen in Bulgakov's "The Master and Margarita").

Divergent types of swappers include Labove of "The Hamlet", Addie Bundren of "As I Lay Dying" (who swaps her own children), the soldier named MacWyrghinchbeath of the short story "Thrift", the two bachelors in "Was", the first component story of the novel "Go Down, Moses" (discussed below), and some of the soldiers in the novel "A Fable". The bluffing characteristic of these and other similar plot-lines gives parts of Faulkner's works a picaresque quality, to be noted also in the character of Simon Suggs of the Southern humorist J. J. Hooper. In fact, in the character of the immoral

trickster Flem Snopes, Bungert detects an absorption of influences from Simon Suggs, without, however, the latter's possession of some positive qualities, evoking empathy.

A complex of comic interpretations occurs around the motif of *horse-races*. At times it may give rise to comic confrontations between the city aristocrats and the backwoodsmen (as in the short stories "Fox Hunt" and "Knight's Gambit" (the latter being the first component story of the collection with the same title)), at other times events around horse-racing may be developed into whole odysseys as in "The Reivers" and the episode of "A Fable" called "Notes on a Horsethief" (published also as a separate story), illustrating the courage and hardiness of horses (frequently elevated into a symbol of the unflinching life force) and of horsemen.

Finally, *horses, ponies, and mules* form themselves an independent motif, comic as often as tragicomic, much of whose relevance Faulkner seems to have derived from older humorists of his native background. The episode with a wild pony entering a mansion and breaking its furniture has, as Bungert shows, several thematic concurrences with a couple of G. W. Harris's stories about Sut Lovingood, such as "Sicily Burns's Wedding" (with a bull instead of a pony causing the mess there) and "The Wider McCloud's Mare". Images in the latter story – with a character "lying as a sick sow in a snowstorm" after the mare attacked – have direct counterparts in Faulkner's "The Spotted Horses", in which Mr. Tull, unconscious, is seen lying, "bleeding like a hog", after a pony stampeded over his wagon.

Faulkner's admiring, though also half-derogatory, musings about the character of the mule as a separate, unique species, occurring in books as far apart temporally as "Sartoris" (1929) and "The Reivers" (1962), according to Bungert's studies display influences of the imagery of older writers, as well.

Faulkner's narratives have one more common feature with the Southern tall tales in their focus on the character type of *backwoodsmen* (more appropriately, called *backwoods people*, as these also include women). The creed of these people could be summed up with the words of Charles Mallison in "The Mansion": "So what you need is to learn to trust in God without depending on Him" (cited in: Bungert 1971: 105). Self-reliant, the backwoods people are remarkably good at coping with their lives, no matter what hardships may strike them. Bungert gives the examples of Lena Grove of "Light in August", the tall convict of "Old Man", the widow Hait of "The Town", and "Uncle Willy" from the story with the same title. Just like the hero of T. B. Thorpe's story "The Big Bear of Arkansas", of whom Milton Rickels says: "He is self-reliant – an individualist – at ease with himself even though he is quite aware that he deviates from the accepted pattern of proprieties and timidities" (cited in: Bungert 1971: 105), Uncle Willy likes adventures, has a rich imagination, and avoids conformism – and is willing to sacrifice his life, as he ultimately does, for his freedom. Bungert also marks a note of anti-clericalism in Faulkner's story about Uncle Willy, another trait that it shares with the earlier tradition.

A comedy follows, both in Faulkner and his predecessors (e. g. J. J. Hooper's "Taking the Census"), when a government agent (or "gentleman" in the early tales) meddles with the independent lives of backwoodsmen, as is the case in the short story "The Tall Men", to be viewed more below. In the episode with one of the young McCallum men having his leg amputated, his only pain-killer being whiskey, Bungert has found a similarity with H. C. Lewis's sketch "The Indefatigable Bear Hunter", in which the backwoodsman Mik-hoo-tah, injured from fighting with a bear, undergoes a similar operation under the same conditions. The burial of the leg afterwards in "The Tall Men" also has its direct counterpart in the far more ghoulish, macabre, yet comic scenes of Lewis's stories "The Curious Widow" and "Stealing a Baby".

To the type of backwoodsmen also belongs Dr. Peabody, occurring in a number of Faulkner's works. Inventive and unpretentious, contrasted with the bookish city doctors, he trusts the popular healers and folk methods of medicine where the outsiders haughtily downplay them. Some kind of inventiveness Bungert finds in Mink Snopes of "The Hamlet", and, to a significant degree, in the Black character Lucas Beauchamp from the story "The Fire and the Hearth" of the book "Go Down, Moses".

Historically, these inventive rogueries could be classified as belonging to the traditional tall tale motif of the victory of the *country hick over the city slicker*. Whereas in tall tales, such victories remain anecdotal, Faulkner epicizes them through the introduction of amusing dialogue, minute description of the location and provision of numerous concrete details (Bungert 1971: 111).

Another motif connected with the character type of backwoods people is that of *country yokels in town*, widely employed in traditional tall tales. Both Faulkner's novels "Sanctuary" and "The Reivers" include scenes with backwoodsmen unwittingly finding themselves in a brothel whose identity and functions they are ignorant of; in "Sanctuary", the three "yokels" take the madam for the mother of an unusually large family of daughters, or else for a seamstress whose clients are scantily clad because they are trying the clothes on. Jokes of this kind are not limited to brothel settings, however. In the short stories "Shall Not Perish" and "Two Soldiers" the child protagonist from the Yoknapatawpha countryside amuses the readers by comparing the previously unseen city conveniences to things he has experienced on the farm. The earlier stories mentioned by Bungert as examples of the motif "country yokels in town" include such pieces by the "Longstreet School" of authors as H. C. Lewis's "'Winding Up a Mississippi Bank", H. E. Taliaferro's "Johnson Snow at a 'Hottle'", J. S. Robb's "Swallowing an Oyster Alive", G. W. Harris's "There's Danger in Old Chairs", and various chapters of W. T. Thompson's books.

The whole family of the Bundrens in "As I Lay Dying" represent one of the purest types of backwoods people, including the daughter Dewey Dell, desperately trying to get rid of her pregnancy. The motif with the greatest historical resonance, in "As I Lay Dying", in regard to earlier sources, is the stench of Addie Bundren's decomposing corpse. Bungert proves that Faulkner was not the first to employ such means of comic horror: it has previously

appeared in a sketch by J. M. Field which Mark Twain used for his “The Invalid’s Story”, as well as in G. W. Harris’s story “Well! Dad’s Dead”. (The same kind of macabre comic occurs in Faulkner’s short story “A Rose for Emily”, in “The Hamlet” and in one of his early sketches, “Yo Ho and Two Bottles of Rum”.) In Harris’s work, the last of his Sut Lovingood stories, it is Sut’s father who is lying on his deathbed, surrounded by his family as uncaring, by and large, as the one in Faulkner’s novel. After his death, disasters almost equal in size to those in Faulkner’s book strike the funeral procession. However, it is highly unlikely that Faulkner had read “Well! Dad’s Dead”, its plot having probably reached him through oral retellings (Bungert 1971: 118). Bungert also notes that what he considers the high point of comic horror in Faulkner’s novel, the boring of the holes into Addie’s coffin (and, by accident, into her face) for her to breathe through, has its (less extreme) parallel in Harris’s “Frustrating a Funeral”.

For Mink Snopes, in “The Hamlet”, hiding the body of his murder victim in a hollow tree, a possible source could be found in the black humour of W. G. Simms’s tall tale “How Sharp Snaffles Got His Capital and Wife”. The short story “A Bear Hunt” (discussed below), in which Luke Provine (called “the same kind of hell-raiser as Sut Lovingood” by J. McDonald (cited in: Bungert 1971: 121–122)) is tormented by incessant hiccups, has its parallels in J. S. Robb’s sketch “Trimming a Darky’s Heel” (cruel jokes on Blacks) and in the Sut Lovingood story “The Snake-Bit Irishman”, about a man who finally gets frightened out of his terrible snoring.

Bungert also devotes a subchapter to Faulkner’s vernacular style. In this field particularly, formative influences on Faulkner, exerted by tall tale writers, abound. The character whose vernacular involves the greatest degree of comedy is the sewing machine agent Ratliff of the Snopes trilogy of novels, also present in various short stories. A frequent device is that of comic contrast, as between Ratliff’s ungrammatical dialect and the learned, impeccable, dry-sounding English of Gavin Stevens.

The vernacular often serves to give additional dynamics to the narrative; in Faulkner’s oeuvre, from the earliest attempts in the mid-1920s to the last novel, published in 1962, there are scarcely any works without some amount of vernacular playing its role in them (thus, the legend about Faulkner as the author of extremely long, torturous, serpentine, bookish sentences, as opposed to simple people talking, is heavily one-sided). However, Faulkner differs from a writer like Mark Twain in that his characters nearly always speak the kind of vernacular with the idiosyncracies that can be expected from their background; he almost never puts his own witticisms into their mouths, rarely ever relishes his vernacular omnipotence as the author (in this respect, resembling the tall tale writers previous to Mark Twain).

Hans Bungert’s basic classification of Faulkner’s comic, which along with the analysis of its structural and thematic functions, is situated in a later part of the original work, has been briefly characterized earlier in this Introduction and will be used (or referred to) below, in Chapters One and Two.

The relationship between the fictions of Mark Twain and Faulkner is not so much of an indebtedness on Faulkner's part as one of a general native affinity. Though Faulkner wrote very disparagingly about Twain in his youth, in his later statements he testified to the earlier writer's importance. It is possible the young Faulkner consciously aspired to evade Twain's excessive influence, to absorb more cosmopolitan, more dashing influences, to be less of an entertainer and more of a challenging artist, less of a folk humorist and more sophisticated, than Twain. Various studies have been written comparing the two as artists of equal standing. For the purpose of this study, which in general focuses on the kinds of comic treatment that are either peculiar to Faulkner or that he rather shares with certain modernists, it is necessary to point out that not only does Faulkner display a lot of the same popular, low-brow, indigenous Southern humour which Twain is the master of, but Twain is also rich in the Faulknerian instances of an inseparable synthesis of the comic and the appalling.

An example of Twain's powers at the tragicomic can be found in his book of recollections, "Life on the Mississippi", probably his most serious work. In Chapter 20, describing the victims of a steamboat explosion, he writes:

I saw many poor fellows removed to the "death-room", and saw them no more afterward. But I saw our chief mate carried thither more than once. His hurts were frightful, especially his scalds. He was clothed in linseed oil and raw cotton to his waist, and resembled nothing human. He was often out of his mind; and then his pains would make him rave and shout and sometimes shriek. Then, after a period of dumb exhaustion, his disordered imagination would suddenly transform the great apartment into a forecabin, and the hurrying throng of nurses into a crew; and he would come to a sitting posture and shout, "Hump yourselves, *hump* yourselves, you petrifications, snail-bellies, pall-bearers; going to be all day getting that hatful of freight out?" and supplement this explosion with a firmament-obliterating irruption of profanity which nothing could stay or stop till his crater was empty. And now and then while these frenzied possessed him, he would tear off handfuls of the cotton and expose his cooked flesh to view. (Twain 1981: 108)

As in the instances of Huck's silly jokes with mortal dangers facing Jim, as in the juxtaposition of the ridiculous and the gravely repellent in the Duke and the King in "Huckleberry Finn", there is the same kind of tragicomic tension here that so often startles the reader to a new epistemological awakening in Faulkner.

The understatement, discussed above, which is what leads to the sense of textual hiatuses or gaps of cognition later to be searched for at different levels in the texts viewed in this study, Faulkner most directly learned from his one time mentor Sherwood Anderson (1876–1941).

According to Faulkner's own testimony, he originally thought of himself as a poet, but was persuaded into becoming a fiction writer primarily by Anderson, who was his close friend in the years 1925–1926. The two men mostly met in New Orleans. In the spring of 1925, for the Dallas "Morning

News”, Faulkner wrote an essay consisting of short analyses of the older writer’s works. He later parodied Anderson’s style in a small book titled “Sherwood Anderson and Other Famous Creoles”. Though the friendship came to a quick and sudden end, and though Faulkner seems to have fought back Anderson’s excessive influence, he never denied the initial impulse which he had received from him.

Sherwood Anderson, whose best work probably appeared in the short story collections “Winesburg, Ohio” (1919), “The Triumph of the Egg” (1921), “Horses and Men” (1923), and “Death in the Woods” (1932), was an author with deep knowledge of poor people’s lives but not learned in the bookish sense. How intellectually challenging he may or may not be regarded depends on how much one appreciates the mostly unpretentious psychological insights that his works offer, and the self-taught craftsmanship of simple storytelling whose efficacy arises from laconic methods of highlighting sudden subcurrents of reality. Notable for the transparency of his style, for the economy with which he reveals his compassion for the characters, for the sincerity, warmth in sadness and melancholy humour that create the illusion of a tremendous artistic naïveté, Anderson is both a realist and an early modernist but most significantly a representative of literary minimalism.

It is important for an understanding of Faulkner’s (tragi)comic to see how much he used Anderson’s minimalism as the basis and starting-point for his own fiction, a basis to which in some relevant aspects he remained true until his last works. Still, Faulkner developed into a far more complex writer, and one more complexly tragicomic. Absorbing influences from a variety of native and foreign sources, unknown to or not used by Anderson, Faulkner managed a synthesis in the tragicomic whose autonomy amounts to that of a whole literary subcontinent.

It is on the latter ground that endeavours are made in this study to compare Faulkner’s comic and tragicomic with authors ranging from ancient Greek drama classics, Shakespeare and Rabelais through Southern U. S. tall tale authors to writers like James Joyce, Thomas Mann, W. B. Yeats, Hermann Hesse, Mikhail Bulgakov, and others. Nevertheless, present as an underlying factor everywhere in Faulkner is also the minimalism that he learned from Anderson – the creative motive as the author’s irresistible need to express his pity at the thought of an erring, solitary individual caught in a tangle of life problems.

Revelatory in this respect is a passage from Faulkner’s essay on Anderson’s works that was published in Dallas “Morning News”. This is how Faulkner commented on Anderson’s short story collection “Horses and Men”:

No sustained plot to bother you, nothing tedious; only the sharp episodic phases of people, the portraying of which Mr. Anderson’s halting questioning manner is best at. “I’m a Fool”, the best short story in America, to my thinking, is the tale of a lad’s adolescent pride in his profession (horse racing) and his body, of his belief in a world beautiful and passionate created for the chosen to race horses on, of his youthful pagan desire to preen in his lady’s eyes that brings

him low at last. Here is a personal emotion that does strike the elemental chord in mankind. (Faulkner 2002: 136)

One can find a few essential later characteristics of Faulkner in this characterization of Anderson: “sharp episodic phases” anticipates Faulkner’s own frequent technique of episodic highlighting with elements of sharp surprise. The “halting questioning manner” in the younger writer leads to the suspense and solutions of narrative tension that relate directly to the tragicomic effects of “hiatuses” (defined in Chapter One), and, more generally, to the oscillations between the expected and the unexpected which, as will be claimed below, constitute the fabric of Faulkner’s tragicomic on all narrative levels; and “the desire to preen in his lady’s eyes that brings him down at last”, striking “an elemental chord in mankind”, expresses much of Faulkner’s typical tragicomic focusing on the situational and character level that allows for his deep psychological interpretations and connects him with several world classics (as seen in the comparison to Thomas Mann in Chapter Three).

The culmination points in Faulkner’s best short stories, or short-story-like novel episodes, may be philosophically more powerful than the ones in Anderson’s stories, but their epiphanic clarity and emotional impetus are the same, or very similar.

## **Foreign Parallels**

Prevailing in the Faulkner studies, Hans Bungert’s elaborate analysis of Faulkner’s comic included, is the view of him as a “native son” to the traditions of the American South. While the logical primacy of such a view is bolstered by literary facts, approaches in this line, as in any line, are bound to exhaust themselves one day. On the other hand, analogies with Faulkner in the European literature, as contrastive as they may be, have always been rather timidly sought for – besides James Joyce, the transcultural ties of Faulkner to Europe, that is, ties that go beyond the use of a limited range of formal literary techniques and penetrate what may be called the “spirit” of Faulkner’s narratives, have been left in a dubious zone verging on illegitimacy (possible exceptions are the formative influences of Joseph Conrad and Dostoevsky). The present dissertation aims at some progress in that underdeveloped direction, attempting comparisons of Faulkner’s tragicomic with authors like Thomas Hardy, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Thomas Mann, Hermann Hesse, and William Butler Yeats (as an essay writer and playwright).

The major influence which James Joyce exerted on Faulkner in the field of innovations in literary technique, in various technical tricks, widespread use of hyperbole as well as “jokes” with form, is well known and has been studied extensively before. A long comparison between the two is deemed unnecessary. While in many important aspects Joyce also may be seen as a comedic writer according to the definition in this study, Faulkner differs from him by

the quality, not directly included in the definition of comedic, of being much more a traditional social chronicler and sociohistorical narrator, even researcher, thus more closely an epic writer in the sense set by Balzac, than Joyce, whose works (except “Dubliners”) rather more resemble polyphonically united lyrical efforts, strictly arranged into self-contained, dramatic prose-poems (such as “Ulysses” and “Finnegans Wake”).

A closer parallel is observed between Faulkner and Thomas Mann who is also regarded as both a comic and comedic writer. A difference is seen in Mann’s main dominance of irony with a relative lack of more “naïve” kinds of comic in the form of tall tales and folk humour which are frequent in Faulkner. As an intermediary step between the analyses of comic and of comedic, a chapter is devoted to analyzing the parallels between Mann’s and Faulkner’s portrayals of tragicomic love relationships.

Comedic by definition implies sociohistorical qualities. In a comparison first with Thomas Mann, and later with Hermann Hesse it will be analyzed what social, cultural and historical factors make Faulkner’s oeuvre comedic. While Thomas Hardy’s prose oeuvre shares important characteristics with Faulkner’s (both created large sociohistorical canvases with a wide array of human types, centred on an apocryphal, fictive county, both depicted the decay of aristocracy, the hardships of poor labourers and the tensions between rural, agricultural and urbanized ways of life at the onset of modernism) and although both writers often employ a similar type of irony, because of the bleakness of his ultimate vision as a novelist Hardy cannot be properly classified as a comedic writer.

As a “male *commedia*”, Faulkner’s oeuvre will be seen as most closely following the comic and comedic structure of the quest of Don Quixote, with a decisive part of the activity occurring on a psychoanalytically absorbed, psychically introverted, mental landscape instead of the direct, extroverted, physical action of Cervantes’s hero.

The investigation of the comic aspect in a fiction writer’s work largely by means of interpreting the same in the fiction writing of others, may appear of insecure value to a few conceptualist-oriented schools of literary scholarship, but one may be reminded of George Santayana’s remark from 1900, that “every conception in an adult mind is a fiction” (1911: 259), and of Jüri Talvet’s differentiation of the explicit theoretical concepts from the implicit ones organically (one might say endemically) found in the imagery of major literary works (2007: 271).

## CHAPTER ONE.

### The Creation of the Comic and the Tragicomic through Suspense in Faulkner's Works

#### The Earliest Occurrences of Tragicomedy in Faulkner. Variants of the Limited Perception in His Short Stories

The way the comic and the tragic mingle in Faulkner is given an early example in the only children's story he ever wrote, in the fairy tale "The Wishing Tree", written around 1927 and first published in 1964. Though joyous, innocent humour prevails in the story, it nevertheless includes a Black character who upon joining the fantastic company starts talking about his war experience, comparing different wars (Faulkner 1964: 45–48). Faulkner's earliest tragicomic masterpiece is the short story "Sunset", first published on May 24, 1925 in *Times-Picayune*. The story stands high above the level of other writings of that early period, later collected and published as "New Orleans Sketches". Evident with laconic clarity in "Sunset" are the basic conflicts and dilemmas that constitute Faulkner's artistic identity and form the matter of much of his oeuvre.

The protagonist of the story is an unnamed Black man who, armed with a shotgun and carrying a few belongings, like a lonely and lost herd animal wanders in New Orleans neighbourhoods, bewildering people with his questions where "Af'ica" is. He has decided to go back where he had heard the preacher say his race came from, and that obsession governs his insanity.

Faulkner frequently writes about Black people acting insane, about as often as he depicts (white) idiots. Faulkner's apparent "obsession" with mental deviations is one strong reason a lot of people dislike (or distrust) his writings. However, what at a superficial sight appears as a sick interest, an empathic reading will show as highly symbolic of the status of anyone with a mind destined to be different from the majority of people.

On the symbolic reading of "Sunset", the Black man is an artist in search of his ideal, and the ideal is "Af'ica". As the desired and unattainable homeland, the word evokes associations with Plato's world of ideas to which the soul longs to return. With the Black man taking a cow in the Louisiana pasture for a lion at night and thinking of its owners as "Af'ikin savages", obvious connections with Don Quixote come to mind.

The speech of the protagonist is in heavy dialect, and the comic in dialogue occurs in ways later to become characteristic of Faulkner's dialogue humour, as when a policeman asks the Black which state he comes from, "Mississippi or Louisiana?" and misunderstanding the question, the Black answers: "Yessuh, I 'speck so."

The heart-rending and timelessly relevant predicament of a person in search for the fulfilment of his hopes of comfort and his beautiful ideal, incapable of understanding others with their practical mindsets and of being

understood, in “Sunset” is conveyed with the lyricism and economy of a prose ballad. The action-focused narration is intercepted by passages of poetic calm, as when the protagonist has finished helping others load the ship and goes to drowse aboard at sunset:

Quitting time: the sun hung redly in the west and the long shadows were still and flat, waiting for dark. The spinning golden motes spun slower in the last sunlight; and the other hands gathered up coats and lunch pails and moved away toward the flashing street lights, and supper. He picked up his gun and bundle and went aboard the boat.

Among soft, bulky sacks he lay down to munch the loaf of bread he had bought. Darkness came down completely, the lapping of water against the hull and the pungently sweet smell of the sacked grain soon put him to sleep. (79)

After having shot several people whom he takes for hostile savages, and being wounded himself, the Black is lying in the copse and dreaming of home, no longer of Africa, but his home plantation where he and his Black mates used to work for Mr. Bob. His sense of time has become vague, and as his imaginary and actual reality finally merge to drift away into transcendence when the machine gun fire ends his life, there is one final change of style, the poetic tonality decisively overcoming the action-focused description, a requiem with an air of serenity and the suggestiveness of music finishing the tale about unbridgeable abysses between different minds, different worlds of ideas:

Here was a wind coming up: the branches and bushes about him whipped suddenly to a gale fiercer than any yet; flattened and screamed, and melted away under it. And he, too, was a tree caught in that same wind: he felt the dull blows of it, and the rivening of himself into tattered and broken leaves.

The gale died away, and all broken things were still. His black, kind, dull, once-cheerful face was turned up to the sky and the cold, cold stars. Africa or Louisiana: what care they? (85)

The image of stars recalls Immanuel Kant’s statement about the stars in the sky and the moral law in the human heart being the two wonders of the world (later Faulkner was to use a similar image at the end of his short story “Barn Burning”, a sublimely tragicomic writing about conflicting loyalties). The key of the ending of “Sunset” is related to the concluding sensations and allusions in the Ike Snopes and the cow episode of Chapter Two of the section “The Long Summer” of Faulkner’s novel “The Hamlet”, a parallel masterpiece about the universal isolation of a mentally aberrant mind, to be analyzed later in this work.

The short story “Carcassonne”, first published in the short story collection “These 13” in 1931 and later selected to conclude Faulkner’s “Collected Stories”, appears to hold a special place in the writer’s oeuvre. More than elsewhere Faulkner emerges here as the lyrical poet that he originally dreamt about becoming. The five-page work has no plot in the strict sense. In it, a

poet-dreamer lying in an attic has alternately visions of heavenly splendour and of decay and death, and all the while he is holding a quiet dialogue with his own skeleton, probably a symbol of what is mortal in human beings. As a counterweight to thoughts about mortality, he sees the skies, and in them, a horse is constantly galloping:

The girth cuts the horse in two just back of the withers, yet it still gallops with rhythmic and unflagging fury and without progression, and he thinks of that riderless Norman steed which galloped against the Saracen Emir, who, so keen of eye, so delicate and strong the wrist which swung the blade, severed the galloping beast at a single blow, the several halves thundering on in the sacred dust where him of Bouillon and Tancred too clashed in sullen retreat; thundering on through the assembled foes of our meek Lord, wrapped still in the fury and the pride of the charge, not knowing that it was dead (Faulkner 1985).

The image of the steed galloping “without progression” (an obvious oxymoron) while having been severed into halves and in its momentum still not knowing that it is dead may stand for so much of what is essential to Faulkner’s fiction. The forces of lethargy and paralysis that the horror and brutality in life often entail are counterbalanced in his works by the unstained naïveté and idealism of his youthful or childlike characters; in the often sombre world of fatalism, it is mostly thanks to them that events worth empathizing with happen. Like the horse who is unaware of being doomed and who for that reason still moves, Faulkner’s juvenile narrators and protagonists carry the action faced with abysses of decay or immorality, displaying admirable courage, if at times also foolhardiness.

The decisive part given to naïve characters marks such works with a specific kind of comic colouring. In his article “Faulkner’s Humor: A European View”, Hans Bungert writes:

A surprisingly large number of Faulkner’s most humorous short stories and novels are narrated from a child’s or adolescent’s point of view. “Shingles for the Lord”, “Uncle Willy”, “Was”, *The Reivers* and the greater part of *The Unvanquished* are some examples. In these texts, the narrative perspective of a child is one of the constituents of comedy (1986: 146–147).

Termining the comedy in such examples “comedy of limited perception” (1986: 147), Bungert compares it with what he calls the comedy “as a method of concealment” (1986: 147) or a “comedy of deception” (1986: 148), the one that appears in works where the narration of a child of limited understanding is accompanied or later replaced by the voice of someone experienced.

In this work, the term “comedy of limited perception” is used to encompass both of these closely related comic methods described by Bungert. In all cases of “limited perception”, the seriousness of the situation is conveyed through the voice of some character, or it is the authorial voice, veiled

behind the juvenile perception, that both conceals and reveals the tragicomedy masked as purely comic.

Of Faulkner's novels, in addition to "The Unvanquished" and "The Reivers", corresponding to the classification of the comedy of concealment are, above all, "Go Down, Moses" and "The Town". The first, "Benjy" section of "The Sound and the Fury" in which the voice of a 33-year-old man with the mind of a three-year child reports the events of a family tragedy, also is a pure example of comic concealment; the rest of the novel thus represents steps of gradual revelation. The sections of Vardaman Bundren in "As I Lay Dying" are a similar case.

Of Faulkner's short stories, counting the ones printed both in his "Collected Stories" and "Uncollected Stories" (but excluding the writings later incorporated into his novels), at least twenty display one of the following traits of the comedy of concealment: they are either told by a child narrator; have a child protagonist; are told by a naïve narrator; or have a naïve protagonist. Listed below are the short stories representing each of the four types.

- **Child narrator:** "Shingles for the Lord", "A Bear Hunt" (?), "Two Soldiers", "Shall Not Perish", "Uncle Willy", "That Will Be Fine", "That Evening Sun".
- **Child protagonist:** "Barn Burning".
- **Naïve narrator:** "Afternoon of a Cow", "Al Jackson", "The Big Shot", "Evangeline", "Snow".
- **Naïve protagonist:** "Hair", "Dry September", "Elly", "Red Leaves", "A Justice", "Lo!", "Mountain Victory", "The Big Shot" (?).

The question marks after a few of the stories denote problems of classification due to the multi-layered type of narration used in those writings. Thus "A Bear Hunt" uses a framing device in which a juvenile narrator conveys the story, although the story proper is told by the adult sewing-machine agent Ratliff, who more likely than not could be classified as a naïve narrator; however, the story also has a naïve protagonist in the person of Luke Provine. Related problems with framing and the story proper occur in "The Big Shot". The story "Mountain Victory" has a child antagonist who towards the end acquires an increasingly central role; how naïve or cynical the adult protagonist is is a matter of argument. Not included in the list is "A Rose for Emily" which could be classified separately as a "tragicomedy (or comitragedy) of concealment with chorus".

## The Short Stories: Tragicomedies

### “Barn Burning”

The vacillations between suspense and relief in this story are created by the overwhelming sense of the boy protagonist’s loyalty to his father, a loyalty which through its own inner logic, in a process of accumulative observance, grows into the act of betrayal. The narrator’s voice, always close to the boy’s viewpoint, meticulously records the events in and around the boy’s family during another year of farmwork. As the boy’s natural moral gaze notes down each of his father’s tiniest movements on the ethical landscape, the suspense grows as a conflict between the boy’s two moral urges. The attentiveness to the facts of the father’s moral logic pervades the style and the use of imagery. The climax in tragicomic paradox arrives when the boy discovers that the only way of remaining loyal to father’s stance is to betray him by reporting his act of barn-burning to the landlord. In fact, the boy has acted exactly the same way towards his father as the father acted towards the landlord: ridiculously faithful and yielding initially, finally avenging his humiliation in a desperate act of betrayal. But unlike his father, the boy has not destroyed anything except his father’s possible trust in him. The story leaves a sense of passive observance, a dream-like flux of time and space, a slow flow of events before the inert character’s eyes until the sudden explosion of moral awakening – the loyalty to father having overgrown into a loyalty to one’s conscience. The anticlimactic effect lies in the bright flash of moral action being the natural outgrowth of the previous loyal inertia.

### “Shingles for the Lord”

A story of a building burnt down like “Barn Burning” that precedes it, “Shingles for the Lord” is written prevalently in the key of folk humour. Low-life comic dominates until the church unintentionally catches fire; after that, the description of the burning building with the preacher’s baptizing gown in it likened to Archangel Michael, and of the serenity of the preacher at that sight, rise into majestic heights in a solemn tragicomic pitch. The powerful anticlimax of the story lies in the reader’s expectations for an amusing finale in the dog selling trick being dwarfed by a radically different kind of ending. It is a pure example of the comic lying in expectations falling blank as pointed out by Kant.

Before the climax in the flames, the reader is entertained by the dialect speech (“You don’t seem to kept up with these modren ideas” (page 30), “druv the blade” (31), “the froe done already druv through the bolt” (33), “had went” (34)), the use of hyperbole (“I am jest a average hard-working farmer trying to do the best he can, instead of a durn froe-owning millionaire named Quick or Bookwright” (page 31 – actually a litotes within a hyperbole), “pap making every lick of hisn like he was killing a moccasin” (31), “the whole shingle went whirling /---/ like a scythe blade” (32), “corn that’s crying out loud for

me” (35)) and the use of comic exaggeration as describing a hound “tiptoeing” a trail (32).

The story also contains a direct anecdotal joke:

Mrs. Killegrew was worser deaf than even Killegrew. If you was to run in and tell her the house was afire, she would jest keep on rocking and say she thought so, too, unless she began to holler back to the cook to turn the dogs loose before you could even open your mouth. (28)

Likewise, there is a passage which can be interpreted as containing a hiatic image (see the definition of hiatus below in this chapter): “/---/ his eyebrows looking like a big iron-gray caterpillar lying along the edge of a cliff”. (29)

### **“The Tall Men”**

The humour of the story is overshadowed by rhetoric in favour of the independence of old style farming people. The investigator coming to arrest the McCallum youths who had failed to register for military service is a pathetic figure. Expectations during the first half of the story are too vague to be high, so there is no noticeable anticlimax, even though the attention paid to the burial of Buddy’s severed leg, accompanied by the old deputy marshal’s admonishing rhetoric, is unexpectedly great and slightly tragicomic.

The story is an illustration of the applicability of the character types as found in ancient Greek and Roman drama to Faulkner’s works. The government investigator acting on behalf of the military is portrayed ironically just as military types were seldom spared a satirical treatment in ancient comedies. The family of the army evaders, the McCallums, who appear as the embodiment of peasant integrity, corresponds to the general sympathetic treatment of farmers in old Greek comedies.

The peasants and the deputy marshal speak a dialect (“This here ain’t hurt none to speak of since I got a-holt of this johnny-jug” (51), “The Government done right by me in my day, and it will do right by you” (53), “Ain’t you found out yet that me or you neither ain’t going nowhere for a while?” (53), “/g/rowned men” (60)), to which the grammatically impeccable sentences of the investigator form a comically sterile-sounding contrast.

### **“A Bear Hunt”**

The story is in the vein of the low-life tall tale humour. The introductory part by an anonymous boy narrator with its adventurous but serious recollections possesses a Mark-Twain-like tonality. The main narrative, told by the sewing-machine agent Ratliff, is in heavy dialect, much more ungrammatical than Faulkner’s average use of dialect speech. “A Bear Hunt” has two climaxes: one when the Black man Ash confesses to Ratliff how he had managed to get Luke Provine scared by the Indians, and the second a page lower when he reveals his reason for having urged the Indians to scare Luke. The second climax, frame-like, ties up the ending with the introductory part in which

Luke's former misdoings were first mentioned. There is another, hidden framing device in that the scene of Luke attacking Ratliff in revenge for having sent him to the Indians is described twice, once at the beginning of Ratliff's narration and secondly before the first climax. The suspense – what will happen to Luke among the Indians and will he get rid of his hiccup? – is held high until the first climax arrives, by means of Ratliff's recurrent phrases such as “And still I never knowed, never suspected” (74) and “not suspecting anything” (75).

The story is rich in mispronounced and misspelt words such as “hit” (for “it”, 66 etc.), “cusses” (for “curses”, 67), “fahr” (for “fire”, 67), “teching” (for “touching”, 68), “squirls” (for “squirrels”, 68), “mizzable” (for “miserable”, 69), “sujest” (for “suggest”, 71), “tahr” (for “tire”, 71), “lantrun” (for “lantern”, 72), “gwine” (for “going to”, 73) and “harrycane” (for “hurricane”, 75).

Comic exaggerations by means of the hyperbole govern the imagery, giving this anecdotal tragicomedy a slightly rabelaisian sound: “flinging them fellows holding his arms around like they was rag dolls” (67), “I reckon he never so much went away as he kind of died away in the distance like that ere motorcycle Major mentioned” (69), “I done already drunk so much water that if I was to fall down I would gush like a artesian well” (69), “They said he would echo back from the canebrake across the river like one of these hyer loud-speakers down in a well. They said that even the dogs on the trail quit baying, and so they all come up and made him come back to camp” (69–70), “his throat had done turned into a one-way street on him” (70), “Even his feet sounded mad” (71), “I'll skin him alive” (75), “Hit sounded like a drove of wild horses coming up that road” (75).

The whole description of Luke being tormented by hiccuping (“Hic-uh! Hic-ow! Hic-oh! Hic – oh, God!”, 68 etc.) is, of course, wildly comical. There is sarcasm and biting irony in Ratliff's account about why the Indians should be grateful to the white man: “/---/ the white folks have been so good to them – not only letting them keep that ere hump of dirt that don't nobody want noways /---/. I hyear tell how pretty soon they are even going to start letting them come to town once a week” (72).

The strong dialectal forms of the white hunting company (“Hit was a good while after they had done hauled Luke Provine offen me that I found that out” (66–67), “Them Indians knows all sorts of dodges that white doctors ain't hyeard about yet” (71), “you ought not to done that” (73)) are modest when compared with the dialect talk of the Black character Ash, as seen in this confession of his in the second climax of the story:

I ain't skeered for him to know. One time dey was a picnic. Hit was a long time back, nigh twenty years ago. He was a young man den, en in de middle of de picnic, him en he brother en nudder white man – I fergit he name – dey rid up wid dey pistols out en cotch us niggers one at a time en burned our collars off. Hit was him dat burnt mine. (79)

## The Tragicomic Method of Hiatus

In the famous monologue of Act One, Scene 7 of Shakespeare's "Macbeth", the title villain expresses his moral tremors preceding the murder of King Duncan in a collection of rhetorically organized images.

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well  
It were done quickly. If th'assassination  
Could trammel up the consequence and catch  
With his surcease, success, that but this blow  
Might be the be-all and the end-all – here,  
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,  
We'd jump the life to come.  
/---/

Besides, this Duncan  
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been  
So clear in his great office, that his virtues  
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongu'd against  
The deep damnations of his taking-off.  
And pity, like a naked newborn babe  
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin hors'd  
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,  
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,  
That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur  
To prick the sides of my intent, but only  
Vaulting ambition /---/ (2001: 19).

One of the long soliloquies of Shakespeare's tragic characters, this poetical confession does not carry any action in the strict sense but is meant to convey invisible processes – first, occurrences behind the scene and second, the process within the character's soul. It is a momentary stop in the quick activities on stage, a stop full of the dynamism of psychic powers. It is tragic and evidently meant to be nothing but tragic. But if a criminal in life, in a police documentary or even in a detective movie poured forth a passage like this before committing his murder, the effect would most likely produce irresistible laughter because of its utter incompatibility with what is usually seen as the squalor of criminal life. Thus soliloquies like this are not only a stop in the activities of the drama but are rocketed away from the predictable fabric of usual human life in general, orbiting it in partial defiance of its rules and regulations.

In the present work, an attempt will be made to give a name, hiatus, to such self-dependent collections of rhetorical images which slow down the action and momentarily flash in the hidden psychic landscape. Studying the works of William Faulkner, hiatuses can be seen as a definitive factor of the tragicomic tonality of his fiction. The plot of a prose narrative always resembles a play. Hiatuses fill a contradictory function, both lessening and increasing the dramatic qualities of the work of fiction. Being stops in the plot,

they slow down the action. However, as outpourings of the narrator's imaginative energy they resemble the verbal fabric of a drama. Though not dialogue in the straight sense, a hiatic passage often represents a kind of telepathic dialogue of the narrating character with the readers (=audience). As pools of "frozen" energy and dynamics, not relatable to any particular action, hiatuses give an additional weight to the effects of the plot. Viewable as lyrical interludes in the narrative, by their context hiatuses play a complex lyrical-epical-dramatic role in creating the impression of the primeval unity of literary genres. The decision as to whether a hiatus serves a tragic or a comic function nearly always depends on the scale of the context, and the scale in Faulkner is nearly always twofold.

In an article titled "Frozen Movement in *Light in August*", Darrel Abel has pointed out the quality in Faulkner's prose of not presenting static entities, but instead presenting motion, "reality in flux" (1957: 33) at arrested instants. Abel's argument is based on Henri Bergson's work "The Creative Mind", in which the artistic intuition of the whole and of eternity is contrasted with intelligence which "starts ordinarily from the immobile, and reconstructs movement as best it can with immobilities in juxtaposition" (cited in: Abel 1957: 32). Abel writes: "If Faulkner has, as I think, a similar conception of reality in flux, and a similar theory of the imaginative writer's gift and function, his technique must master a paradox: in order to fix reality in a literary construct, it must freeze movement" (1957: 33). Abel's argument is related to Jean-Paul Sartre's opinions expressed in his essay "Time in Faulkner", from which the American scholar uses quotes. Abel refers to Bergson as saying that intuition "will have to use ideas as a conveyance" (cited in: 1957: 33) and that "[n]o image will replace the intuition of duration /---/, but many different images /---/ will be able, through the convergence of their action, to direct the consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to seize on" (cited in: 1957: 33).

In the present work, the collections of images conveying a sense of the "frozen movement", or reality in flux, will be viewed as entities emerging either in figures of speech or as small-scale episodes (not focused upon in this chapter). The relation of the sense of "frozen movement" to the sense of the tragicomic will be analyzed. The name of hiatus belongs to the entity conveying the sense of "frozen movement".

The word "hiatus" comes from the Latin verb *hiare*, meaning "to yawn". The traditional meaning of hiatus in English is "blank space". In linguistics, the word denotes the juxtaposition of two vowels, one at the end of a word and the other at the beginning of the next word. In that sense, the word hiatus was first used in ancient Roman discipline of rhetoric.

One of the meanings of the word, according to Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, is "an interruption in time or continuity" (1987: 569). For the purpose of this study, hiatus is used as a term marking relative interruptions in the straight continuity of the narrative, and is given a meaning related to the category of figures of speech. **A hiatus is a withholding of the**

**progressive information of the linear narrative through visual or otherwise graphic images and collective metaphors or similes, a withholding often with the deliberate purpose of heightening the dramatic pitch of the narrative.** It is a step outside the story-line, a suspension of action, revealing the hidden dynamism of the moment. A hiatus may involve the use of various figures of speech. Most usually, it is the use of metaphors or similes with the additional effect directly or indirectly related to hyperbole (an exaggerated or extravagant statement), litotes (a deliberate understatement or denial of the contrary), aporia (a true or feigned doubt or deliberation about an issue) or prosopopoeia (representing an imaginary or absent person as speaking or acting; or attributing life, speech or animate qualities to dumb or inanimate objects). **Otherwise, the hiatus may be defined as a unit, either on the level of style, imagery or episodes, that involves a climax (ascendance of interest and emotional response) and a following anti-climax (sudden change from the expected to an unexpected significance).**

According to Immanuel Kant, “/a/ joke must have something in it capable of momentarily deceiving us. Hence, when the semblance vanishes into nothing, the mind looks back in order to try it over again, and thus by a rapidly succeeding tension and relaxation it is jerked to and fro and put in oscillation” (1992: 201). As oscillations between the suspense of expectations and relief, the comic in this philosophical sense resembles music: “Music /---/ and what provokes laughter are two kinds of play with aesthetic ideas, or even with representations of the understanding, by which, all said and done, nothing is thought. By mere force of change they yet are able to afford lively gratification” (1992: 198). Kant’s considerations shed light also on interpreting the meaning of comic in Faulkner’s works: just as it is needless or superfluous about a piece of instrumental music to ask what the composer “means by this”, it is needless or superfluous to ask about Faulkner’s surprising images, turns of style or seemingly deviant episodes what the author has meant by them, why he has put them into the narrative. The very intention of such devices is to create the interplay of suspense and relief by presenting hiatuses in perception, sensations of blankness which nevertheless contain something. That quality of oscillations between suspense and relief is what constitutes the overall comic and tragicomic fabric of Faulkner’s oeuvre.

Faulkner’s methods of hiatus often result in tragicomic effects, as the density of words and images leave the unsaid loom with enormous graphic visuality, thus probing the powers and limits of the comprehension of human imagination. Each new tragicomic discovery produced by hiatus resembles the impact of the story of King Oedipus (in the epistemological, not in the panerotic interpretation), with the focus on the jeopardy of the process of understanding and on the tragic fallacies inherent to learning.

Faulkner’s novels doubtless evoke comparison with high dramas of world literature as in both the role of a straight narrative, so univocally prevalent in what is popularly understood by “fiction”, is definitively subjugated to other functions such as poetic suggestiveness including verbally created visual

effects, and philosophical knots of plot by their shocking suspense and surprises resembling such exercises of paradoxical logic as “King Oedipus” of Sophocles. Faulkner’s novels could also be seen as verbally conveyed movies, with the pervasive trait of a dramatically engaging introspection never to such a degree attainable in films. All Faulkner’s novels are “tragicomedies” in the same sense as Shakespeare’s plays, both his high tragedies and even the lighter comedies blend, in different proportions, the comic and the tragic; therefore Faulkner’s books could be separated into “light” tragicomedies (e. g. “As I Lay Dying”, “Intruder in the Dust”, “The Reivers”) and “dark” tragicomedies or comitragedies (e. g. “The Sound and the Fury”, “Absalom, Absalom!”).

But of course the parallel with classical dramas cannot be employed without reservations. Certainly Faulkner’s works can be read as a substitute for the genre called reading dramas. However, by his main strengths Faulkner was a poet-novelist, and the role of the plot for him never was as dominant, as transparently definitive as with playwrights. It is thus not solely by the turns of the plot that Faulkner’s comic and tragicomic effects should be analyzed. It is not only the ridiculousness of a character, a sentence, a situation or an event that evokes the laughter. The sense of tragicomedy in Faulkner often emerges in passages readable as expressions of the author’s lyrical self, introspectively observing a particular vision from behind the mask of a particular character. What is often both funny and scary in Faulkner is merely how he has worded a description. In his “The Meaning of Form in “The Sound and the Fury””, Donald M. Kartiganer views the narrative structure of the novel as based on Bergsonian principles: “For Bergson the analytic mind is capable of the “ingenious arrangement of immobilities”” (1987: 373). The American scholar Fred Miller Robinson, who calls the passages involving a hiatus “tableaux”, writes about them in his book “The Comedy of Language. Studies in Modern Comic Literature”: “In many of his novels, as is often noted, Faulkner’s tableaux are modelled after the scene of Keats’ Grecian Urn: motion, usually “terrific” motion, is “frozen”, as in a stop-action photograph, for our aesthetic contemplation. We experience motion and stasis simultaneously” (1980: 70).

It is in the depictions of “frozen movement”, uniting a still-stand with dynamic force, similar to certain bas-reliefs of ancient temple friezes, that as striking synthesis of the awesome (characteristic of tragedy) and the lucrative is achieved in Faulkner. The words conveying such a movement seem both groping and hitting their aim, and their visible concreteness and graphic precision simultaneously raise a silent puzzle of how much of the material world really can be sensed and how much of it adequately conveyed in words.

Such depictions, often involving an intricate sequence of association, belong to the class of images called hiatus in this study. They illuminate the imagination while leaving the reason blank and bewildered. They are like delving into another reality solely constituted of words, a reality in which the representative ability of language meets its high end and also its ultimate limits.

In the chapter devoted to “As I Lay Dying” (1930) of his book “The Comedy of Language”, Fred Miller Robinson writes: “What Faulkner’s metaphors do is delineate and clarify the life of forms while dissolving it into relation” (1980: 74). Part of Faulkner’s aim in that novel, according to Robinson, is to “celebrate, lyrically, the creation of forms that are a function of the strength of reality to dissolve them, pry them open, ruin them” (1980: 74). “The Life that shapes us dies in the shaping,” he phrases the central contradiction of the novel (1980: 75). Ryuichi Yamaguchi views the novel as both a comedy (including a comedy of mutual revengers, i. e., Addie and Anse) and a tragedy, best seen as expanding the genre of tall tale in every direction (“a taller action, a more pervasive uncertainty, deeper themes and implications”), and thus exploiting “all the generic affinities of the tall tale with carnivalesque and the absurd” (Yamaguchi 2004: 116). The action for him potentially suggests “an insulting cosmic irony” (Yamaguchi 2004: 116). Ted Atkinson in his neo-Marxist interpretation observes the book as a critical examination of the ideology of autonomy, artistic and economic. John Matthews, to whom Atkinson refers, understands the fate of the destructive Darl Bundren, breaking all the normal limits of artistic autonomy, as a “repudiation /on Faulkner’s behalf/ of the sort of art that too effortlessly fills the gaps of a story, that too readily composes itself abstractedly, and that too hastily universalizes its meaning”, thus as a means for Faulkner “to exorcise the strictly aestheticist impulse of his modernism” (cited in: Atkinson 2005: 22). Significantly for this study, using a phrase from the very novel, Atkinson sees all the Bundrens as driven by urges and longings for “just a shape to fill a lack” (Atkinson 2005: 25). In his work “William Faulkner and Bruno Schulz. A Comparative Study”, the Polish scholar Zbigniew Maszewski writes about “As I Lay Dying”: “/In that novel/ the essence of life is metamorphosis, migration of forms and “the bare fact of separate individual existence holds an irony, a hoax, a clown’s stuck-out tongue” [*Letters and Drawings of Bruno Schulz with Selected Prose* 113]” (2003: 141). Louise Gossett says of the plot of the book: “The series of accidents out of which Faulkner builds the funeral trip is a parade of human and natural disasters” (1965: 33). Ward L. Miner writes:

The novel is a folk comedy embodying tragedy, despair, and futility. These overtones are those particularly appropriate to Southwest folk humor, which has been noted for its violence and cruelty. Faulkner has applied modern subjective techniques to the violent material of the regional folklore (cited in: Bungert 1971: 115).

Robinson detects in the book “/t/he sense of comedy that survives the strictures of irony” (1980: 83). About the central family in the book Maszewski writes: “Frozen into a mechanism that keeps them moving and talking, the Bundrens repeat acts of watching each other’s marionette-like, uncanny, repetitious gestures of rubbing their knees, fanning, hammering, lifting their hands, spitting into the dust” (2003: 137). The novel abounds in

groupings of metaphors or similes occurring at crucial moments and intensifying the impact of the action. By their precision these episodes resemble etchings, while their boldness leaves the impression of a free-hand drawing.

An example from page 9, containing the very word used in present terminology, presents nearly all the characteristics of the concept:

They stand in rigid terrific hiatus, the horse trembling and groaning. Then Jewel is on the horse's back. He flows upward in a stooping swirl like the lash of a whip, his body in mid-air shaped to the horse. For another moment the horse stands spraddled, with lowered head, before it bursts into motion. They descend the hill in a series of spine-bolting jumps, Jewel high, leech-like on the withers, to the fence where the horse bunches to a scuttering halt again.

There is a grouping of similes here, there is frozen movement and there is poetic information not serving the linearity of the plot. Fred Miller Robinson writes of the description introducing the above passage:

Here two extremes are held in terrific tension, the rigidity of motionlessness conforming to the horizontal and dynamic nature of reality. What is rigid and static becomes disembodied, earth-free, and what is dynamic is arrested in form. This tension is implicit in Addie's comment /---/ about the impossibility of straddling words and doing. In Faulkner's tableaux this tension is resolved in dynamic form (1980: 70).

A sequence of hiatic effects can be found on pages 86 and 87 in the novel:

The brim of his hat has soaked free of the crown in two places, drooping across his wooden face so that, head lowered, he looks through it like through the visor of a helmet, looking long across the valley to where the barn leans against the bluff, shaping the invisible horse. "See then?" I say.

The plain fact that the character does not see the desired object is expressed here with a complexity of images, all trying the reader's powers to draw connections between the invisible, the conceptual. The passage with the significance of a painting is purported to show not what the character sees but his power to see and also to make the reader see, as it were, through his closed eyelids, just his faculty of vision. The narrator's question heightens ironically the effect of the previous sentence. Robinson writes in his study of "As I Lay Dying": "Metaphor, and particularly metaphor that shifts and grows, engendering out of itself new relations, allows us to glimpse the real. We need not be blinded by it because we truly *see*, blinded, that is, to the world of forms" (1980: 76).

High above the house, against the quick thick sky, they hang in narrowing circles.

Again, what is shown is not seen, at least not by the reader, as the object of reference is not named. In the following sentence, a look-alike is provided, while some strong characteristics are brought out relief-like:

From here they are no more than specks, implacable, patient, portentous.

The same one page long passage by the character Darl contains twice the adjective “wooden-backed” and once “wooden-faced” as referring to the character he is observing. “Wooden” as a synonym to “rigid” corresponds to Henri Bergson’s arguments about the comic rising from a sense of rigidity. The narrative here is held in suspense through underlying information. The hiatus is distinguished by a high degree of visuality and sonority, a flood of poetic information which causes a stop in the straight narrative.

At the following page, the character Cash’s nine line long narration begins and ends almost identically:

It won’t balance. If you want it to tote and ride on a balance, we will have ---”  
/---/  
It won’t balance. If they want it to tote and ride on a balance, they will have ---”

As in earlier examples, information is withheld, the reference to the coffin detectable only in the wider context. The repetition of the phrase resembles the use of a musical motif in slight alterations.

Examples of hiatus in “As I Lay Dying” are especially abundant in the sections of the clairvoyant half-madman Darl. Maszewski characterizes him: “Behind the artificiality of the stage one can feel the breath of the spontaneous, the mysterious. Darl, the master of metaphor and simile, seems to be mastered by them, loosens his grip of words and demonstrates, as though against his will, their fluid, uncontrollable nature” (2003: 141). Elsewhere in his study Maszewski says of Darl: “He is a dreamer and a devotee of the schemes that organize, systematize, harmonize” (2003: 138) and “he identifies with the family of sawdust, wooden-backed, wooden-faced shapes” (2003: 137).

On page 96 a passage of Darl’s of relatively straight depiction is followed by a characteristic halt with both highly abstract and picturesque qualities, describing, as it were, the very nature of poetic hiatus:

Vernon still stands there. He watches Jewel as he passes, the horse moving with a light, high-kneed gait, three hundred yards back. We go on, with a motion so soporific, so dreamlike as to be uninferant of progress, as though time and not space were decreasing between us and it.

A hiatus of the elevated “frozen movement” style occurs when on pages 135–136 nearly a page is devoted to the appearance of a log in the flooded river before it is to strike the wagon containing Addie’s body and her family. In an italicized passage (italics stress the significance of the moment), the log “/surges/ up out of the water and /stands/ for an instant upright upon that

surging and heaving desolation like Christ.” In the next passage the “long gout of foam” on the end of the log is compared to “the beard of an old man or a goat”, giving the previous simile with Christ a vague ironic shade and making possible an association with ancient Dionysian rituals (“tragedy” meaning “goat-song” literally).

The “frozen movement” impact may appear in descriptions of an actual halt of objects or reflections:

The air smells like sulphur. Upon the impalpable plane of it their shadows form as upon a wall, as though like sound they had not gone very far away in falling but had merely congealed for a moment, immediate and musing. (69)

or, more often, it is just an imaginary halt registered during rapid motion:

He heaves, lifting one whole side so suddenly that we all spring into the lift to catch and balance it before he hurls it completely over. /---/ Then it breaks free, rising suddenly as though the emaciation of her body had added buoyancy to the planks or as though, seeing that the garment was about to be torn from her, she rushes suddenly after it in a passionate reversal that flouts its own desire and need. (88)

or it may be an indeterminate state between motion and immobility, as in this description of buzzards:

High against it they hang in narrowing circles, like the smoke, with an outward semblance of form and purpose, but with no inference of motion, progress or retrograde. (212)

The coffin with its associations of elimination of time is a favourite object described in such singled-out moments:

/---/ it begins to rush away from me and slip down the air like a sled upon invisible snow, smoothly evacuating atmosphere in which the sense of it is still shaped. (89)

In the depiction of the fire set upon the barn by Darl, the coffin which is being rescued evolves into a particularly dramatic symbol:

/---/ for another instant /the coffin/ stands upright while the sparks rain on it in scattering bursts as though they engendered other sparks from the contact. Then it topples forward, gaining momentum /---/. (208)

Essentially the embodiment of immobility, in a paradoxical comparison, derived from painting, the coffin is given insect-like qualities:

/---/ the square squat shape of the coffin on the saw-horses like a cubistic bug /---/. (204)

Characteristic of the novel are combinations of the “frozen movement” with descriptions of comically repetitive, rigidly mechanical action:

He touches the quilt as he saw Dewey Dell do, trying to smoothe it up to the chin, but disarranging it instead. He tries to smoothe it again, clumsily, his hand awkward as a claw, smoothing at the wrinkles which he made and which continue to emerge beneath his hand with perverse ubiquity, so that at last he desists, his hand falling to his side and stroking itself again, palm and back, on his thigh. (47)

Often the inertness is expressed in the imagery of rigid woodenness:

/---/ with the hub turning smoothly under his sole he lifts the other foot and squats there, staring straight ahead, motionless, lean, wooden-backed, as though carved squatting out of the lean wood. (218)

The qualities of inertness in such cases may also be purely facial:

He sits the horse, glaring at Vernon, his lean face suffused up to and beyond the pale rigidity of his eyes. (114)

Sometimes the similes are borrowed directly from comic art terminology:

Pa looks at him, his face streaming slowly. It is as though upon a face carved by a savage caricaturist a monstrous burlesque of all bereavement flowed. (70–71)

The pathetically comic, dummy-like traits of the characters may be conveyed in images of nature, emphasizing the rural, hillbilly-like air of the narrative drama:

In his face the blood goes in waves. In between them his flesh is greenish looking, about that smooth, thick, pale green of cow’s cud /---/. (88)

Richly poetic, Darl’s galloping imagination occasionally produces passages of fascinating originality and faltering logic:

Her face is calm and sullen, her eyes brooding and alert; within them I can see Peabody’s back like two round peas in two thimbles: Perhaps in Peabody’s back two of those worms which work surreptitious and steady through you and out the other side and you waking suddenly from sleep or from waking, with on your face an expression sudden, intent, and concerned. (92)

Motion and immobility may be juxtaposed with the elegance of a dancing cadence:

He galloped up and stopped, his heels in the horse’s ribs and it dancing and swirling like the shape of its mane and tail and the splotches of its coat had

nothing whatever to do with the flesh-and-bone horse inside them, and he sat there, looking at us. (121)

In certain places, the isolation of a time unit (“frozen movement”) is replaced by the isolation of physical space:

Jewel and Vernon are in the river again. From here they do not appear to violate the surface at all; it is as though it had severed them both at a single blow, the two torsos moving with infinitesimal and ludicrous care upon the surface. (152)

In the episode with the burning barn, Darl’s schizophrenia reaches especially tragicomic dimensions, as the man who has set the barn afire rushes others, himself physically immobile, to save it:

Against the dark doorway he seems to materialize out of darkness, lean as a racehorse in his underclothes in the beginning of the glare. He leaps to the ground with on his face an expression of furious unbelief. He has seen me without even turning his head or his eyes in which the glare swims like two small torches. (204)

Once again, natural imagery and metaphors involving rigidity strengthen the impression of inert mechanisms in action:

He looks back at us, his eyes and mouth three round holes in his face on which the freckles look like English peas on a plate. (206)

It is the cow; with a single whistling breath she rushes between us and through the gap and into the outer glare, her tail erect and rigid as a broom nailed upright to the end of her spine. (206–207)

As it can be expected from Faulkner with his classical models, a simile uniting “frozen movement” with allusions from antiquity will not be missed:

When I reach the front, he is struggling with Gillespie; the one lean in underclothes, the other stark naked. They are like two figures in a Greek frieze, isolated out of all reality by the red glare. (207)

Later as the Bundren family approach their destination, Darl surprises the reader again with queer philosophizing on the plain fact they must walk uphill after the wagon:

Life was created in the valleys. It blew up on to the hills on the old terrors, the old lusts, the old despairs. That’s why you must walk up the hills so you can ride down. (212)

The envisionings of Darl's younger brother Vardaman are not so much insane as childishly wild and illogical. With very simple statements he may reach a high tragic pitch:

The barn went swirling up in little red pieces, against the sky and the stars so that the stars moved backward. (209)

There is ironic misunderstanding in Vardaman's words as he tries to console his brother after they nearly lost their mother's body in the burning barn:

"You needn't to cry," I said. "Jewel got her out. You needn't to cry, Darl." (210)

Although far from Darl's depths of contemplation, compared with the choleric brother Jewel the carpenter Cash is something of a philosopher, as seen in these musings in the vein of ungrammatical folk wisdom:

Folks seem to get away from the olden right teaching that says to drive the nails down and trim the edges well always like it was for your own use and comfort you were making it. It's like some folks has the smooth, pretty boards to build a court-house with and others don't have no more than rough lumber fitten to build a chicken coop. But it's better to build a tight chicken coop than a shoddy court-house, and when they both build shoddy or build well, neither because it's one or tother is going to make a man feel the better nor the worse. (220–221)

And in his broken grammar, Cash almost with the eloquence of Darl expresses a poignant truth both about his insane brother and humanity:

It's like there was a fellow in every man that's done a-past the sanity or the insanity, that watches the sane and the insane doings of that man with the same horror and the same astonishment. (226)

Always comically ignorant of grammar rules, the father Anse is almost capable of Old Testament style laments:

"You all don't know," pa says. "The somebody you was young with and you growed old in her and she growed old in you, seeing the old coming on and it was the one somebody you could hear say it don't matter and know it was the truth outen the hard world and all a man's grief and trials. You all don't know." (221)

The reader's last glimpse of Darl shows him on the way to the mental institution fulfilling his sickly conflicting roles as a soothsayer and a liar:

"I thought you would have told me," he said. "I never thought you wouldn't have." (225)

Although he says this, wildly laughing, it is evident Darl knew perfectly well beforehand what was going to be done with him.

Unlike the clear-cut episodic character of “As I Lay Dying”, hiatic groupings of images in “Old Man” (1939) occur accompanied by a complex flow of syntactic devices, in long periods of rhetoric rich in various figures of speech.

It was as if the water itself were in three strata, separate and distinct, the bland and unhurried surface bearing a frothy scum and a miniature flotsam of twigs and screening as though by vicious calculation the rush and fury of the flood itself, and beneath this in turn the original stream, trickle, murmuring along in the opposite direction, following undisturbed and unaware its appointed course and serving its Lilliputian end, like a thread of ants between the rails on which an express train passes, they (the ants) as unaware of the power and fury as if it were a cyclone crossing Saturn. (Faulkner 1966: 62–63)

Detectable in the preceding example are traits of such figures of speech as *propopoeia* (the stream is given animate qualities, being compared to a thread of ants) as well as hyperbole (“a cyclone crossing Saturn”) and *litotes* (“its Lilliputian end”).

In the following passage, there is no hiatus (deliberate withholding of progressive narrative information), but the tragicomic description of people and animals at the mercy of the flood strongly resembles similar scenes in Mark Twain’s book of recollections “Life on the Mississippi”.

A woman clutching two children squatted on the ridgepole, a man and a half-grown youth, standing waist-deep, were hoisting a squealing pig onto the slanting roof of a barn, on the ridgepole of which sat a row of chickens and a turkey. Near the barn was a haystack on which a cow stood tied by a rope to the center pole and bawling steadily; a yelling negro boy on a saddleless mule which flogged steadily, his legs clutching the mule’s barrel and his body leaned to the drag of a rope attached to a second mule, approached the haystack, splashing and floundering. (63)

What gives a simile hiatus-like qualities is often the precision and amount of information included in it, as in the following passage where the disappearance of the road is compared to a blade:

Then the road vanished. There was no perceptible slant to it yet it had slipped abruptly beneath the brown surface with no ripple, no ridgy demarcation, like a flat thin blade slipped obliquely into flesh by a delicate hand, annealed into the water without disturbance, as if it had existed so for years, had been built that way. (64)

Faulkner’s elaborate rhetoric very often produces sentences in which the hiatus-like effect is contained not only in imagery but in the very succession of surprisingly coupled words of Anglo-Saxon and Latin heritage:

While the two guards talked with the sentry before the tent the convicts sat in a line along the edge of the platform like buzzards on a fence, their shackled feet dangling above the brown motionless flood out of which the railroad embankment rose, pristine and intact, in a kind of paradoxical denial and repudiation of change and portent, not talking, just looking quietly across the track to where the other half of the amputated town seemed to float, house shrub and tree, ordered and pageant-like and without motion, upon the limitless liquid plain beneath the thick gray sky. (66–67)

As a deliberate withholding of narrative information entailing a falling short of expectations, the phenomenon called hiatus in this study also occurs elsewhere in Faulkner, but never with such frequency as in the two works observed above. Viewable as a variant of narrative suspense, the hiatus may be extended further than groupings of imagery to cover whole episodes, such of them that appear to be inserted into the narrative progression not with the aim of developing the straight plot-line but with the sole purpose of creating the effect of the (tragi)comic in the way that Kant defines the nature of comic. One of such hiatic episodes can be found in the quotation from “The Sound and the Fury”, presented in the following chapter, that novel being particularly rich in tragicomic digressions. However, the phenomenon of the hiatus in its narrowly defined form is mainly characteristic of the young Faulkner of his first productive years as a mature writer. The ways Faulkner builds up comic suspense both on the level of imagery and of situations require a many-sided look on his linguistic and narrative devices. An attempt at such a look will be undertaken in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER TWO.** **Devices of Tragicomic in a Selection of Faulkner's Works**

### **The Farcical and the Tragicomic**

Frequent in Faulkner's works are farcical traits united with the grim and the macabre. These elements of a farce are not properly comic because of their darkness; neither are they, because they lack in sublimity, properly tragic. Thus, the whole novel "Sanctuary" (1931) can be seen as a grim farce, even though the psychological motivation of its characters is at times complicated and impressive. In "Pylon" (1935), a certain amount of tragicomic contrast arises between the oververbalized (represented by the reporter) and the incommunicable (represented by the aviators) versions of reality. The aviators as creatures of the sky become unhuman demigods with whom earthly concepts, even as serious breaches of norms as adultery (which they commit, with no protests from anyone directly involved, in the air), lose their connotations; the reporter is driven half mad and led to self-humiliation by the realization that what fills his head with reproachful and accusatory verbal pictures and periods of rhetoric, what oppresses him with obsessive jealousy, is for the aviators, unperturbed by the moral and moralizing sights of people on earth, a passing act of biological functions, as much above the power of words and beyond emotional impact of concepts as the fact of being alive itself. These hazardous problems of representing the non-linguistic reality are related to the philosophical challenges in the more successful novels such as "The Sound and the Fury" and "The Hamlet". Nevertheless, the farcical and the anecdotal, with few touches of the really comic and tragic, prevail in "Pylon".

Similarly, the latter traits are present in the novels rated more highly by the majority of critics. The novels "The Sound and the Fury", "As I Lay Dying", "Light in August" and "Absalom, Absalom!" share the fact that they include both more of the farcical and more of the immediately and passionately dramatic than the works of the more mature period beginning with "Go Down, Moses".

Faulkner's properly comic and his tragicomic are unusual in that they nearly always occur intertwined with the farcical; in many cases, the farce does not entail them but when it does, as in the four early novels listed above, as well as in a number of short stories, the emergence of the sublime and the tragicomic from the merely farcical may be the more striking. The attempt in this study is to analyze such instances of the farce overlapping with the comic and the tragicomic. The versions of that overlapping are diverse; for example, it may be only the richness of the language, the stylistic devices that give the text its comic depth. The attention is paid in this chapter to such works or episodes that more than others evade trivial implications.

## **“The Sound and the Fury”. The Benjy Section**

The novel “The Sound and the Fury”, published in 1929, contains some of Faulkner’s most memorable scenes of comic and ones which appear as the clearest realizations of comic as defined by Kant. The first part, narrated from the viewpoint of the idiot Benjy – for many the highest point of Faulkner’s technical and philosophical innovations –, constantly poses the reader ontological and epistemological problems and paradoxes; not merely funny, not merely pathetic, they astound the interpreter by letting the natural, rational, logical expectations down, by startling the common sense into a suspended hiatus.

Comic episodes, comic devices also occur in the remaining three parts of the novel. In the second part, Quentin’s obsession with his watch, a personification of time for him, which he breaks, is tragicomic as well as pathetic. His comparing the pair of irons, the weight necessary for him to drown which he carries along in Cambridge, to a pair of shoes, and especially his walk with the little Italian girl, magnified to a personified death by his psychosis, are occasions when the tense reception of tragic by the reader may provoke terrible, involuntary laughter, resembling an unexpected grin on the tragic mask. In the third part, Jason’s wicked fury and evil jokes take on a bitterly humorous significance, as when he tortures the Black servant boy Luster by slowly letting drop into fire the circus tickets he says he does not need but the latter is longing for. In the fourth part, Luster is obsessed with playing tunes on a saw, his perseverance at that being in a tragicomic, vaguely symbolic contrast with the fatal whirlwinds of mortal sins that have embraced the household on that Easter day. Throughout the novel, the tragicomic pitch is heightened by the Black characters’ heavy dialect speech.

Frequent especially in the third part, narrated by Jason, are digressions from straight action whose main purpose seems to be highlighting Jason’s evil, but complex personality from quickly changing angles, each like an impasse of hope for any humane characteristics that he potentially might possess. Such digressive highlighting partly continues in the fourth part, presented by the omniscient narrator and containing an extended portrayal of Jason. The reason these digressions are particularly notable in regard to Jason is that unlike the illogical or straying minds of Benjy and Quentin, Jason is a practical character, all of whose deeds would be expected to follow a direct course. In terms of narration, these digressive scenes resemble the impact of hiatus, defined above, raised to the level of whole episodes. Following as an example of these is a literal aberration of Jason’s on his quest to catch the niece Quentin whom he hates. By the hilariousness mingled with convulsions of fury, by the strain and tension such a sudden grin of fate causes in the reader during the reception of a display of hubris, this is one of the masterful examples of Faulkner’s conveyance of tragicomic.

Then he went to the car and mounted the steps, swiftly and quietly, and paused at the door. The galley was dark, rank with stale food. The man was a white blur, singing in a cracked, shaky tenor. An old man, he thought, and not as big as I am. He entered the car as the man looked up.

“Hey?” the man said, stopping his song.

“Where are they?” Jason said. “Quick, now. In the sleeping car?”

“Where’s who?” the man said.

“Dont lie to me,” Jason said. He blundered on in the cluttered obscurity.

“What’s that?” the other said. “Who you calling a liar?” and when Jason grasped his shoulder he exclaimed, “Look out, fellow!”

“Dont lie,” Jason said. “Where are they?”

“Why, you bastard,” the man said. His arm was frail and thin in Jason’s grasp. He tried to wrench free, then he turned and fell to scrabbling on the littered table behind him.

“Come on,” Jason said. “Where are they?”

“I’ll tell you where they are,” the man shrieked. “Lemme find my butcher knife.”

“Here,” Jason said, trying to hold the other. “I’m just asking you a question.”

“You bastard,” the other shrieked, scrabbling at the table. Jason tried to grasp him in both arms, trying to prison the puny fury of him. The man’s body felt so old, so frail, yet so fatally singlepurposed that for the first time Jason saw clear and unshadowed the disaster toward which he rushed.

“Quit it!” he said. “Here. Here! I’ll get out. Give me time, and I’ll get out.”

“Call me a liar,” the other wailed. “Lemme go. Lemme go just one minute. I’ll show you.”

Jason glared wildly about, holding the other. Outside it was now bright and sunny, swift and bright and empty, and he thought of the people soon to be going quietly home to Sunday dinner, decorously festive, and of himself trying to hold the fatal, furious little old man whom he dared not release long enough to turn his back and run.

“Will you quit long enough for me to get out?” he said. “Will you?” But the other still struggled, and Jason freed one hand and struck him on the head. A clumsy, hurried blow, and not hard, but the other slumped immediately and slid clattering among pans and buckets to the floor. Jason stood above him, panting, listening. Then he turned and ran from the car. At the door he restrained himself and descended more slowly and stood there again. His breath made a hah hah hah sound and he stood there trying to repress it, darting his gaze this way and that, when at a scuffling sound behind him he turned in time to see the little old man leaping awkwardly and furiously from the vestibule, a rusty hatchet high in his hand.

He grasped at the hatchet, feeling no shock but knowing that he was falling, thinking So this is how it’ll end, and he believed that he was about to die and when something crashed against the back of his head he thought How did he hit me there? Only maybe he hit me a long time ago, he thought. And I just now felt it, and he thought Hurry. Hurry. Get it over with, and then a furious desire not to die seized him and he struggled, hearing the old man wailing and cursing in his cracked voice (Faulkner 1987b: 184–185).

The prevailing tragicomedy of the Benjy section of “The Sound and the Fury” lies in Benjy’s stagnant idiot consciousness memorizing and revisualizing events as they change the world, with an unchanging, purposeless passivity, while life around him is whirling in tempestuous flux, his siblings and companions die and procreate, it being alternately, in his mental narrative, his sister Caddy and her daughter Quentin who slip, are torn away from his still world into the lures of sex impulses.

As a human being, some essential parts of whose definable humanity, like intellect, are severely impaired, if not lacking, Benjy suffers from an extreme rigidity of mind, making him painfully tragicomic. Notable in the section are transitions from one time level to another, from one state of things as Benjy perceives them to a new one, whose abruptness suggests a deliberate evocation of distrust in the narrator, in his ability to maintain continuity. The idiot can only grasp the states, not the flowing connection between them:

It was red, flapping on the pasture. Then there was a bird slanting and tilting on it. (Faulkner 1987a: 4)

Caddy was walking. Then she was running, her booksatchel swinging and jouncing behind her. (6)

Instead of saying “she started running”, Benjy here jumps to the new action as if starting his registration process from the scratch, as he also does in the following examples.

She gave me a flower and her hand went away. (11)

I wasn’t crying, but I couldn’t stop. I wasn’t crying, but the ground wasn’t still, and then I was crying. /---/ Quentin held my arm and we went toward the barn. Then the barn wasn’t there and we had to wait until it came back. (23)

I couldn’t stop. Quentin and T. P. came up the hill, fighting. T. P. was falling down the hill and Quentin dragged him up the hill. Quentin hit T. P. I couldn’t stop. (24)

He was still laughing, and I couldn’t stop, and I tried to get up and I fell down, and I couldn’t stop. (24)

“Drink.” Quentin said. They held my head. It was hot inside me, and I began again. I was crying now, and something was happening inside me and I cried more, and they held me until it stopped happening. Then I hushed. It was still going around, and the shapes began. (25)

Versh’s hand came with the spoon, into the bowl. The spoon came up to my mouth. The steam tickled into my mouth. Then we quit eating and we looked at each other and we were quiet, and then we heard it again and I began to cry.

“What was that.” Caddy said. She put her hand on my hand.  
“That was Mother.” Quentin said. The spoon came up and I ate, then I cried again. (28–29)

“Bring his bowl here.” Dilsey said. The bowl went away. (29)

Quentin hit the match with her hand and it went away. (56)

But as a natural phenomenon, part of a world in itself of large, hidden truths, Benjy is able to commune with that world’s secret expressions at a highly poetic level. The latter quality makes him sublime, therefore tragic, and as a paradox, his mind is at once the most rigid (capable or registering only separate states without seeing the causal continuity) and the most fluid (flexible in a non-human sense, intuitive the way the poetic mind works) in the whole novel. Perceivable in the following passage is an ironically tragicomic contrast between the lyrical heights of Benjy’s consciousness and the remaining primitiveness of the being capable of them:

*I saw them. Then I saw Caddy, with flowers in her hair, and a long veil like shining wind. Caddy Caddy*

“Hush.” T. P. said. “They going to hear you. Get down quick.” He pulled me. Caddy. I clawed my hands against the wall. Caddy. T. P. pulled me. “Hush.” he said. “Hush. Come on here quick.” He pulled me on. Caddy “Hush up, Benjy. You want them to hear you. Come on, les drink some more sassprilluh, then we can come back if you hush. We better get one more bottle or we both be holler-ing. We can say Dan drunk it. Mr Quentin always saying he so smart, we can say he sassprilluh dog, too.” /---/ T. P. fell down. He began to laugh, and the cellar door and the moonlight jumped away and something hit me. /---/ The cellar steps ran up the hill in the moonlight and T. P. fell up the hill, into the moonlight, and I ran against the fence and T. P. ran behind me saying “Hush up hush up.” (45)

That there is a lot of poetry in the idiot consciousness becomes evident from such a sweet leitmotif as “You don’t want your hands froze on Christmas, do you” as well as the very frequent “Caddy smelled like trees in the rain” and “We could hear the fire and the roof”. When Benjy observes the sounds, the shapes and the brightness around him, or when he claims to be hearing a visual phenomenon, it appears that he is far from being unable to comprehend any connections at all but his mind functions in an intuitive, animistic way like a shaman’s or a prehistoric poet’s, contacting the powers of the non-human universe:

I could smell the clothes flapping /---/ (15)

The trees were buzzing, and the grass. (43)

We could hear the dark. (85)

I went around the kitchen, where the moon was. Dan came scuffling along, into the moon. (53)

She led me to the fire and I looked at the bright, smooth shapes. I could hear the fire and the roof. (74)

/---/ I squatted there, holding the slipper. I couldn't see it, but my hands saw it, and I could hear it getting night, and my hands saw the slipper but I couldn't see myself, but my hands could see the slipper and I squatted there, hearing it getting dark. (82)

Lyricism of perception and a comprehension of causality appear synthesized occasionally:

/---/ it kept on making the sound and Quentin kicked T. P. and Caddy put her arms around me, and her shining veil, and I couldn't smell trees anymore and I began to cry. (46)

For another example, Benjy understands whose shadow which is ("We went along the brick walk, with our shadows" (40)). And the natural flow really is available to the sensations of Benjy on the special occasions when he falls asleep embraced by his mind's image of the beloved Caddy, or when he sees things pass him in what appears to him to be the right order:

/---/ the bright shapes went smooth and steady on both sides, the shadows of them flowing across Queenie's back. They went on like the bright tops of wheels. Then those on one side stopped at the tall white post where the soldier was. But on the other side they went on smooth and steady, but a little slower. (12)

Ryuichi Yamaguchi sees "The Sound and the Fury" as "a lamentation of loss" (2004: 92) and he interprets its each section, including Benjy's, as being built around "a major situational joke on loss" (2004: 97). In Benjy's narrative, besides Benjy himself, the loser is the Black servant boy Luster in search for his lost quarter. Yamaguchi writes:

Benjy's section presents an inventory of losses called up by his and Luster's movements on April 7, 1928. Those movements, which structure Benjy's section, are prompted by Benjy's and Luster's separate quests: Benjy's for his lost virgin sister-mother Caddy and the childhood paradise of affection and security she had given him; Luster's for his lost quarter, the ticket to the childhood paradise of music and spectacle he expects to find at the show /---/. (2004: 97)

Yamaguchi characterizes Benjy and Luster as two knight errants on their quests on parallel courses, each a hindrance for the other, each unaware of what the other is looking for. He writes:

The humor of the paired quests involves dramatic irony and comic contrast. /---/  
The two heroes themselves are a study in comic contrasts: big, white, mute, helpless Benjy versus small, black, sassy, resourceful Luster. And so it is with the objects of their quests: Benjy seeks his radiant sister, Luster his shiny quarter, both with the same single-minded intensity. The terrible element in this bizarre pair of quests is that for both heroes, this day repeats their everyday experience of loss. Luster loses one more day of the childhood he has had to spend trailing Benjy, while Benjy relives the losses of a lifetime, recalled afresh at the site where each occurred. Neither Luster's impressment into Benjy's service, nor Benjy's immediate pain, seems likely to end any time soon. (2004: 98)

Luster's tragic loss of his quarter is given an urgency, penetrating Benjy's hearing like a leitmotif but totally beyond his understanding ("You go last night." Luster said. "I going tonight. If I can find where I lost that quarter."(17)) It also receives a direct comic treatment as in this witty reply of Luster's:

"Where'd you get a quarter, boy. Find it in white folks' pocket while they aint looking."  
"Got it at the getting place." Luster said. "Plenty more where that one come from. Only I got to find that one. Is you all found it yet." (16)

And as a balance, there is comic stupidity in Luster's answer soon thereafter, in the following dialogue:

"I had it when we was down here this morning." Luster said.  
"Where bouts you lose it."  
"Right out this here hole in my pocket." Luster said. (18)

Another source of comic, as in many other texts by Faulkner, is the Black dialect with its distorted grammar ("Course I is." Dilsey said. (11), "I is done it." (19)), words ("that ahun gate" (7), "Look at them chillen" (16), "*Naw, sir*" (37), "He's deaf and dumb" (56), "I dont ricklick seeing you around here before"(56), "not sturb" (68) "liberry" (69)), and names ("Miss Cahline" (10)).

As an extreme case of Faulkner's frequent comedy of limited perception, the Benjy section presents its tragicomic moments when the idiot is witnessing Uncle Maury's alcoholism ("Uncle Maury was putting the bottle back in the sideboard." (7)) or his being caught at an adulterous action. The same degree of tragicomedy applies to Benjy's registration of the Black servants' long and expert talk about conjuring, of which he naturally understands nothing, and to his unwittingly assaulting the schoolgirl, after which he is castrated. The section also includes the first displays of Benjy's brother Jason's wickedness, as in this initial appearance of Jason:

Mother out her handkerchief under her veil. "Stop it, Mother." Jason said. "Do you want to get that damn looney to bawling in the middle of the square. Drive on, T. P." (13)

Later Jason re-emerges into Benjy's consciousness as a small boy, already selfish and mean. He and Caddy repeatedly call each other names, and he keeps telling on others:

"Jason wont tell." Quentin said. "You remember that bow and arrow I made you, Jason."

"It's broke now." Jason said. (22-23)

"Caddy and Quentin threw water on each other." Jason said.

We waited.

"They did." Father said. (27)

"He does it every night since Damuddy was sick and he cant sleep with her." Caddy said. "Cry baby."

"I'm going to tell on you." Jason said. (30)

"Do you think buzzards are going to undress Damuddy." Caddy said. "You're crazy."

"You're a skizzard." Jason said. He began to cry.

"You're a knobnot." Caddy said. Jason cried. His hands were in his pockets. (40)

The wickedness in such a young child is tragicomic, the more so as the austere revelation of his moral condition is veiled by the utter childishness of the situations as they float in Benjy's mind.

And there are the first intimations of the moral incest between Quentin and Caddy, at the scene in which the children are playing at the brook:

"It's not wet." Caddy said. She stood up in the water and looked at her dress.

"I'll take it off." she said. "Then it'll dry."

"I bet you wont." Quentin said.

"I bet I will." Caddy said.

"I bet you better not." Quentin said.

/---/

"You just take your dress off." Quentin said. Caddy took her dress off and threw it on the bank. (20)

Sadly comic is the appearance of Mrs. Compson, Benjy's mother, as she starts reproaching the only person, Dilsey, who caringly thinks about Benjy on his birthday:

/Mother/ came and stood by me. "Hush." she said. "Right this minute. Did you give him this cake."

“I bought it.” Dilsey said. “It never come out of Jason’s pantry. I fixed him some birthday.”

“Do you want to poison him with that cheap store cake.” Mother said. “Is that what you are trying to do. Am I never to have one minute’s peace.” (68)

Towards the end of the section, Caddy’s slipper develops into a tragicomic symbol (““Here.” Dilsey said. “Stop crying, now.” She gave me the slipper, and I hushed.” (69)). Finally, as in Benjy’s late evening recollections the children go to sleep, the feeling of nostalgia, pervading the narrative despite the bleakness of memories, becomes overwhelming:

Father went to the door and looked at us again. Then the dark came back, and he stood black in the door, and then the door turned black again. (85)

The Benjy section of “The Sound and the Fury” resembles a symphony with its leitmotifs, its recurrences and repetitions, with its meaningful omissions and ellipses, the alternating time levels similar to different movements played by different groups of instruments in an orchestra. A powerful, philosophically challenging piece of writing, the Benjy section represents Faulkner’s comedy and tragicomedy of limited perception as one of its farthest-reaching and most multi-faceted developments.

### **Rabelaisian Influences on Faulkner: “The Mansion”**

The critic who discovered Faulkner’s creative debt to Rabelais is Joel A. Hunt. In the article “William Faulkner and Rabelais: The Dog Story” in the 1969 summer issue of the journal “Contemporary Literature”, he described an anecdotal, or tall-tale-like, episode in Rabelais’s novel “Pantagruel” (the second, or first, by the date of the original publication, component novel of his pentalogy) and found it to correspond in several original details to an embarrassing scene in a chapter of Faulkner’s novel “The Mansion”, depicting the end of the political career of the upstart Clarence Egglestone Snopes. Hunt drew the conclusion:

William Faulkner, in all likelihood, drew upon the *Pantagruel* for the composition of the Snopes scene, and /---/ this borrowing would not seem to have been made from any other source. No other work of literature, so far as I have been able to determine, presents a situation containing these unique and highly distinctive elements /---/ (1969: 386).

As a general truth, nowhere else in Faulkner’s fiction is the Rabelaisian grotesque as richly represented as in the Snopes trilogy of novels, “The Hamlet” (1940), “The Town” (1957) and “The Mansion” (1959). Chapter One of Part Four, “The Peasants”, of “The Hamlet”, also published separately in different

versions as the story “The Spotted Horses” (viewed below), possesses a quality of tempestuous momentum, with its hyperbolic scenes bordering on the hardly believable, purely fantastic, or as one could say in the terms of late 20<sup>th</sup> century literature, on the character of magic realism.

In Faulkner’s episode of “The Mansion”, the swindling politician Clarence Snopes gets thwarted off from his run for US Congress when Ratliff plays him a trick with dogs. Meeting his future voters at the country home of Uncle Billy Varner, the man who actually made his career, Clarence attracts the attention of a huge pack of dogs who all try and raise one of their hind legs on his trousers, marking him off the same way as dogs mark fence-posts. From a nearby copse, a favourite place for stray dogs, Ratliff, or actually a couple of boys in his service, had brought some tree switches heavily scented with dozens of dogs’ urine, and secretly rubbed them against the senator’s trousers. Escaping into a car from his embarrassment, Clarence is still surrounded by dogs who now keep circling around the car in a natural merry-go-round and marking its tires. Such an end to a political career of crooked methods and lies, an end pointedly simple and rustic, is the more comic as for the previous twenty-seven pages the narrator has been describing all the meticulous roguery of Clarence’s own, wicked tricks that have kept him progressing in high-scale politics first on the county and then the state level.

In Rabelais’s book, in Chapter 22 of “Pantagruel”, the eponymous hero’s friend Panurge plays through a scheme, analogous to Ratliff’s, on a Parisian lady as a revenge for her indifference to him and his dashing codpiece. The whole episode is as follows:

Now you must note that the next day was the great festival of Corpus Christi, called the Sacre, wherein all women put on their best apparel, and on that day the said lady was clothed in a rich gown of crimson satin, under which she wore a very costly white velvet petticoat.

The day of the eve, called the vigil, Panurge searched so long of one side and another that he found a hot or salt bitch, which, when he had tied her with his girdle, he led to his chamber and fed her very well all that day and night. In the morning thereafter he killed her, and took that part of her which the Greek geomancers know, and cut it into several small pieces as small as he could. Then, carrying it away as close as might be, he went to the place where the lady was to come along to follow the procession, as the custom is upon the said holy day; and when she came in Panurge sprinkled some holy water on her, saluting her very courteously. Then, a little while after she had said her petty devotions, he sat down close by her upon the same bench, and gave her this roundelay in writing, in manner as followeth.

Roundelay.

For this one time, that I to you my love  
Discovered, you did too cruel prove,  
To send me packing, hopeless, and so soon,  
Who never any wrong to you had done,  
In any kind of action, word, or thought:  
So that, if my suit liked you not, you ought  
T' have spoke more civilly, and to this sense,  
My friend, be pleased to depart from hence,  
For this one time.

What hurt do I, to wish you to remark,  
With favour and compassion, how a spark  
Of your great beauty hath inflamed my heart  
With deep affection, and that, for my part,  
I only ask that you with me would dance  
The brangle gay in feats of dalliance,  
For this one time?

And, as she was opening this paper to see what it was, Panurge very promptly and lightly scattered the drug that he had upon her in divers places, but especially in the plaits of her sleeves and of her gown. Then said he unto her, Madam, the poor lovers are not always at ease. As for me, I hope that those heavy nights, those pains and troubles, which I suffer for love of you, shall be a deduction to me of so much pain in purgatory; yet, at the least, pray to God to give me patience in my misery. Panurge had no sooner spoke this but all the dogs that were in the church came running to this lady with the smell of the drugs that he had strewed upon her, both small and great, big and little, all came, laying out their member, smelling to her, and pissing everywhere upon her--it was the greatest villainy in the world. Panurge made the fashion of driving them away; then took his leave of her and withdrew himself into some chapel or oratory of the said church to see the sport; for these villainous dogs did compass all her habiliments, and left none of her attire unbesprinkled with their staling; insomuch that a tall greyhound pissed upon her head, others in her sleeves, others on her crupper-piece, and the little ones pissed upon her pataines; so that all the women that were round about her had much ado to save her. Whereat Panurge very heartily laughing, he said to one of the lords of the city, I believe that same lady is hot, or else that some greyhound hath covered her lately. And when he saw that all the dogs were flocking about her, yarring at the retardment of their access to her, and every way keeping such a coil with her as they are wont to do about a proud or salt bitch, he forthwith departed from thence, and went to call Pantagruel, not forgetting in his way amongst the streets through which he went, where he found any dogs to give them a bang with his foot, saying, Will you not go with your fellows to the wedding? Away, hence, avant, avant, with a devil avant! And being come home, he said to Pantagruel, Master, I pray you come and see all the dogs of the country, how they are assembled about a lady, the fairest in the city, and would duffle and line her. Whereunto Pantagruel willingly condescended, and saw the mystery, which he found very pretty and strange. But the best was at the procession, in

which were seen above six hundred thousand and fourteen dogs about her, which did very much trouble and molest her, and whithersoever she passed, those dogs that came afresh, tracing her footsteps, followed her at the heels, and pissed in the way where her gown had touched. All the world stood gazing at this spectacle, considering the countenance of those dogs, who, leaping up, got about her neck and spoiled all her gorgeous accoutrements, for the which she could find no remedy but to retire unto her house, which was a palace. Thither she went, and the dogs after her; she ran to hide herself, but the chambermaids could not abstain from laughing. When she was entered into the house and had shut the door upon herself, all the dogs came running of half a league round, and did so well bepass the gate of her house that there they made a stream with their urine wherein a duck might have very well swimmied, and it is the same current that now runs at St. Victor, in which Gobelin dyeth scarlet, for the specifical virtue of these piss-dogs, as our master Doribus did heretofore preach publicly. So may God help you, a mill would have ground corn with it. Yet not so much as those of Basacle at Toulouse. (Rabelais 2004)

There is more realism, less hyperbolism in Faulkner's version of the story. The episode is enriched with Southern particulars and earth-bound nuances which save the borrowing from being too direct. There is superb humour in Ratliff's initial description of the thicket loved by dogs; all through his narration he never identifies the plotter as having been himself.

"Hold it," his uncle said. "Dog thicket. Come on now. I'm supposed to be busy this morning even if you're not."

"That's what I'm trying to tell you," Ratliff said. "it was a dog way-station. A kind of a dog post office you might say. Every dog in Beat Two uses it at least once a day, and every dog in the congressional district, let alone jest Yoknapatawpha County, has lifted his leg there at least once in his life and left his visiting card. You know: two dogs comes trotting up and takes a snuff and Number One says, "I be dawg if here aint that old bobtail Bluetick from up at Wyott's Crossing. What you reckon he's doing away down here? "No it aint," Number Two says. "This here is that-ere fyce that Res Grier swapped Solon Quick for that half a day's work shingling the church that time, don't you remember?" and Number One says, "No, that fyce come afterward. This here is that old Wyott's Crossing Bluetick. I thought he'd been skeered to come back here after what that Littlejohn half-Airedale done to him that day." You know: that sort of thing." ("The Mansion", Faulkner 1965: 316)

The climax is similar in spirit, different in specific form if compared to Rabelais's:

"/--/ until whoever this anonymous underhanded feller was, suh-jested to them two boys what might happen say if two folks about that size would shoo them dogs outen that thicket long enough to cut off a handful of them switches well down below the dog target level and kind of walk behind where Senator C. Egglestone Snopes was getting out the vote, and draw them damp switches light and easy, not to disturb him, across the back of his britches legs. Light and easy, not to disturb nobody, because apparently Clarence nor nobody else even

noticed the first six or eight dogs until maybe Clarence felt his britches legs getting damp or maybe jest cool, and looked over his shoulder to see the waiting line-up of his political fate with one eye while already breaking for the nearest automobile or pickup you could roll the windows up in with the other, with them augmenting standing-room-only customers strung behind him like the knots in a kite's tail until he got inside the car with the door slammed and the glass rolled up, then frustrated dogs circling round and round the automobile like the spotted horses and swan boats on a flying jenny, except the dogs was travelling on three legs, being already loaded and cocked and aimed you might say. /---/ ("The Mansion", Faulkner 1965: 317–318)

Rabelais employs the motif of pissing as a weapon also elsewhere in "Pantagruel", as in Chapter 28, in which Pantagruel almost drowns his enemies, the Dipsodes and the Giants, in his own urine. Mikhail Bakhtin writes in his monograph "Rabelais and His World": "U/rine is a link between body and sea. /---/ T/he little devil Pantagruel /---/ becomes in Rabelais' novel the incarnation of the gay element of urine." (1984: 335)

Joel A. Hunt analyzes the analogies between the climaxes of the two episodes:

The trick produces an overt humiliation, being carried out on a public, festive occasion. The ceremonies of the Corpus Christi day, in this regard, can be looked upon as parallel to the unveiling of political plans at Varner's picnic, the social nature of each gathering being emphasized. But it is the means by which the tricks are performed, to be sure, which afford the most striking comparison. In both cases, an imperious appeal to the olfactory sensibilities of the dog population is ingeniously fabricated, each troop of dogs then joyously responding to the lure of the old familiar scent by a concerted and enthusiastic bespattering of the victim's person. The four-footed agents of this inspiring if indelicate prank are sensitively described by each author, graphic and kinetic stress being laid upon the mechanics of the action. The victim's inglorious retreat is narrated, finally, with appropriate images of precipitation. These suggest, in strident overtones, themes of catharsis, pathos, and atonement (1969: 386).

Comparing the two protagonists, Hunt finds them rather related: "V. K. Ratliff is, like Panurge, a wit and a prankster. But if each is garrulous, greedy, and often gullible, each is also a whimsical philosopher, a picaresque hero, and a knight-errant in disguise" (1969: 386). And he points out

/---/ the underlying coherence of Ratliff's prank with Panurge's, the one destroying a political charlatan, the other manifesting Rabelais' passionate contempt for the camouflage of precious and simpering gallantry. In both cases, the weapons of earthy ridicule are employed to attack hypocrisy, vanity, and pretense. In both authors, there is obvious delight taken in the meeting of the sacramental with the excremental. In both actions, finally, an implicit appeal is made for forthright and sincere moral standards (Hunt 1969: 387).

Besides bringing forth the thematic similarities of these two particular episodes, Hunt's merit may lie in stressing the occurrence in late Faulkner of a spirit congenial with "the deep-rooted popular ethos of Rabelais" (1969: 388), so carefully and profoundly studied by Mikhail Bakhtin. "We must not forget that urine (as well as dung) is gay matter, which degrades and relieves at the same time, transforming fear into laughter," Bakhtin writes (1984: 335). Generalizing from Faulkner's invention of "a tall tale, deliberately spun out by Ratliff for pleasure as well as for political advantage" (1969: 387), Hunt notes it leading to "a link between the two novels which has fundamentally to do with the optics of a large-scale view of the novelist's world" (1969: 388), to

the plane on which both can be said to meet and to offer a number of coherent analogies is that of cultural milieu: ideas, attitudes, customs, manners, expressed in sequences of highly imaginative if not fantastic episodes which have, then, a surrealistic rather than a realistic cast. The novels are to be read as folk-inspired epics consisting of moral and intellectual parables, much as, in another domain, the animal epic and the fairy tale have served as the vehicle for similar points of view (1969: 388).

Hunt's position supports the attempts to undermine the widespread myth of Faulkner as a formalist in his ivory tower, solely a "writers' writer", and what he says on the basis of the Snopes trilogy may tentatively even be extended to some tendencies of earlier Faulkner, to his works as a whole:

The tall tale as it is found in Rabelais accords closely with Faulkner's practice of it, and the comico-satirical function in particular is substantially similar. Techniques of overstatement, caricature, and parody, the exploitation of a rich humor of colloquial language, regionalisms, and slang, the leavening of bawdy incident and description (not excluding scatological jokes and allusions), these are some of the marks of the genre which are manifest in both writers (1969: 388).

However, it was Faulkner's innovation as a novelist to allude to the comic masterpieces of earlier classics in only partial dependence on them, moderating the older literary truths with his own traits of social realism and subtle undertones of symbolism.

## **"The Spotted Horses"**

"The Spotted Horses", of which several versions exist, appeared as Chapter One of the Fourth Section, "The Peasants", of the novel "The Hamlet" in 1940. Another, earlier variant, in the form of a 19-page-long independent story, originally published in 1931, re-appeared in Faulkner's "Uncollected Stories". Both these versions are viewed here.

The village villain Flem Snopes has brought a Texan horse trader to Frenchman's Bend, together with whom they set up an auction of spotted horses. The creatures are well tied but in fact completely wild; the schemers know well that after buying them (at apparently low prices), the new owners will be unable to handle and tame them, even to take them away from the place where they were auctioned. Finally all the spotted horses break free and turn the whole hamlet and miles of its neighbourhood into a perfect mess. For several days and nights, the air is resonant with their hoof-beats, the first night is haunted by their neighing and distant outcries as they jump over households and push over possessions. Stampeded across bridges, they turn over and break wagons; at night, one of the horses enters the mansion in which the sewing machine agent Ratliff is sleeping, ascends the stairs to the second floor and breaks into Ratliff's room, the man escaping by jumping out of the window without his trousers on.

The narrative has the impact of a diabolic (tragi)comedy, a free fall into ever deeper abysses of a moral void. Unlike Bulgakov's devilries, which it resembles in a rapid succession of fatal scenes, in the immoral psychic landscape rendered visible and tangible, it is basically built on entirely realistic relations, possibly excluding its hyperbolism. "Spotted Horses" is a triumph of hyperbole, which emerges in cascades of original and striking metaphors and similes.

The use of anti-climax, especially in the version of "Uncollected Stories", is notable in its two interpretations, both in the narrower and traditional one – a succession of images of growing poetic significance ended abruptly with a trivial-sounding image ("He had /the horse's/ head twisted clean around like a owl's head. Its legs was braced and it was trembling like a new bride and **groaning like a saw mill** /---/. ("Uncollected Stories", 168) and in the wider sense of presenting a turn, unexpected by logical calculations, in the flow of images. Understatement also occurs ("the horses stood in a restive clump, **larger than rabbits** and gaudy as parrots and shackled to one another and to the wagon itself with sections of barbed wire" (300))

The imagery may involve people, animate objects, inanimate nature, substances, tools, other man-made objects, ghosts, cultural prototypes, body parts, bodily functions.

### **Images with people:**

a second horse slashed at his back, severing his vest from collar to hem down the back exactly **as the trick swordsman** severs a floating veil with one stroke ("The Hamlet", 302)

The pear tree across the road opposite was now in full and frosty bloom, the twigs and branches springing not outward from the limbs but standing motionless and perpendicular above the horizontal boughs **like the separate**

**and upstreaming hair of a drowned woman sleeping upon the uttermost floor of the windless and tideless sea.** (306)

In the pear tree the mockingbird's **idiot reiteration** pulsed and purred. (308)

it run right up the steps and into the house **like a boarder late for supper.** ("Uncollected Stories", 174)

### **Images involving biological objects:**

Calico-coated, small-bodied, with delicate legs and pink faces in which their mismatched eyes rolled wild and subdued, they huddled, gaudy motionless and alert, **wild as deer, deadly as rattlesnakes, quiet as doves** ("The Hamlet", 300)

He vanished, broad hat, flapping vest, wire-cutters and all, into a kaleidoscopic maelstrom of long teeth and wild eyes and slashing feet, from which presently the horses began to burst one by one **like partridges flushing**, each wearing a necklace of barbed wire (303)

The ponies still streaked back and forth through the growing dusk **like hysterical fish** (304)

"All right. You folks can buy them critters if you want to. But me, **I'd just as soon buy a tiger or a rattlesnake.** And if Flem Snopes offered me either one of them, I would be afraid to touch it for fear it would turn out to be **a painted dog** or a piece of garden hose when I went up to take possession of it /---/" (308)

"One of them things will snap your head off **same as a acorn** /---/" (310)

"Them ponies is **gentle as a dove**, boys /---/." (315)

"– and legs you whoa I'll tear your face right look him over quick boys worth fifteen dollars of let me get a holt of who'll make me a bid whoa **you blare-eyed jack rabbit**, whoa!" (318)

The earth became thunderous; dust arose, out of which the animals began to burst **like flushed quail** and into which, with that apparently unflagging faith in his own invulnerability, the Texan rushed. (318)

The Texan stopped looking at the other. He raised the empty carton and squinted carefully into it, as if it might contain a precious jewel or perhaps **a deadly insect.** (322)

The others were waiting at the gate, beyond which the ponies, huddled again, were **like phantom fish**, suspended apparently without legs now in the brilliant treachery of the moon. (331)

the horse now apparently scrambling along the wagon-tongue itself **like a mad squirrel** and scrabbling at the end-gate of the wagon with its fore feet as if it intended to climb into the wagon (336)

“/---/ Yes sir, when I looked around and seen that varmint in the door behind me blaring its eyes at me, I’d a made sho Flem Snopes had brought a **tiger** back from Texas except I knowed that couldn’t no just one tiger completely fill a entire room.” (342)

she reached the level earth and began to retreat, the gray folds of the garment once more lost all inference and intimation of locomotion, so that she seemed to progress without motion like a figure on a retreating and diminishing float; **a gray and blasted tree-trunk moving, somehow intact and upright, upon an unhurried flood.** (350–351)

“/---/ And sho enough, soon as the horse come to the end of the lane and seen Freeman’s barn, it whirled just like Eck figured it would and come helling back up that lane **like a scared hen-hawk.**” (353)

all of a sudden something come swurging up outen the bushes and jumped the road clean, without touching hoof to it. It flew right over my team, big as a billboard and flying through the air **like a hawk.** (“Uncollected Stories”, 165)

**the young bucks** setting on the porch, swarming around Eula **like bees** around a honey pot. (166)

tied to the tail-gate of the wagon was about two dozen of them Texas ponies, hitched to one another with barbed wire. **They was colored like parrots and they was quiet as doves, and ere a one of them would kill you quick as a rattlesnake.** (167)

we could watch them spotted varmints swirling along the fence and back and forth across the lot **same as minnows in a pond.** (167)

with his hand out **like he was fixing to catch a fly** (168)

“Look it over,” he says, with his heels dug too and that white pistol sticking outen his pocket and his neck swole up **like a spreading adder’s** /---/ (169)

we couldn’t see nothing but spotted hide and mane, and that ere Texas man’s boot-heels **like a couple of walnuts on two strings,** and after a while that two-gallon hat come sailing out **like a fat old hen crossing a fence.** (169)

He taken out that gingersnap box and held it up and looked into it, careful, like it might have been a diamond ring in it, or **a spider.** (170)

Henry Armstid standing there with his mouth already open, watching Eck and the Texas man **like a mad-dog** or something. (170)

one dollar bill that looked **like a cow's cud**. (171)

Mrs. Armstid had went back to the wagon, setting in it behind them two **rabbit-sized**, bone-pore mules /---/. (171–172)

/the horse/ run up the wagon tongue **like a squirrel**. (176)

Uncle Billy put his head out, **peart as a peckerwood** /---/. (177)

She looked **like a old snag still standing up and moving along on a high water**. (183)

### **Images involving inanimate nature:**

the entire interior exploded into mad tossing shapes **like a down-rush of flames** (“The Hamlet”, 312)

Across the dreaming and silver night a faint sound **like remote thunder** came and ceased. (336–337)

the silver air seemed to be filled with faint and sourceless sounds – shouts, thin and distant, again **a brief thunder** of hooves on a wooden bridge, more shouts faint and thin and earnest and clear as bells; once they even distinguished the words: “Whooley. Head him.” (337)

again there was **a brief rapid thunder** of hooves on wooden planking. (340)

them things went through the gate **like a creek flood** (“Uncollected Stories”, 174)

### **Images involving substances:**

his eyes became **like two pieces of flint** turned suddenly up in dug earth (“The Hamlet”, 301)

The Texan stopped looking at the other. He raised the empty carton and squinted carefully into it, **as if it might contain a precious jewel** or perhaps a deadly insect. (322)

The pear tree before Mrs Littlerjohn's was **like drowned silver** now in the moon. (331)

“It ain't no need to worry about that boy,” I says. “He's charmed.” He was right behind Eck last night when Eck went to help feed them. The whole drove of them jumped clean over that boy's head and never touched him. It was Eck that touched him. Eck snatched him into the wagon and taken a rope and **frailed the tar outen him**. (“Uncollected Stories”, 174)

### Images with tools:

The nearest one was standing on three legs now. It appeared to be asleep. Its eyelid drooped over the cerulean eye; its head was shaped **like an ironing-board**. (“The Hamlet”, 301–302)

when that Texas man got down off the wagon and walked up to them to show how gentle they was, one of them cut his vest clean off him, **same as with a razor**. (“Uncollected Stories”, 167)

when they broke, they run clean over Henry **like a hay-mow** breaking down. (174)

She hit it across the face with the scrubbing-board; that ere scrubbing-board split **as neat as ere a axe could have done it** (175)

### Images with other man-made objects:

the whip snaking about the harlequin rumps in methodical and **pistol-like** reports (“The Hamlet”, 303)

the very idea that all that fury and motion should be transpiring inside any one fence was something to be repudiated with contempt, **like a mirror trick** (304)

They were watching the horses, which at that moment broke into a high-eared, stiff-kneed swirl and flowed **in a patchwork** wave across the lot and brought up again /---/ (309)

“/---/ you **banjo-faced** jackrabbits /---/” (311)

a hollow, thunderous sound **like that of a collapsing mine-shaft** (311)

It was the Texan who laughed, harshly, with only his lower face, **as if he were reciting a multiplication table**. (317)

the man free of the earth and in violent lateral motion **like a rag** attached to the horse’s head. (318)

“What need I got for a horse I would need **a bear-trap** to catch?” Eck said. (319)

the wife following in the gray and shapeless garment within which she moved without inference of locomotion, **like something on a moving platform**, a float. (325)

his father held him clear of the ground in one hand, shaking him **like a rag doll**. (334)

They saw the horse the Texan had given them whirl and dash back and rush through the gate into Mrs Littlejohn's yard and run up the front steps and crash once on the wooden veranda and vanish through the front door. Eck and the boy ran up onto the veranda. A lamp sat in a table just inside the door. In its mellow light they saw the horse fill the long hallway **like a pinwheel**, gaudy, furious and thunderous. (334–335)

the faint **bell-like** cries and shouts with which the silver air was full. (338)

the faint, urgent, indomitable cries murmured in the silver lambence, sourceless, at times almost musical, **like fading bell-notes**; again there was a brief rapid thunder of hooves on wooden planking. (340)

She said that when it hit that rope, it looked just **like one of these here great big Christmas pinwheels**. /---/" (353)

all of a sudden something come swurging up outen the bushes and jumped the road clean, without touching hoof to it. It flew right over my team, **big as a billboard** and flying through the air like a hawk. ("Uncollected Stories", 165)

One of these here kind of big, soft-looking gals that could giggle richer **than plowed new-ground**. (166)

a set of hoofs would go Bam! against the barn, **like a pistol**. (167)

Eck got out just in time. He come outen that barn **like a ship on the crest of a busted dam of water**, and clumb into the wagon just in time. (168)

"Get him into the wagon and take him on home," the Texas man says, **like he might have been telling them he enjoyed his supper**. (173)

them things went through the gate like a creek flood and into the wagons and teams hitched side the road, busting wagon tongues and snapping harness **like it was fishing-line**, with Mrs. Armstid still setting in their wagon in the middle of it **like something carved outen wood**. Then they scattered, wild horses and tame mules with pieces of harness and single trees dangling offen them /---/. (174)

I was in my room, in my underclothes, with one sock on and one sock in my hand, leaning out the window when the commotion busted out, when I heard something run into the melodeon in the hall; it sounded **like a railroad engine**. Then the door to my room come sailing in **like when you throw a tin bucket top into the wind** and I looked over my shoulder and see something that looked **like a fourteen-foot pinwheel** a-blaring its eyes at me. It had to blare them fast, because I was already done jumped out the window. (174–175)

Mrs. Armstid was still setting in the wagon **like she had done been carved outen wood** and left there and forgot. (175)

### Images with ghosts:

It was merely a treacherous and silver receptivity in which the horses huddled in mazy camouflage, or singly or in pairs rushed, fluid, **phantom**, and unceasing, to huddle again in **mirage-like** clumps from which came high abrupt squeals and the viscous thudding of hooves (“The Hamlet”, 305)

One of the animals emerged. **It seemed not to gallop but to flow, bodiless, without dimension.** Yet there was the rapid light beat of hard hooves on the packed earth (305)

**the ponies were now a splotchy phantom** moiling punctuated by crackings of wooden partitions and the dry reports of hooves which gradually died away (311)

the ponies which now huddled **like gaudy phantoms** in the gloom (312)

A quarter of a mile further on, the road gashed palid and moony between the moony shadows of the bordering trees, the horse still galloping, **galloping its shadow into the dust** /---/. (335)

and his mules and that spotted horse going on up the road **like a ghost.** (“Uncollected Stories”, 176)

### Images with cultural prototypes:

“Get up, you transmogrified hallucinations of **Job and Jezebel,**” the stranger said (“The Hamlet”, 302)

the heavy gold hair, the mask not tragic and perhaps not even doomed: just damned, the strong faint lift of breasts beneath the marblelike fall of the garment; to those below **what Brunhilde, what Rhinemaiden** on what spurious river-rock of papier-mache, **what Helen** returned to **what topless and shoddy Argos,** waiting for no one. (338)

### Images with body parts:

his features gathering toward the center of his face **as though plucked there by a hand.** (“The Hamlet”, 345)

### Images with bodily functions:

Then an indescribable sound, a movement desperate and despairing, arose among them; for an instant of static horror men and animals faced one another, then the men whirled and ran before **a gaudy vomit** of long wild faces and splotched chests which overtook and scattered them and flung them sprawling

aside and completely obliterated from sight Henry and the little boy (“The Hamlet”, 333–334)

The version in the “Uncollected Stories” is much shorter than the excerpt in “The Hamlet”, in which other plot lines of the novel occur and intersect. Comparing the two versions, while most of the metaphors and similes occur at the same scenes, on most occasions Faulkner has found different, though related, images to convey the corresponding similitudes, which in both variants are equally fresh and ingenious. “The Hamlet” puts ungrammatical speech in the mouths of the rural characters, with the authorial narrative in standard English. The story in “Uncollected Stories” has the additional comic power as it is wholly in dialect, narrated by the sewing machine agent Ratliff. The ungrammatical features of his narration include double, or triple, negatives, irregular verb forms that do not exist in the standard language but are preserved in the Southern dialect, standard irregular verbs used as if they were regular ones, plural forms replaced by singular ones and vice versa, dialectal forms of pronouns, ungrammatical use of the indefinite article, comically mispronounced and/or misspelt words, etc.

Examples of the dialect features:

### **Double, or triple, negatives:**

we **couldn’t see nothing** but spotted hide and mane (“Uncollected Stories”, 169)

She stood behind Henry, with her hands rolled into her dress, **not looking at nothing**. (169)

“And he **hain’t no more** despair.” (171)

**Never nobody** said **nothing**. (172)

Uncle Billy **never had none** of this here chloryfoam (178)

### **Non-standard verb forms:**

“Them ponies **is** gentle as a dove, boys /---/.” (“The Hamlet”, 315)

“/---/ Yes sir, when I looked around and **seen** that varmint in the door behind me blaring its eyes at me, I’d **a** made sho Flem Snopes had brought a tiger back from Texas except I **knowed** that couldn’t no just one tiger completely fill a entire room.” (342)

“/---/ And sho enough, soon as the horse **come** to the end of the lane and **seen** Freeman’s barn, it whirled just like Eck figured it would and **come** helling back up that lane like a scared hen-hawk.” (353)

That Flem Snopes. I be dog if he **ain’t** a case, now. (“Uncollected Stories”, 165)

He **skun** me in two trades, myself. (166)

They **mought** have gone to Texas, too. (166)

Then one day last month, Eula **come** back, with ababy. We figgured up, and we decided that is was as well-**grewed** a three-months-old baby as we ever **see**. (167)

They **was** colored like parrots and they **was** quiet as doves (167)

Flem **had done already disappeared**; he **had went** on to see his wife, I reckon, and to see if that ere baby **had done gone** on to to the field to help Uncle Billy plow maybe. (167)

Eck **holp** him last night /---/. (168)

Eck got out just in time. He **come** outen that barn like a ship on the crest of a busted dam of water, and **clumb** into the wagon just in time. (168)

his neck **swole** up like a spreading adder’s (169)

“He **hain’t** no more despair than to but one of them things,” she says, “and us not five dollars ahead of the pore house, he **hain’t** no more despair.” (169)

She **had done got done** too (171)

I **come** on in and **et** supper. (173)

So I **had done et** and went to my room and was undressing, long as I had a long trip to make next day (174)

it **run** right up the steps and into the house (174)

I **was already done jumped** out the window. (174–175)

She **taken** one look at us (176)

It’s a funny thing about them Snopes: they all **looks** alike, yet there **ain’t** ere a two of them that **claims** brothers. (180)

“Flem’s **done skun** all of us so much,” I says, “that we’re proud of him.” (180)

“**Twarn’t** none of my horses,” he says (181)

a half-**et** cracker (182)

### **Dialectal forms of pronouns:**

one of them dangle-armed shirts of **hish** (“Uncollected Stories”, 169)

### **Ungrammatical use of the indefinite article:**

same as **a acorn** (“The Hamlet”, 310)

### **Comically mispronounced and/or misspelt words:**

**swurging** (“Uncollected Stories”, 165)

**chloryfoam** (178)

Both the versions of the story build up tension around the gradual revelation of the men’s recklessness or foolishness, and the parallel, helpless female prudence. Devices that help the author work up toward the climax include repetitions, either as repeated phrases by the characters (““Dont you go in there, missus” /---/ “Dont you go in there, missus”” (325); “He spoke in a flat still voice, like that of a man after a sharp run. “Get him on away, missus.” /---/ “Get him on away from here, missus,” he said. /---/ “Get him on home, missus.”” (327)), by the authorial narrator (“They passed /---/ they passed /---/” (329)), or, in the shorter version, by Ratliff (“I could hear the dishes. /---/ I could hear the dishes.” (179)). These devices also include meaningful coincidences, such as the bang of Mrs Littlejohn’s wash pail exactly at the moment the men show first certain signs of falling prey to Flem’s scheme.

“You going to give it to me?” Eck said.

“Yes. Provided you will start the bidding on the next one.” Again there was no sound save the Texan’s breathing, and then the clash of Mrs Littlejohn’s pail against the rim of the pot. (320)

Along with other comic speech features, the he characters occasionally display irony:

“I wouldn’t get past the first Texas saloon without starting the vigilance committee. /---/” (329)

“His pockets wont rattle.” (330)

And accompanying the story there are remarks of female sarcasm:

“You men.” (337)

“/---/ I reckon a man ain’t so different from a mule, come long come short. Except maybe a mule’s got more sense.” (177)

The authorial narrative, rich in poetic devices, may contain juxtapositions of qualities that border on the oxymoron:

his gaze at once abstract and alert (315)

a thin man, not large, with something about his eyes, something strained and washed-out, at once vague and intense (320)

With sparse, laconic means the author is able to convey large truths about his characters, as in this phrase implying at Henry Armstid's poverty:

the faded sleeves of his shirt too short from many washings (322)

With a cascade and sometimes collisions of climaxes of various narrative lines (Eck Snopes and the horse given to him, Henry Armstid and the five dollar bill tricked away from him, all the men fooled by Flem and the horse seller, the stampede of the wild horses at night, Eula as a sad muse guarding over her husband's wickedness, Ratliff and his powerless wisdom), the story is especially memorable at such tragicomic, high points of the narrative, that contain the scenes of the "frozen movement" as in the following excerpts:

Then an indescribable sound, a movement desperate and despairing, arose among them; for an instant of static horror men and animals faced one another, then the men whirled and ran before a gaudy vomit of long wild faces and splotched chests which overtook and scattered them and flung them sprawling aside and completely obliterated from sight Henry and the little boy, neither of whom had moved though Henry had flung up both arms, still holding his coiled rope, the herd sweeping on across the lot, to crash through the gate which the last man through it had neglected to close, leaving it slightly ajar, carrying all of the gate save the upright to which the hinges were nailed with them, and so among the teams and wagons which choked the lane, the teams springing and lunging too, snapping hitch-reins and tongues. Then the whole inextricable mass crashed among the wagons and eddied and divided about the one in which the woman sat, and rushed on down the lane and into the road, dividing, one half going one way and one half the other. (333-334)

They saw the horse the Texan had given them whirl and dash back and rush through the gate into Mrs Littlejohn's yard and run up the front steps and crash once on the wooden veranda and vanish through the front door. Eck and the boy ran up onto the veranda. A lamp sat in a table just inside the door. In its mellow light they saw the horse fill the long hallway like a pinwheel, gaudy, furious and thunderous. A little further down the hall there was a varnished yellow melodeon. The horse crashed into it; it produced a single note, almost a chord, in bass, resonant and grave, of deep and sober astonishment; the horse with its monstrous and antic shadow whirled again and vanished through another door. It was a bedroom; Ratliff, in his underclothes and one sock and with the other sock in his hand and his back to the door, was leaning out the open window facing the lane, the lot. He looked back over his shoulder. For an instant

he and the horse glared at one another. Then he sprang through the window as the horse backed out of the room and into the hall again /---/. (334–335)

The horse neither checked nor swerved. It crashed once on the wooden bridge and rushed between the two mules which waked lunging in opposite directions in the traces, the horse now apparently scrambling along the wagon-tongue itself like a mad squirrel and scabbling at the end-gate of the wagon with its fore feet as if it intended to climb into the wagon while Tull shouted at it and struck at its face with his whip. The mules were now trying to turn the wagon around in the middle of the bridge. It slewed and tilted, the bridge-rail cracked with a sharp report above the shrieks of the women; the horse scrambled at last across the back of one of the mules and Tull stood up in the wagon and kicked at its face. Then the front end of the wagon rose, flinging Tull, the reins now wrapped several times about his wrist, backward into the wagon bed among the overturned chairs and the exposed stockings and undergarments of his women. The pony scrambled free and crashed again on the wooden planking, galloping again. (336)

### **“A Portrait of Elmer”**

A reworking of the materials of the abortive novel “Elmer” that Faulkner was trying to write during his stay in Europe in 1925, “A Portrait of Elmer” dates from around 1935. A long short story of seven chapters, the narrative leaves several loose ends, resembling motifs in a longer work which nevertheless are not developed any further. Therefore the story cannot be considered an entirely successful one, as the publishers recognized (Faulkner 1997: 710).

The narrative displays signs of James Joyce’s influences, most notably in the use of unusual compound words whose components are spelt together (“violetroofed” (610), “steamopaque” (625), “a dollarayear man” (628), “palevaporous” (632), “girlmotion” (632), “mornningglories” (633), “ladderlatticed” (635), “autumntinged dusk” (639), “nowformless gleams” (639), etc.) Similar to Joyce, but nevertheless characteristically Faulknerian is the highly sensuous imagery of the associative, occasionally languid style. The explicit eroticism of the wanderings of Elmer’s mind (““Let’s get married then,” Elmer said, out of his mesmerism of enveloping surreptitious breasts and thighs” (Faulkner 1997: 624)) is entertaining and mildly comic, with the erotic associations at times reaching the playfulness of poetry:

Helps to reach down sugar jar from where it sits in a pan of water against ants, but sees only in white cascade of sugar little white teeth over which full soft mouth and red never quite completely closed and her plump body bulging her soiled expensive clothing richly the aromatic cubbyhole in the halfdark. Touched sugar hands in the halfdark hishing cling by eluding, elude but not gone; bulging rabbitlike things under soiled silk taut softly, hishing ceaseless cascade of tilted sugar now on the floor hishing: a game. (Faulkner 1997: 619)

Truly hilarious is the punch-line, elaborately prepared for, in which the aspiring artist hero hurries to meet his millionaire sweetheart, while squirming with stomach trouble. After he has emptied his bowels in the privy before the meeting, he discovers there is no paper either in the niche nor in his pockets, so – in fear the girl might leave if he lingers – he reaches for his portfolio and sacrifices the watercolour picture he has recently completed with much pride:

He whirls: he looks at the empty niche, surrounded by the derisive whistling of that dark wind as though it were the wind which had blown the niche empty. He does not laugh; his bowels too have emptied themselves for haste. He claps his hand to his breast pocket; he becomes immobile again with his arm crossing his breast as though in salute; then with a dreadful urgency he searches through all his pockets, producing two broken bits of crayon, a dollar watch, a few coins, his room key, the tobacco tin (worn silver smooth now) containing the needles and thread and such which the cook had given him ten years ago in Canada. That is all. And so his hands cease. Imbued for the moment with a furious life and need of their own, they die; and he sits for a moment looking quietly at the portfolio on the floor beside him; again, as when he watched them fondle the handgrenade on board the transport in 1916, he watches them take up the portfolio and open it and take out the picture. But only for the moment, because again haste descends upon him and he no longer watches his hands at all, thinking Myrtle. Myrtle. *Myrtle*. (Faulkner 1997: 641)

### **“Afternoon of a Cow”**

Faulkner wrote the story in 1937. According to his biographer Joseph Blotner, on 29 June 1937 Faulkner read to his house guests the unpublished story, whose *jeu d’esprit* only his French translator Maurice Coindreau seemed to appreciate (Faulkner 1997: 702). The story first appeared in French in 1943, and in English in 1947. It is in “Afternoon of a Cow” that the romantic love story between an idiot and a cow (to be analyzed later in this study) in the novel “The Hamlet” (1940) originates. In both narratives, the cow is given a romantic, mock chivalric treatment, and in both, she is brought to a hysterical fear as flames burst up in her idyllic pasture.

“Afternoon of a Cow” is the single mature fictional work which Faulkner wrote with the sole aim of amusement. Narrated by a character called Ernest V. Trueblood who claims that “my position is in no sense menial, since I have been writing Mr. Faulkner’s novels and short stories for years” (Faulkner 1997: 424), a lot of its comic derives from its young narrator’s highly formal, bookish expressions, which recall the style of the British prose classics of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Rare or archaic words alternate with the Black vernacular of the servant Oliver, the select style of the narrator is in humorous contrast with the rustically commonplace, slightly embarrassing nature of the incident (“This third time the rope either slipped or parted, and Mr. Faulkner

and the cow hurled violently to the foot of the precipice with Mr. Faulkner underneath.” (430))

Intercepting the narration are the narrator’s pronounced calculations as to how well he follows the formal rules of a story as set by the classics:

Nor do I feel that I further violate the formal rules of order, unity and emphasis by saying that we would never for one moment have conceived them to be where later evidence indicated that they now were. (425)

I believe however that this time order requires, and the element of suspense and surprise which the Greeks themselves have authorized will permit, that the story progress in the sequence of events as they occurred to the narrator, even though the accomplishment of the actual event recalled to the narrator the fact of circumstance with which he was already familiar and of which the reader should have been previously made acquainted. So I shall proceed. (427)

The story has a strong element of self-parody in it, with the successive subordinations of clauses, sometimes leading to unpredictable conclusions, and with the long thematic digressions resembling similar sentences in Faulkner’s serious works. It is especially in the juxtaposition of unusual Latinisms, here often comically detached from the subject matter, with straight-sounding classical Anglo-Saxon vocabulary, that the hints at a self-parody are the most noticeable. However, the touch of conservative British syntax of the formal tradition is much more emphatic than in Faulkner’s usual style.

### **Examples of the comic contrast between the contents and the select style:**

No, our concern was to reach the pasture, though not with any hope of saving the hay which had been Mr. Faulkner’s pride and even hope – a fine, though small, plantation of this grain or forage fenced lightly away from the pasture proper and the certain inroads of the three stocks **whose pleasance the pasture was**, which had been intended as an **alternative or balancing factor in the winter’s victualing** of the three beasts. (425)

and that the two horses might bolt in terror, and **to their detriment**, into the further fence of barbed wire (425)

a **congenitally vicious brute** which no one **durst** approach (426)

the poor creature’s **lugubrious lamenting** (427)

But Mr. Faulkner, a member in good standing of the **ancient and gentle profession of letters!** But then neither can I understand why he should wish to ride a horse, and the notion has occurred to me that Mr. Faulkner acquired his rapport gradually and perhaps over a long period of time from contact of **his posterior** with the animal he **bestrode**. (427)

a **dumb brute’s indictment of heaven** itself (427)

“Are you hurt, Mr. Faulkner?” I cried. I shall not attempt to reproduce Mr. Faulkner’s reply, other than to indicate that it was couched in that **pure ancient classic Saxon which the best of our literature sanctions and authorizes and which, due to the exigencies of Mr. Faulkner’s style and subject matter, I often employ but which I myself never use although Mr. Faulkner even in his private life is quite addicted to it and which, when he employs it, indicates what might be called a state of the most robust, even though not at all calm, wellbeing.** (429)

I recalled how, at the moment while we watched Oliver scramble out of the ravine, I seem to have received, as though by telepathy, from the poor creature (a female mind; the lone female among three men) not only her terror but the subject of it: that **she knew by woman’s sacred instinct that the future held for her that which is to a female far worse than any fear of bodily injury or suffering: one of those invasions of female privacy where, helpless victim of her own physical body, she seems to see herself as object of some malignant power for irony and outrage; and this none the less bitter for the fact that those who are to witness it, gentlemen though they be, will never be able to forget it but will walk the earth with the remembrance of it so long as she lives; – yes, even the more bitter for the fact that they who are to witness it are gentlemen, people of her own class.** (430)

I have been told by soldiers (I served in France, in the Y. M. C. A.) how, upon entering battle, there often sets up within them, prematurely as it were, a certain impulse or desire which brings on a result quite logical and quite natural, the fulfilment of which is incontestable and of course irrevocable. – In a word, Mr. Faulkner underneath received the **full discharge of the poor creature’s afternoon of anguish and despair.** (430)

He now sat in the attitude of M. Rodin’s *Penseur* increased to his tenth geometric power say, since **le penseur’s principal bewilderment** appears to be at what has bemused him, while Mr. Faulkner can have had no doubt. (431)

Imagine yourself, if you will, set suddenly down in a world in complete **ocular or chromatic reversal**. Imagine yourself faced with three small ghosts, not of white but of purest and unrelieved black. (433)

They stood looking at us in complete immobility until Mr. Faulkner said, again with that **chastened gentleness and quietude** which, **granted my theory that the soul, plunged without warning into some unforeseen and outrageous catastrophe, comes out in its true colors**, has been Mr. Faulkner’s true and hidden character all these years: “Go to the house.” (433)

the **sable plain which had witnessed our Gethsemane** (433)

Oliver led the cow into its private and detached domicile, from which there came presently the sound of chewing as, freed now of anguish and shame she ruminated, **maiden meditant** and – I hope – once more fancy free. (433)

“Make it two,” said I; I felt that the occasion justified, even though it may not have warranted, that **temporary aberration into the vernacular** of the fleeting moment. (434)

the real Mr. Faulkner which had appeared momentarily to Oliver and myself in the pasture had already retreated to that **inaccessible bourne** from which only the cow, Beulah, had ever evoked it (434)

### Examples of the Black vernacular:

“Mr. Bill!” he cried. “**Day done sot** fire to **de** pasture!” (424)

“**I reckon dey** all right,” Oliver said. “But **where you reckon Beulah at?**” (426–427)

## “Was”

Set in the time before the Civil War, in 1859, “Was” is a story about two old bachelor plantation owners, Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy, who are really abolitionists but some of whose Black slaves still live with them. A young Black man, Tomey’s Turl, runs away to the neighbouring plantation because his sweetheart Tennie lives there. To bring him back, the brothers have to avoid staying too long at their neighbour’s, Hubert’s, because living with him is his old maid sister Sophonsiba, who desperately wants Uncle Buck, a confirmed bachelor, to marry her. The story of several symbolic and literal hunts is framed with the motif of a comic fox-hunt. The first component story of the novel in short stories, “Go Down, Moses” (published in 1942), “Was” can be read and understood separately from the rest of the novel. It is widely regarded as having the least tragic or even the least tragicomic tonality in that tragic book. Daniel Hoffman writes about “Was”: “/T/here is no denying that the characters in this knockabout farce are by Restoration comedy out of Li’l Abner: the woman-shy old bachelor, the huntin’-gamblin’ country squire, the mincing overaged coquette; add for good measure to this seamless patchwork of stereotypes the scheming servant familiar in *commedia dell’arte*” (Hoffman 1986: 57). By the “scheming servant”, Hoffman means Tomey’s Turl who outtricks all the others. Lewis Dabney has termed the story a “classic comedy of the frontier” (cited in: Hoffman 1986: 58); Hoffman himself detects in it a remodelling of classical Southern folktales. In addition, “Was” is another example of Faulkner’s “comedy of concealment”, as the events are conveyed through the eyes of a nine-year-old boy (although he is described in the third person). Hoffman says of this: “the unknowing deadpan telling of the naïf narrator produces much of the comedy” (Hoffman 1986: 75). While it is possible to regard “Was” as a “carefree comedy”, giving “a naïf view of

antebellum life” (Hoffman 1986: 76), it may be also seen as a witty, and rather sharp, satire of the social pretensions of Southern slaveowners. Thus Hoffman proposes the interpretation of it as “a black comedy in which the toying with slavery, the avoidance of adult responsibility, and the demeaning treatment of women convey the real meaning of the tale, grotesquely embedded in a seeming farandole of frontier folk humor” (Hoffman 1986: 59). Finding Tomey’s Turl to be “the picaresque hero”, Nancy B. Sederberg writes:

The humorous treatment of aristocratic pretension can be seen, for example, in Sophonsiba’s insistence that everyone call their run-down plantation Warwick. /---/ The added touches of the ribbon which she gives Uncle Buck for “success” in the hunt /of Tomey’s Turl/, the ritual of sipping his toddy to sweeten it, and his chivalric gesture of dragging his foot parody medieval and antebellum romances. (Sederberg 1986: 81)

Faulkner’s satire of antebellum gender roles is seen from the fact that, after Sophonsiba, together with Tomey’s Turl, has tricked Uncle Buck into entering her bed and thus into the obligation to marry her, Uncle Buck only retrieves his liberty through a poker game, finally won for him by his brother, in which she is one of the stakes. Hoffman concludes that by this, “Faulkner has shown up the chauvinism of the Code of the Southern Gentleman” (Hoffman 1986: 69).

With the satire of ridiculous social conventions being the case, nevertheless lighter comedy prevails in the story. The introductory fox-hunt is shown as a comic procedure, with the period of repetitions emphasizing the topsyturvydom of the situation:

they heard Uncle Buddy cursing and bellowing in the kitchen, then the fox and the dogs came out of the kitchen and crossed the hall into the dogs’ room and they heard them run through the dogs’ room into his and Uncle Buck’s room then they saw them cross the hall again into Uncle Buddy’s room and heard them run through Uncle Buddy’s room into the kitchen again and this time it sounded like the whole kitchen chimney had come down and Uncle Buddy bellowing like a steamboat blowing and this time the fox and the dogs and five or six sticks of firewood all came out of the kitchen together with Uncle Buddy in the middle of them hitting at everything in sight with another stick. It was a good race. (Faulkner 1973: 4–5)

The brothers’ appreciation of their freedom as bachelors is illustrated through hyperbolic means, as in the following saying:

Uncle Buddy didn’t own a necktie at all; Uncle Buck said Uncle Buddy wouldn’t take that chance even in a section like theirs, **where ladies were so damn seldom thank God that a man could ride for days in a straight line without having to dodge a single one.** (7)

Or when Miss Sophonsiba sends Uncle Buck the mediaeval-type token of her devotion, his reaction to the appalling sign is conveyed through a strong simile:

“It’s for you,” the nigger said. Then Uncle Buck took it and unwrapped it. It was the piece of red ribbon that had been on Miss Sophonsiba’s neck and Uncle Buck sat there on Black John, holding the ribbon **like it was a little water moccasin** only he wasn’t going to let anybody see he was afraid of it /---/. (15–16)

The ridicule of Uncle Buck goes along with affirmations of his manhood:

Uncle Buck whooped once from the woods, running on sight, then Black John came out of the trees, driving, soupled out flat and level as a hawk, with Uncle Buck right up behind his ears now and yelling so that they looked exactly **like a big black hawk with a sparrow riding it** /---/. (8)

Tension is gradually built up towards the first climax in Uncle Buck falling prey to Sophonsiba’s matrimonial scheme:

They could hear nothing beyond the door, and when Uncle Buck tried the knob, it opened. “All right,” Uncle Buck whispered. “Be quiet.” They could see a little now, enough to see the shape of the bed and the mosquito-bar. Uncle Buck threw down his suspenders and unbuttoned his trousers and went to the bed and eased himself carefully down onto the edge of it, and he knelt again and drew Uncle Buck’s trousers off and he was just removing his own when Uncle Buck lifted the mosquito-bar and raised his feet and rolled into the bed. That was when Miss Sophonsiba sat up on the other side of Uncle Buck and gave the first scream. (20–21)

The neighbour Hubert continuously speaks in metaphors or hyperboles, as when he compares his sister to a bear in the third example below:

“After dinner,” Mr Hubert said. “If we don’t start him somewhere around the kitchen, we’ll put the dogs on him. They’ll find him if it’s in the power of mortal Walker dogs to do it.” (10)

“Go back in there and tell her again,” Mr Hubert said. Uncle Buck looked at Mr Hubert for a minute. He batted his eyes fast.

“Then what Will I come back and tell you?” he said.

“To me?” Mr Hubert said. “I would call that a horse of another color. Wouldn’t you?” (22)

“You come into bear-country of your own free will and accord. All right; you were a grown man and you knew it was bear-country and you knew the way back out like you knew the way in and you had your chance to take it. But no. You had to crawl into the den and lay down by the bear. And whether you did or didn’t know the bear was in it don’t make any difference. So if you got back

out of that den without even a claw-mark on you, I would not only be unreasonable, I'd be a damned fool. (22–23)

Although humorous, there may be hidden racism in Mr. Hubert's expressions, as when he distinguishes a "mule" class of beings between animals and humans:

"Go to the back door and holler. Bring the first creature that answers, **animal mule or human**, that can deal ten cards." (27)

The second and most powerful climax arrives when the decisive poker game is conducted with the hunted runaway, Tomey's Turl, himself distributing the cards. Mr. Hubert until the end of the game could only see the brown hand; as he finally raises his glance, the outcome of the whole incident, with him being the loser, becomes clear to him:

He reached out and tilted the lamp-shade, the light moving up Tomey's Turl's arms that were supposed to be black but were not quite white, up his Sunday shirt that was supposed to be white but wasn't quite either, that he put on every time he ran away just as Uncle Buck put on the necktie each time he went to bring him back, and on to his face /---/ (29)

Speech-wise, there is comic even in the archaism of the curses the bachelor brothers use ("I swear to godfrey –" (22)). As elsewhere in Faulkner, the Black dialect with its mispronunciations and non-standard verb forms offers an independent comic level:

"Hah," Tomey's Turl said. "And **nem** you mind that neither. I got protection now. All **I needs** to do is to keep Old Buck from **ketching** me **unto I gets** the word." (13)

"She just **sonit** hit to you," the nigger said. "She say to tell you "success". (16)

With its developments of the hero after hardships smoothly winning his bride, with lessons learned and the darker shades of the human nature touched upon but not delved into, and by the elegance of the plot "Was" possesses a classical comic quality, leaving the flavour of the lighter comedies of Shakespeare. That parallel and the motifs common with *commedia dell'arte* illustrate the success Faulkner achieved in uniting universal literary themes with traits specific to his home region.

## **"Pantaloon in Black"**

The story, another component of "Go Down, Moses", if judged solely by its title, might be expected to be a light comedy with the "pantaloon" or a risible,

stereotyped character at its centre. As Joseph Blotner writes in his “Faulkner. A Biography”, the Pantalone figure of the Italian *commedia dell’arte* traditionally is “an old man cuckolded by a youthful rival” (Blotner 1991: 414). As a matter of fact, the title is deceptive, displaying probably Faulkner’s characteristic hinting irony. It is one of the most sombre stories that Faulkner ever wrote. The Black saw mill worker Rider, aged twenty-four, buries his wife Mannie who had died six months after they got married. Instead of taking the expected leave, allowed to him after the funeral, he emerges at the saw mill the following morning, displaying incredible energy and strength by heaving up, unaided, whole logs. Another unexpected turn follows, when in the afternoon he leaves the job and wanders into the wilderness with the howling hound, his sole companion after the wife’s death. He buys moonshine whiskey and drinking enormous amounts of it straight from the jug, he strides through the countryside at night like a giant, Gargantuan ghost, moved by the wild power of intoxication and the impetus of his robust physicality that has wrapped up his grieving spirit. Early the next morning he re-appears at the mill and gets engaged in gambling with a group of workers. Upon finding out that the white man among them is cheating in the game, he grabs his arm. The white man reaches for his pistol and is about to shoot Rider, but the Black overtakes him by cutting his throat with a razor. Later in the jail, where his aunt has joined him, he breaks the bars of the cell and fights with a crowd of Blacks sent to catch hold of him, before he is lynched, hanged by the white man’s relatives in a Black schoolhouse.

On the basis of such a summary, it would be difficult to find anything but depressive tragic in this story. However, what is comic is that like his Black predecessor in Faulkner’s much earlier “Sunset” (discussed in Chapter One), Rider is not so much evil as driven by primitive, unreflected impulses after the severe blow he has received from destiny; rejecting all religious comfort and exhausting the consolation from food and alcohol, by his desperate, single-minded and decisive mode of suffering, his choice of the expression of mourning, he convinces himself more and more of a hyperbolic innocence. It is this innocence, illusory in its measures but fueled by the suffering, that develops into an unnatural, mechanically rigid trait of character, making him, as a tragicomic paradox, a comic character in an entirely non-comic line of events and happenings. What he performs and what happens to him, is exclusively tragic, but how he behaves is tragicomic. Thus the case here is one of Faulkner’s most uniquely original syntheses of the morbid and the laughable.

The tragicomic becomes more perceivable at the end, narrated, as a coda, by a deputy sheriff to his wife. In the culmination, during the Black’s revolt in the cell that will lead to his lynching, despair and a wild joy of living blend in his action:

Ketcham could see into the cell where the old woman was kind of squinched down in one corner and where the nigger had done tore that iron cot clean out of

the floor it was bolted to and was standing in the middle of the cell, holding the cot over his head like it was a baby's cradle, yelling, and says to the old woman, "Ah aint goan hurt you," and throws the cot against the wall and comes and grabs holt of that steel barred door and rips it out of the wall, bricks hinges and all, and walks out of the cell toting the door over his head like it was a gauze window-screen, hollering, "It's awright. It's awright. Ah aint trying to git away." (Faulkner 1973: 158)

As the deputy describes the scene with the Blacks he had into the cell to hold down Rider, hyperbolic similes flow in abundance, picturing the last, Gargantuan eruption of life force in the man that has already decided to say yes to death:

And Ketcham says that for a full minute that nigger would grab them as they come in and fling them clean across the room **like they was rag dolls**, saying, "Ah aint tryin to git out. Ah aint tryin to git out," until at last they pulled him down – a big mass of nigger heads and arms and legs boiling around on the floor and even then Ketcham says every now and then a nigger would come flying out and go sailing through the air across the room, **spraddled out like a flying squirrel** and **with his eyes sticking out like car headlights**, until at last they had him down and Ketcham went in and begun peeling away niggers until he could see him laying there under the pile of them, laughing, **with tears big as glass marbles** running across his face and down past his ears and making a kind of popping sound on the floor **like somebody dropping bird eggs**, laughing and laughing and saying, "Hit look lack Ah just cant quit thinking. Look lack Ah just cant quit." (159)

Thus, the same hyperbolic devices that made "Spotted Horses" into such a comic devilry of juicy tricks, in "Pantaloon in Black" form a bright tragicomic contrast to the deathly, and even aridly laconic, kernel of the story.

There is a comic twisting of words in Rider's dialogue with the fireman attempting to help him:

"Eat hit it all," the fireman said. "Ah'll eat outen de yuthers' buckets at dinner. Den you gawn home and go to bed. You dont looks good."

"Ah aint come hyar to look," he said. (143)

The tragicomic prevails in the meticulous description of sensations and movements when, during the night after the funeral, Rider (apparently along with his dog) hallucinates his dead wife is standing in the kitchen door:

/The dog/ stopped just outside the front door, where he could see it now, and the upfling of its head as the howl began, and then he saw her too. She was standing in the kitchen door, looking at him. He didn't move. He didn't breathe nor speak until he knew his voice would be all right, his face fixed too not to alarm her. "Mannie," he said. "Hit's awright. Ah aint afraid." Then he took a step toward her, slow, not even raising his hand yet, and stopped. Then he took another step. But this time as soon as he moved she began to fade. He stopped

at once, not breathing again, motionless, willing his eyes to see that she had stopped too. But she had not stopped. She was fading, going. "Wait," he said, talking as sweet as he had ever heard his voice speak to a woman: "Den lemme go wid you, honey." But she was going. She was going fast now, he could actually feel between them the insuperable barrier of that very strength which could handle alone a log which would have taken any two other men to handle, of the blood and bones and flesh too strong, invincible for life, having learned at least once with his own eyes how tough, even in sudden and violent death, not a young man's bones and flesh perhaps but the will of that bone and flesh to remain alive, actually was.

Then she was gone. He walked through the door where she had been standing, and went to the stove. (140–141)

The tragic details vary. They may be compassionate, as in the mention of the household "towel made of scalded flour sacks sewn together" (138), rhetorically touching ("his body breasting the air her body had vacated, his eyes touching the objects – post and tree and field and house and hill – her eyes had lost" (137)), or the grief can be revealed in pathetic exclamations as in this dialogue between Rider and his aunt:

"Ah'm awright," he said.

"You aint awright. De Lawd guv, and He tuck away. Put yo faith and trust in Him. And she kin help you."

"Whut faith and trust?" he said. "Whut Mannie ever done ter Him? Whut He wanter come messin wid me and –" (145)

A tragicomic pitch is held up in suspense by the insertion of an unusually long subordinate clause in the following picture of the extinction of Rider's hopes:

The hearth where the fire which was to have lasted to the end of them, before which in the days before he was able to buy the stove he would enter after his four-mile walk from the mill and find her, the shape of her narrow back and haunches squatting, one narrow spread hand shielding her face from the blaze over which the other hand held the skillet, had already fallen to a dry, light soilure of dead ashes when the sun rose yesterday. (140)

Rider's despair is heard growing in his talk to the whiskey jug:

/---/ gulping the liquid solid and cold as ice water, without either taste or heat until he lowered the jug and the air got in. "Hah," he said. "Dat's right. Try me. Try me, big boy. Ah gots something hyar now dat kin whup you." (147)

/---/ speaking to the jug: "Come on now. You always claim you's a better man den me. Come on now. Prove it." (148)

Towards the end, the irony is built up with repetitions of Rider's arcane phrases: "Ah'm snakebit and de pizen cant hawm me" (152), "Ah'm snakebit."

(153); right before the suicidal murder, the main character is shown smiling abnormally, victimized by the inelasticity of his own condition of soul:

“Dass awright, boss-man,” he said, his voice equable, his face still fixed in the faint rigid smiling beneath the blinking of the red eyes; “Ah aint drunk. Ah just cant wawk straight fer dis yar money weighin me down.” (152)

/---/ his face still fixed in the rigid and deadened smiling, his voice equable, almost deferential /---/ (153)

Returning once again to the title, it might be deemed possible that Faulkner was quite aware of the innovative paradox of having set a comic character into the current of tragic movements and that he intended that apparent, but not functional, mismatch of character and plot characteristics to be reflected in the title: with the “pantaloons” possibly standing for the comic traits, and the phrase “in black” conveying the actual sombreness of the story. Certainly this component of “Go Down, Moses” embodies one of the most unexpected halts of the logic of emotional reasoning, as well as one of the uneasiest impasses that life can lead into.

In the remaining two parts of this chapter, two authors will be discussed who both in some specific ways appear related to Faulkner. First Thomas Hardy, Faulkner’s predecessor in creating a fictional county peopled with rural characters still living under patriarchal rules but under growing pressure from “decadent” modernism, will be viewed in regard to the general character of narration, as well as to some comic narrative devices, in which he either differs from or resembles Faulkner. Secondly, the Irish playwright (and poet) William Butler Yeats, as much influenced by his native lore as Faulkner was by Southern tall tales and legends, will be discussed. Like Faulkner, Yeats was simultaneously a provincialist (in a good sense) and a cosmopolitan in his writings; immersed with great achievements of other literary cultures, he incorporated into his plays, with conservative Irish themes, fertile influences from various classical literatures (from Greece to Japan), along with personal psychic factors and with the unmistakably local.

### **Parallels and Divergences in the Tragicomic in Faulkner’s and Thomas Hardy’s Fictional Worlds**

Thomas Hardy in his fictional region of Wessex and Faulkner in his fictional Yoknapatawpha County created for themselves a second, hard-won home, the destination through an abyss of loneliness of their male dramas – an essence of a society filtered and respectralized through the individuality of one resistant to the primary calls and expectations of the society with its established, majority-based code of gender, class, and age roles (also of race roles, in the case of Faulkner).

Thomas Hardy is at worst seen merely as a writer of melodrama, with all his innovations in revealing covert truths about the naked soul of country people allegedly having become commonplace and outdated knowledge by the beginning of the twenty-first century. His colourful juxtaposition of episodes and complementary plot-lines, as well as his extraordinary epiphanic effects are likewise ignored. In a global culture which favours visual arts over literature, a disadvantage of Hardy is that his novels are too easily filmable, that is, their peculiar literary values appear as too easily transmutable into visual action (with the transmutation involving light-hand evasion of the style and the philosophical weight of specific episodes), which is to say that they are easily overlooked in favour of the cinematic language.

Faulkner's fiction is cinematic too, but in a different sense; as much of its essence consists in technical experimentation, angles of illumination available only to written narratives, and as Faulkner with his portrayals of an inner psychic scene has developed a quasi-cinematic technique (different from, but equal or superior in its complexity to films) operable only through the written word, through reading experience, his fiction persists in having a more independent value, less convertible into other art forms.

John Rabbetts writes:

Faulkner's stories perhaps insist more thoroughly upon the equivocation of comedy and tragedy than those of Hardy, which tend in their tragic climaxes towards a more purely elegiac tone. Nevertheless, Hardy's habitual irony is a double-edged weapon which even in his most impassioned tragedies is frequently used to undercut the pathos of his protagonists' experiences. (1989: 98)

Speaking of Faulkner's novel "Light in August", the same critic points out that "the rueful comedy of Byron and Lena gives balance and contrast to the tragic centre of *Light in August*, the story of Joe Christmas" (1989: 184).

Important for this study is Rabbetts's remark:

As one reads Faulkner's novels the "ridiculous" and the "terrible" are found, gradually, to be closely interwoven, as in the story of Lena and Byron which frames and contrasts Joe Christmas's torments. Faulknerian humour often subsists in the bizarre tension felt between the appearances and the actuality of human conduct /---/" (1989: 179)

More generally, Rabbetts admits "that the positive aspects of Faulkner's exploration of the "ache of modernism" depend, rather more heavily than Hardy's, upon an awareness of a certain latent comedy running through the pattern of human suffering" (1989: 178). But he finds important common points:

The relationship between Faulknerian and Hardeian humour is deepened by the fatalism which colours the outlook of both groups of country folk, and by the two writers' common agnosticism and religious scepticism. (1989: 179)

Rabbetts notes a significant similarity in Hardy's and Faulkner's use of "comic codas", such as appear at the end of the novels "The Woodlanders" and "Light in August". In Hardy's novel,

/the tragedies of Giles, Marty, and the incipient tragedy of Grace's doomed marriage as foreseen by her father, are balanced by the farcical incident of Grace, Fitzpiers and the man-trap, and by the blunt commentary upon events supplied by Melbury's rustic companions in the inn at Sherton Abbas. (Rabbetts 1989: 98)

In "Light in August", the tragic account of Joe Christmas's death is followed by a humorous narrative of Byron Bunch's amorous pursuit of Lena, set in a juicy folk key and conveyed by a new, secondary character.

As a parallel to the sense of the tragicomic peculiar to Faulkner, that will be discussed in Chapter Three of this study, Rabbetts finds a tragicomic episode in Hardy's novel "A Pair of Blue Eyes". An "urban intellectual protagonist" (Rabbetts 1989: 72), a well-to-do man, called Henry Knight, is "perilously suspended over a sheer cliff-face" (1989: 72), about to fall into the precipice. As he reclines there, opposite his eyes in the cliff wall he can see a fossilized creature, staring at him constantly with its petrified eyes, millions of years old. Such a vision, just a brief fall away from a total annihilation of all the historical, sociocultural values, the creeds and mannerisms of his time, that the protagonist carries in himself, a contact with the stone gaze of a remnant of animate existence older than humanity, strikes one as a case of sublime tragicomedy. A similar sense can be found occasionally at the more philosophical pages of Faulkner's, especially in his portraits of idiots, such as the Benjy section of "The Sound and the Fury", discussed earlier in this chapter, and the episode with Ike Snopes and the cow in "The Hamlet", to be analyzed in the following chapter.

On the whole, one can agree with John Rabbetts that "Hardy and Faulkner stand both inside and outside their regional cultures, creating unique literary microcosms characterised, like our own worlds, by intense fluctuation and uncertainty" (1989: 117). Both writers wrote novels "with a folk-historical dimension" (Rabbetts 1989: 193), correspondingly presenting a considerable amount of folk humour.

### **Parallels with W. B. Yeats**

Parallels between the comic and tragicomic in Faulkner's fiction and Yeats's plays appear in the juxtaposition of highly formal and highly informal devices. Yeats alternates between classical blank verse and colloquial prose, between noble heroes and common men (beggars, fools, cripples), between a stasis of pathetic postures and a natural dynamism. While the particular facts in Faulkner's works, the emphases on the locality and the ideological scenery, are

definitely different from Yeats's, an analogous creation of tragically comic effects through the organization of informal matter into formal patterns, of solemn motifs into outlandishly casual contexts, can be observed also in Faulkner.

In Yeats's play "On Baile's Strand", the ancient Irish hero Cuchulain unwittingly (though he receives premonitions) combats and kills his own son. After he reappears on stage, maddened from grief at the realization, the Fool (who along with the Blind Man fills the function of comic relief) starts stating Cuchulain's actions of the moment at the man's own presence ("He has taken my feathers to wipe his sword. It is blood that he is wiping from his sword" (Yeats 1997: 69)). The fool's purpose is to inform the Blind Man, but to the audience who can see Cuchulain standing at a short distance from the speaker, these words may sound like a bewildering sneer. By a logical presumption, the noble hero is to hear what the fool says he is doing – the utterances making the situation one of bizarre, alienatingly striking tragicomedy. A similar device occurs in Faulkner's short story "That Evening Sun", in which little Caddy, one of the Compson children, comments out loud on the Black woman Nancy's frenzied action, referring to her in the third person at her presence. Her manner of speaking is provoked by Nancy talking to an invisible partner, as if there were one person more in their company besides the three Compson children, reflecting her fear that there is someone lurking in the dark ditch (to whom she has to signal that she is not alone). Like Cuchulain, Nancy is mad with worries – she is certain that her former lover is going to kill her out of jealousy that night; in fact she is behaving in what appears to be a psychosis – a condition quite similar to the Irish hero's at the end of the play:

"What are you talking so loud for, Nancy?" Caddy said.

"Who; me?" Nancy said. "Listen at Quentin and Caddy and Jason saying I'm talking loud."

"You talk like there was five of us here," Caddy said. "You talk like father was here too."

"Who; me talking loud, Mr Jason?" Nancy said.

"Nancy called Jason "Mister,"" Caddy said.

"Listen how Caddy and Quentin and Jason talk," Nancy said.

"We're not talking loud," Caddy said. "You're the one that's talking like father –"

"Hush," Nancy said; "Hush, Mr Jason."

"Nancy called Jason "Mister" aguh –"

"Hush," Nancy said. (Faulkner 1985: 301)

In these examples, both Yeats and Faulkner create a tragicomic effect by hinting at a hypothetical dark, formless presence (in the case of Yeats, symbolized by the Blind Man whose blindness in turn symbolizes the fatal ignorance of Cuchulain) that overwhelms the normal interaction of the characters and that requires direct addressing.

When the two Indians at the beginning of Faulkner's story "Red Leaves" refer to the flesh of Black people as tasting bitter (Faulkner 1985: 314), the effect of the remark (never elaborated later) is as stunningly outlandish (funny in a terrible way) as the sharper utterances of fools in Yeats's plays.

The number of Faulkner's devices of conveying the comic and the tragicomic, observed in this chapter, cannot be all-inclusive because, as John Rabbetts writes, Faulkner's is a creation of "entire imaginative worlds which cannot ever be fully described or contained" (1989: 213). Deliberate withholding of meaning, selective provision of information, direct ridicule through anecdotal tricks, rich imagery with surprising allusions and colloquialisms, lexical innovations, gradual revelations of hidden motifs, juxtapositions of contrastive narrative lines, ironies of fictional fates, comic codas, suggestive presences-in-absence, all serve the author in weaving a fabric of fiction which is as full of the joy and pain of existence, as thick with tragicomic instances, as life itself.

The comparisons of Faulkner with two of his contemporaries at the end of this chapter may be seen as a prologue to the longer, contrastive comparison of a type of situational jokes of tragicomic nature, in Thomas Mann and in Faulkner, provided in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER THREE.**

### **Teleological Quests in the Tragicomic Realms: Faulkner and Thomas Mann**

#### **The Presentation of a Type of Tragicomic Love Relationships in Thomas Mann and in Faulkner**

The main focus in this chapter lies on how the tragicomic arises from what are seen as deviations from normal social interaction. In Thomas Mann's world, the tragicomic is seen even in moderate, by modern standards, deviations from the ideal of the happy, healthy bourgeois marriages, but Mann went further. Faulkner went still further. From a radical perspective, the tragicomic arises not only from the topics of embarrassing love relationships which both writers portrayed, but from how they wrote about those topics, that is, how even the authors themselves partook of the tragicomically deviant.

Mikhail Bakhtin refers to the aesthetic views of two literary theoreticians from the transition period of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, F. Schlegel and Jean Paul, in the Introduction of his "Rabelais and His World". It is the interpretations of those thinkers that can prove most helpful for the understanding of the preconditions of the kind of tragicomic that Faulkner wrote, which he to a large extent shared with Thomas Mann.

Friedrich Schlegel mentions the grotesque in his "Discourse on Poetry" (*Gespräch über die Poesie*, 1800) without giving any clear terminological definition. He usually calls it "arabesque" and considers it "the most ancient form of human fantasy" and the "natural form of poetry". He finds the grotesque in Shakespeare and Cervantes, in Sterne and Jean Paul. He sees the essence in the fantastic combination of heterogeneous elements of reality, in the breaking up of the established world order, in the free fancy of its images and in the "alternate succession of enthusiasm and irony." (Bakhtin 1984: 41)

The grotesque as the "natural form of poetry" and an "alternate succession of enthusiasm and irony" of Schlegel's rather liberal rendering can be found in the lyrical prose narrations of Faulkner and Mann viewed below, but as both have been classified among the modernists, quite expectedly "the breaking up of the established world order" in them avoids the most Rabelaisian flights of fancy and is confined to the psychic microcosms of the protagonists.

Bakhtin continues with what he considers Jean Paul's Romanticist view of the grotesque (thus contradicting his own delineation of the phenomenon in the preferred Renaissance spirit, but still not quite incompatible with it).

Jean Paul defines the Romantic grotesque even more sharply in his "Introduction to Aesthetics," (*Vorschule der Ästhetik*). He does not use the term grotesque and he conceives it as "destructive humor." /---/

Jean Paul understands perfectly well the universal character of laughter. “Destructive humor” is not directed against isolated negative aspects of reality but against all reality, against the finished world as a whole. All that is finite is per se destroyed by humor. Jean Paul stresses the radicalism of humor. Through it, the entire world is turned into something alien, something terrifying and unjustified. The ground slips from under our feet, and we are dizzy because we find nothing stable around us. Jean Paul sees a similar universalism and radicalism of destruction of all moral and social stability in the comic ritual and spectacles of the Middle Ages.

He does not separate the grotesque from laughter. He understands that without the principle of laughter this genre would be impossible. But his theory concerns itself only with a reduced form of laughter, a cold humor deprived of positive regenerating power. Jean Paul emphasizes the melancholy character of destructive laughter, saying that the greatest humorist of all would be the devil (of course, in the Romantic meaning of this word).

Jean Paul is attracted by the manifestations of medieval and Renaissance grotesque, and especially by Rabelais and Shakespeare. However, he merely offers the theory of the Romantic; through this prism alone can he observe the past stages of development. He “romanticizes” these stages (mostly through Sterne’s interpretation).

The positive element of the grotesque, its last word, is conceived by Jean Paul (as it is by Schlegel) as outside the laughter principle, as an escape from all that is finite and destroyed by humor, as a transfer to the spiritual sphere. (Bakhtin 1984: 41–42)

“Destructive humor” of a “melancholy character”, only sparing what in the world can be transferred “to the spiritual sphere” – this kind of grotesque, overlapping, in Schlegel’s interpretation, with the tragicomic, appears to be just what can be found in the fiction examples of Mann and Faulkner compared and studied in this chapter. Therefore, both writers emerge as the heirs to the Romantic mentality in regard to the comic and tragicomic, displaying the aesthetic (hardly separable from the ethical) dilemmas and predicaments of the Romanticism. Yet even without a powerful bolt of intuition it can be acknowledged that Bakhtin’s opposing of the Renaissance and Romanticist role of laughter and humour is only an approximation, however ingenious, to the truth of literary developments. As the following discussion should show, with all the death-prevailed character, destructive humour, or irony, and melancholy tonality, these two writers succeeded in endowing their narratives with something of a life-affirming perception of beauty.

By many traits, William Faulkner and Thomas Mann are as incompatibly different as two writers from different cultures can be. Yet they share a compassionate attention to the various weaklings of the society, such as idiots (without quotation marks and with them) and the socially aberrant artistic types (the feeble-minded and the artistically oversensitive are often overlapping in Faulkner), to whom they silently (and ironically, of course) sometimes attribute the dubious epithet of being “chosen”. Both writers’

concern with the weaklings ought to be seen as conscious polemics with, and a partial refutation of, the opinions of Friedrich Nietzsche, whose philosophy represents a powerful factor in the formation of the writers' aesthetic views.

Caroline Joan S. Picart has written extensively on the convergences in and the polemics between Thomas Mann and Nietzsche. Put shortly, the philosopher's influence on Mann's comic lies in Nietzsche's method by which an individual in his tragic predicament, when observed from a detached viewpoint, receives a comic interpretation (Picart 1999: 4, 6).

In the first subchapter an attempt will be made to compare the ways occasions of tragicomic love relationships are transmuted into fiction in Faulkner and in three early art-related short stories of Thomas Mann ("Little Herr Friedemann", "Tristan", "Death in Venice"), focusing on the basic sociocultural and stylistic similarities and differences between their conveyance of a hopeless, at once lofty and banal love.

Thirty to forty years before Faulkner wrote his story of the idiot boy Ike Snopes's love for a cow, incorporated into the novel "The Hamlet" (published in 1940) as the second chapter of the third section, "The Long Summer", the German writer Thomas Mann had written stories about unusual love relationships, scandalously embarrassing because of their frankness, challenging contemporary tastes and touching sore areas of the collective psyche of the era. If the love object in Faulkner's story were not revealed, several passages in Thomas Mann's early stories could almost be pasted into that part of "The Hamlet" as orchestrations of Faulkner's theme, corresponding as they are to the same issues of the opposition and symbiosis of the lofty and the banal, of the tragic and the hilarious. The greatest correspondence to Faulkner's cow episode in Mann can be found in the descriptions of the lover approaching his beloved, with the confusion and turmoil of feelings involved, and in the atmosphere of Romanticism as the lovers communicate, with real or symbolic music of passions in the air.

The background in Thomas Mann is solidly dignified, imbued with the end of an era aura, representing accumulations of centuries long material culture, elitist both in its aristocratic and bourgeois aspects. The surroundings in which Mann's more or less marginalized male characters fall in love – with a married woman or a young boy, in both cases entering an emotional taboo area – are a mixture of sombrely tragic Wagnerian romanticism and commonplace business life. The conservatism, the concentration of old European experience is illustrated in the descriptions of the *empire*-style furniture in the settings, as in the following passage depicting Herr Spinell's dwelling room in the story "Tristan":

It was a room like all the others in Einfried, furnished in a simple and elegant period style. The massive chest of drawers had metal lion's-head mountings; the tall pier-glass was not one smooth sheet, but composed of numerous small panes framed in lead; the gleaming floor was uncarpeted and the stiff legs of the

furniture seemed to extend as light shadows into its bluish, varnished surface. A large writing-table stood near the window, across which the novelist had drawn a yellow curtain, presumably to make himself feel more spiritual. (“Tristan”, Mann 1998: 122–123)

The importance the characters attribute to such background definers as furniture, seeing it as a prerequisite of civilization, of being human, of keeping the wild instinctive nature at bay, is heard in this confession of Herr Spinell to his secret beloved, Gabriele Klöterjahn:

“/---/ Now, there are times when I simply cannot do without *Empire*, times when it is absolutely necessary to me if I am to achieve even a modest degree of well-being. You will appreciate that one’s state of mind when one is surrounded by voluptuously soft and luxurious furniture differs entirely from the mood inspired by the straight lines of these tables and chairs and draperies... This brightness and hardness, this cold, austere simplicity, this rigorous reserve imparts its composure and dignity to the beholder: prolonged contact with it has an inwardly purifying and restoring effect on me – there is no doubt that it raises my moral tone.” (“Tristan”, 103)

On the other hand, Faulkner’s love romance between an idiot and a cow occurs in conditions rural, in barns and in pastures, a space so elementary and primitive as to be verging on prehistoricalness, on a nearly timeless state in which nature and civilization have not parted, the fact of being human remaining first and foremost defined as being an animate object rather than a sociocultural product, a person therefore holding his value and what dignity he has on a basis shared with animals. There is no furniture in the room where Ike Snopes sleeps:

Soon it was dark only when he left the barn, backed carefully, with one down-groping foot, from the harness-room where his quilt-and-straw bed was /---/. (“The Hamlet”, Faulkner 1988: 164)

As Mann’s and Faulkner’s characters approach their beloved, there is similar deference in their postures and movements:

He would approach her with extreme circumspection and deference, and always talked to her in a carefully muted voice /---/. He would tiptoe on his great feet up to the armchair in which Herr Klöterjahn’s wife reclined, fragile and smiling; at a distance of two paces he would stop, with one leg poised a little way behind the other and bowing from the waist; and in this posture he would talk to her in his rather impeded, dragging way, softly and intensely, but ready at any moment to withdraw and disappear as soon as her face should show the slightest sign of fatigue or annoyance. But she was not annoyed /---/. (“Tristan”, 102)

As in the preceding example from “Tristan”, a lot of the focus in Faulkner’s narrative is on the probing motion of the lover’s legs and feet, though there is a considerable amount of brutishness in Ike which Herr Spinell lacks:

*/Ike/ followed, stepping gingerly down into the water, and began to cross, lifting his feet high at each step, moaning a little, urgent and concerned yet not to alarm her more. (“The Hamlet”, 166)*

The inelasticity of both Ike’s and Mann’s heroes’ postures is obviously related to the comic in rigidity as discussed by Henri Bergson. Especially comic, in Ike’s case, is the perseverance with which he keeps stepping on the surface of the creek as if it were to carry his weight. His attempts of striding upon the creek as on a platform, and his consequent splashing into the water, are described six times in the chapter, with a combination of variations and repetition. Like a tumbler or a puppet, the examples given by Bergson in his essay on the comic, Ike therefore possesses a quality highly risible because it is apparently lifeless, mechanical. The same rigidity appears later in the chapter when like something inanimate he steps and drops down the bridge into the creek.

The amazed, grovelling or stupefied reverence the characters feel for the female is expressed either in moaning as in Ike’s case or by murmuring, voiceless sighs or groaning as produced by Herr Spinell and Herr Friedemann:

*/---/ speaking to her, urgent and cajoling. (“The Hamlet”, 166)*

*/H/e once more had to run, once more steadily losing ground, moaning again now with that urgent and now alarmed and bewildered amazement. (ib., 167)*

*/H/e stopped the alarmed and urgent moaning and followed her into the shed, speaking to her again, murmurous, drooling, and touched her with his hand. (ib., 167)*

*/---/ when he turned from the road and mounted to the crest of the hill and saw the smoke beyond the creek, he made the hoarse, aghast sound again /---/. (ib., 171)*

*He spoke to her, exhortative /---/. (ib., 174)*

*/H/e ran up, slowing too, moaning, urgent but not loud, not to send her once more into flight. (ib., 174–175)*

*“I see. Please tell me a little more about yourself; do you mind my asking? If it tires you, then do not do it. Just rest, and I will go on describing Paris to you, as I did the other day. But you could talk very softly, you know; you could even whisper, and it would make what you tell me all the more beautiful... You were born in Bremen?” He uttered this question almost voicelessly, with an expression of reverent awe /---/. (“Tristan”, 107–108)*

He examined his feelings with horrified apprehension, realizing that his so carefully cherished, prudently cultivated sensibility had now been uprooted, upchurned, stirred into wild upheaval. And suddenly, quite overcome by emotion, drunk with vertiginous desire, he leaned against a lamp-post and whispered in trembling anguish:

“Gerda!”

There was complete silence. Far and wide there was not a soul to be seen. Little Herr Friedemann pulled himself together and trudged on. He had reached the top of the street in which the theatre stood and which ran quite steeply down to the river, and now he was walking northwards along the main street towards his house...

How she had looked at him! Was it possible? She had forced him to look away! She had humbled him with her gaze! Was she not a woman and he a man? And had not her strange brown eyes positively quivered with pleasure as she had done so?

Again he felt that impotent, voluptuous hatred welling up inside him, but then he thought of the moment when her head had touched his, when he had breathed her fragrance – and once more he stopped, half straightened his deformed back, and again murmured helplessly, desperately, distractedly:

“Oh my God! my God!” (“Little Herr Friedemann”, Mann 1998: 15)

Similarly to Ike, Spinell’s movements and utterances resemble a troglodyte ritual, or a coupling ceremony of birds or animals:

When she was not confined to her bed, Herr Spinell would approach her, tiptoeing up to her on his great feet with extreme circumspection, stopping at a distance of two paces with one leg poised a little behind the other, and bowing from the waist: he would talk to her in a deferentially muted voice, as if he were raising her gently aloft with reverent awe, and laying her down on soft cushioning clouds where no strident noise nor earthly contact should reach her. At such moments she would remember Herr Klöterjahn’s way of saying “Careful, Gabriele, take care, darling, and keep your mouth closed!” in a voice as hard as a well-meant slap on the back. (“Tristan”, 111)

Both Herr Spinell and Ike see in their mind’s eye their loved one as a queen or princess, as being crowned with a fairy-tale-like glory. The writer of Mann’s story tells the lady about it soon after he has confessed he considers it better not to stare at beautiful women but instead imagine their beauty:

She laughed. “is that your way of looking at beautiful women, Herr Spinell?”

Yes, dear madam; and it is a better way than if I were to stare them in the face with a crude appetite for reality, and imprint their actual imperfections on my mind...” (“Tristan”, 105)

“But what is so particularly beautiful about that, Herr Spinell?”

“Oh, the fact that there were six young ladies besides yourself, the fact that you were not one of their number, but stood out amongst them like a queen...”

You were singled out from your six friends. A little golden crown, quite inconspicuous yet full of significance, gleamed in your hair..."

"Oh, what nonsense, there was no such crown..."

"Ah, but there was: it gleamed there in secret. I should have seen it, I should have seen it in your hair quite plainly, if I had been standing unnoticed among the bushes on one of those occasions..." (ib., 109)

Even though Ike's sweetheart is a cow, there is no less queen- or goddess-like magic about her:

Soon he would be sweeping again, stopping only occasionally to make the hoarse sound of bafflement and incredulous grieving, then watching again with peaceful and absorbed astonishment the creeping ridge of dust and trash before the moving broom. Because even while sweeping he would still see her, blond among the purpling shadows of the pasture, not fixed amid the suppurant tender green but integer of spring's concentrated climax, by it crowned, garlanded. ("The Hamlet", 168)

In the episode with Ike rescuing his mistress from the fire there is high dramatism which on a symbolical level resembles the tempests of feeling blowing in the scenes with performances of Wagner in Mann's stories. Using wild images like the oxymoron in "visibility roaring soundless down about him" (171), with the moaning arias of the idiot and the cow bellowing back to him in reply from the distance, Faulkner's fire episode is a parallel to the musical culminations in Wagner's "Tristan and Isolde" and "Lohengrin" as shown in the turn-of-the-century surroundings in Mann's two narratives.

/T/his time when he rose he actually heard the cow's voice, faint and terrified, from beyond the smokepall on the other hill. ("The Hamlet", 171)

The smoke lay like a wall before him; beyond it he could hear the steady terrified bellowing of the cow. He ran into the smoke toward the voice. The earth was now hot to his feet. He began to snatch them quickly up; he cried once himself, hoarse and amazed, whereupon, as though in answer, the smoke, the circumambience itself, screamed back at him. The sound was everywhere, above and beneath, funneling downward at him /---/. (ib., 172)

Compare with these two passages the literary crescendos in "Tristan":

The *Sehnsucht* motif, a lonely wandering voice in the night, softly uttered its tremulous question. Silence followed, a silence of waiting. And then the answer: the same hesitant, lonely strain, but higher in pitch, more radiant and tender. Silence again. And then, with that wonderful muted *sforzando* which is like an upsurging, uprearing impulse of joy and passion, the love motif began: it rose, it climbed ecstatically to a mingling sweetness, reached its climax and fell away, while the deep song of the cellos came into prominence and continued the melody in grave, sorrowful rapture... ("Tristan", 117)

She played with fastidious reverence, lingering faithfully over every significant detail of the structure, humbly and ceremoniously exhibiting it, like a priest elevating the sacred host. What story did the music tell? It told of two forces, two enraptured lovers reaching out towards each other in suffering and ecstasy and embracing in a convulsive mad desire for eternity, for the absolute... The prelude blazed to its consummation and died down. She stopped at the point where the curtain parts and continued to gaze silently at the music. (ib., 117)

The reaction that the very depiction of a drooling idiot risking his life to save a cow, not as a possession but as the object of spiritual love and physical passion, is likely to evoke in coy readers, may somewhat resemble the reaction of Rätin Spatz to Wagner's music when her companion Gabriele is performing it:

In addition this kind of music affected her [Rätin Spatz's] stomach nerves, it threw her dyspeptic organism into a turmoil of anxiety, and Frau Spatz began to fear that she was about to have a fit. ("Tristan", 117)

The horse which recurrently rushes out of, to and fro in the smoke and fire and pushes Ike with his cow into the ravine may be seen as romantic imagination running amok, life force galloping at extremes, or as embodiment of death, of love-in-death lurking in the flames (which is present the more so as very soon Ike's princess-like mistress is going to be turned into beef).

He just ran, running as again the earth, the smoke, filled and became thunderous with the hard, rapid hoofbeats and again the intolerable voice screamed down at him and he flung both arms about his head and fell sprawling as the wind, the dragon-reek, blasted at him again as the maddened horse soared over his prone body and vanished once more. ("The Hamlet", 172-173)

Enforced by phrases of mythic images like "the air was filled with furious wings" (173) and by suggestive plasticity as in "still screaming, the horse vanished beyond the ravine's lip, sucking first the cow and then himself after it as though by the violent vacuum of its passing" (173), the episode in fire is a rustic re-enactment of Wagnerian aesthetic themes, with medieval prototypes and German bourgeois characters substituted for by animate, animalistic forces in the backward agricultural South, each of them – the idiot boy, the cow, the horse, the farmer – acquiring a timeless stature similar to pantheistic, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic deities.

He screamed. His voice and that of the horse became one voice, wild, furious and without hope, and he ran into and through the fire and burst into air, sun, visibility again, shedding flames sucked away behind him like a tattered garment. The cow stood at the edge of a ravine about ten feet away, facing the fire, her head lowered, bellowing. He had just time to reach her and turn, his body intervened and his arms about his head, as the frantic horse burst out of the smoke and bore down upon them. ("The Hamlet", 173)

Within the furies of the elements, a scene with a “frozen movement” of the lovers is described: “they descended once more to the floor of the ditch, planted and fixed ankle-deep in a moving block of sand like two effigies on a float” (174). Notably, the physical particulars of this variant of “frozen movement” are entirely unique.

Along with the associative allusions Faulkner’s chapter evokes to cultural archetypes – the sacred cow of the Hindu religion, the cow as Juno’s (Hera’s) sacred animal, a reversed variant of the legend about the origins of Minotaur with queen Pasiphaë being impregnated by a bull – Ike’s sodomitic love represents an ironical illustration of the male attraction to the ever-feminine, of the human aspiration for dissolution into the nature as the original matrix of life, and of the epistemological tension between the sociocultural memory of human civilization and the non-linguistic, biological memory of un-selfconscious evolutionary aeons.

Ike’s obsession with the cow is Herr Spinell’s principle – not to look at beautiful women straight in the face lest the impression be marred by their imperfections – conducted to the extreme in which infatuation with women is implied as being essentially imperfect, the imagination having been given full reins to dissolve into an infatuation with the ever-feminine completely independent of sociocultural and even species-based rules. Faulkner’s choice of focus on the scandalous sodomitic love affair mirrors an exasperation arising from exhaustion with the stress and contradictions of the closely guarded social mores of the human society in which the risk of one member of the loving couple being sneered at, diminished into humiliating risibility as happens in Mann’s stories, is a constant probability. Inherently, what Faulkner portrays is spiritual sloth, in more neutral terms an alienation from, an exhaustion with and a disinterest in the impersonal demands of the intersexual rituals of the civilized society. Such sloth in many ways is a characteristic of the artistic temperament and that alienation is something substantially related to the condition of the artist opposing himself to the conventional community in order to hold up a mirror to it; whereas in Mann the central opposition is between art and practical life, the opposition in Faulkner is between social, socially acceptable life and the life of animate existence outside social memory, outside historical consciousness.

Herr Spinell’s passage about his own uselessness conveys that sense of decadence in artistic lives which would lead one to compose a lyrical prose-poem about an act of sodomy, an apotheosis of useless passions:

“/---/ Conscience, dear lady – conscience is a terrible thing! I and my kind spend all our lives battling with it, and we have our hands full trying from time to time deceive it and to satisfy it in cunning little ways. We are useless creatures, I and my kind, and apart from our few good hours we do nothing but chafe ourselves sore and sick against the knowledge of our own uselessness. We hate everything that is useful, we know that it is vulgar and ugly, and we defend this truth fanatically, as one only defends truths that are absolutely necessary to one’s existence. And nevertheless our bad conscience so gnaws at

us that it leaves not one spot on us unscathed. In addition, matters are made worse by the whole character of our inner life, by our outlook, our way of working – they are terribly unwholesome, they undermine us, they exhaust us. /---/” (“Tristan”, 104)

And when Spinell expresses his amazement at Gabriele having left her idyllic life as a maiden princess in a wealthy, artistic family tired of things useful, instead marrying a banal merchant who gave her his ugly-sounding name and an unromantically healthy son, Gabriele replies: “Yes, I left all that behind me, for after all, that is the law of nature” (“Tristan”, 110).

It is also the law of nature that cows are made for copulation and for breeding, and that very frequently they are slaughtered and eaten up as meat, which is soon going to happen with Ike’s mistress. It may also be encoded in nature that idiots can develop unnatural passions. The natural law is shown to vanquish what is held unlawful in culture, but the highly engaging and poetic style in which the sodomitic love attraction is conveyed proves that culture too may be timelessly enduring, as are biological processes. On the other hand, the unromantic fate of the love affair afterwards points at scepticism as to what enduring value elevation by art may offer, a scepticism essentially empirical as opposed to the transcendental ecstasies felt by Mann’s characters in the presence of Wagner’s music. There is a liberation suggested in the all-encompassing unification with the dark formless flow of existence in these passages of “Tristan”:

The sound of horns dying away in the distance... or was it the wind in the leaves? The soft of the stream? Already the night had flooded the grove with its stillness and hushed the castle halls, and no warbling entreaty availed now to stem the tide of overmastering desire. The sacred mystery was enacted. The torch was extinguished; the descending notes of the death-motif spoke with a strange, suddenly clouded sonority; and in tumultuous imaptience the white veil was passionately waved, signalling to the beloved as he approached with outspread arms through the darkness.

Oh boundless, oh unending exultation of this meeting in an eternal place beyond all visible things! Delivered from the tormenting illusion, set free from the bondage of space and time, self and not-self blissfully mingling, “thine” and “mine” mystically made one! The mocking falsehoods of day could divide them, but its pomp and show no longer had power to deceive them, for the magic potion had opened their eyes: it had made them initiates and visionaries of night. He who has gazed with love into the darkness of death and beheld its sweet mystery can long for one thing only while daylight still holds him in its delusive thrall: all his desire and yearning is for the sacred night which is eternal and true, and which unifies all that has been separated.

Oh sink down, night of love, upon them; give them that forgetfulness they long for, enfold them utterly in your joy and free them from the world of deception and division! “See, the last lamp has been extinguished! Thought and the vanity of thinking have vanished in the holy twilight, the world-redeeming dusk outspread over all illusion and all woe. And then, as the shining phantasm fades and my eyes fail with passion: then this world from which the falsehood

of day debarred me, which to my unquenchable torment it held out before me as the object of my desire – then I myself, oh wonder of wishes granted! then I *myself* am the world...” And there followed Brangäne’s warning call, with those rising violin phrases that pass all understanding. (“Tristan”, 118–119)

The same kind of liberation is in Faulkner’s chapter offered by the yearning for cow’s flesh, embracing a turning away from aesthetically acceptable life as well as from all the women’s world with its enchantments and betrayals. Elevation not through the love-in-death for a woman but through love-in-death for femininity reduced to (or enlarged into, from another viewpoint) animate female existence is what creates the paradoxical synthesis of the lofty and the banal in Faulkner’s cow episode. Outside the reach of any “blind paroxysm of shame” (“The Hamlet”, 174), the love of the idiot and the cow emerges as an ode to beautiful humane feelings within the very eye of a vortex of embarrassment.

Beauty is what in Mann’s novella “Death in Venice” the writer Gustav von Aschenbach thinks about as he is admiring and yearning for the beautiful Polish boy Tadzio. Aschenbach is an intellectual and he is therefore capable of uniting his actual passion with ancient theories about beauty and love, with Plato’s discussions about beauty as the earthliest of virtues:

A mirror and sculptured image! His eyes embraced that noble figure at the blue water’s edge, and in rising ecstasy he felt he was gazing on Beauty itself, on Form as a thought of God, on the one and pure perfection that dwells in the spirit and of which a human similitude and likeness had here been lightly and graciously set up for him to worship. Such was his emotional intoxication; and the ageing artist welcomed it unhesitatingly, even greedily. His mind was in labour, its store of culture was in ferment, his memory threw up thoughts from ancient tradition which he had been taught as a boy, but which had never yet come alive in his own fire. Had he not read that the sun turns our attention from spiritual things to the things of the senses? He had read that it so numbs and bewitches our intelligence and memory that the soul, in its joy, quite forgets its proper state and clings with astonished admiration to that most beautiful of all the things the sun shines upon: yes, that only with the help of a bodily form is the soul then still able to exalt itself to a higher vision. That Cupid, indeed, does as mathematicians do, when they show dull-witted children tangible images of the pure Forms: so too the Love-god, in order to make spiritual things visible, loves to use the shapes and colours of young men, turning them into instruments of Recollection by adorning them with all the reflected splendour of Beauty, so that the sight of them truly sets us on fire with pain and hope.

Such were the thoughts the god inspired in his enthusiast, such were the emotions of which he grew capable. And a delightful vision came to him, spun from the sea’s murmur and the glittering sunlight. It was the old plane tree not far from the walls of Athens – that place of sacred shade, fragrant with chaste-tree blossoms, adorned with votive statues and pious gifts in honour of the nymphs and of Acheloüs. The stream trickled crystal-clear over smooth pebbles at the foot of the great spreading tree; the crickets made their music. But on the grass, which sloped down gently so that one could hold up one’s head as one

lay, there reclined two men, sheltered here from the heat of the noonday: one elderly and one young, one ugly and one beautiful, the wise beside the desirable. And Socrates, wooing him with witty compliments and jests, was instructing Phaedrus on desire and virtue. He spoke to him of the burning tremor of fear which the lover will suffer when his eye perceives a likeness of eternal Beauty; spoke to him of the lusts of the profane and base who cannot turn their eyes to Beauty when they behold its image and are not capable of reverence; spoke of the sacred terror that visits the noble soul when a god-like countenance, a perfect body appears to him – of how he trembles then and is beside himself and hardly dares look at the possessor of beauty, and reveres him and would even sacrifice to him as to a graven image, if he did not fear to seem foolish in the eyes of men. For Beauty, dear Phaedrus, only Beauty is at one and the same time divinely desirable and visible: it is, mark well, the only form of the spiritual that we can receive with our senses and endure with our senses. For what would become of us if other divine things, if Reason and Virtue and Truth were to appear to us sensuously? Should we not perish in a conflagration of love, as once upon a time Semele did before Zeus? Thus Beauty is the lover's path to the spirit – only the path, only a means, little Phaedrus... And then he uttered the subtlest thing of all, that sly wooer: he who loves, he said, is more divine than the beloved, because the god is in the former, but not in the latter – this, the tenderest perhaps and the most mocking thought ever formulated, a thought alive with all the mischievousness and most secret voluptuousness of the heart. (“Death in Venice”, Mann 1998: 237–239)

In Faulkner's chapter, the intellectual is the narrator, giving an enjoyable form to the nonverbal sensations of a mentally undeveloped individual. Theoretical formulations are lacking, but the writer speaks of Ike's image in the cow's eyes as “one with that which Juno might have looked out with”, of her gaze in which “he watches himself contemplating what those who looked at Juno saw.” (“The Hamlet”, 182) In a metaphor involving terms from antiquity, the birds in the early morning are said to be “invisible still in the mist loud with its hymeneal choristers.” (ib., 165) Later the author refers to the air as “still loud with birds, but the cries are no longer the mystery's choral strophe and antistrophe rising vertical among the leafed altars, but are earth-parallel, streaking the lateral air in prosaic busy accompaniment to the prosaic process of feeding.” (ib., 183)

And there is a similarity in the descriptions of the beauty of the atmosphere in Faulkner's idyllic countryside and in Venice, a similarity in the impressionist conveyance of images of nature, full of ancient and aesthetic allusions, as the narrator in Faulkner speaks about “Troy's Helen and the nymphs”, and Mann fills his pictures with metaphors of Zephyr and Poseidon, and of the sun dragged by the god's winged horses:

Now day after day the god with the burning cheeks soared naked, driving his four fire-breathing steeds through the spaces of heaven, and now, too, his yellow-gold locks fluttered wide in the outstorming east wind. (“Death in Venice”, 234)

With such fiery ceremony the day began, but the rest of it, too, was strangely exalted and mythically transformed. Where did it come from, what was its origin, this sudden breeze that played so gently and speakingly around his temples and ears, like some higher insufflation? Innumerable white fleecy clouds covered the sky, like the grazing flocks of the gods. A stronger wind rose, and the horses of Poseidon reared and ran; his bulls too, the bulls of the blue-haired sea-god, roared and charged with lowered horns. But among the rocks and stones of the more distant beach the waves danced like leaping goats. A sacred deranged world, full of Panic life, enclosed the enchanted watcher, and his heart dreamed tender tales. Sometimes, as the sun was sinking behind Venice, he would sit on a bench in the hotel park to watch Tazio, dressed in white with a colourful sash, at play on the rolled-gravel tennis court; and in his mind's eye he was watching Hyacinthus, doomed to perish because two gods loved him. He could even feel Zephyr's grievous envy of his rival, who had forgotten his oracle and his bow and his zither to be forever playing with the beautiful youth; he saw the discus, steered by cruel jealousy, strike the lovely head; he himself, turning pale too, caught the broken body in his arms, and the flower that sprang from that sweet blood bore the inscription of his undying lament. ("Death in Venice", 242)

Reading the translation of Mann into English and comparing it with Faulkner's original, in such passages as on some other occasions one could almost think they have been penned by the same author. When Faulkner writes: "/T/he shaggy crests still made a constant murmuring sound in the high serene air. The trunks and the massy foliage were the harps and strings of afternoon /---/" ("The Hamlet", 179), the key of tonality in narration is the same as in "Death in Venice". Faulkner's style displays the same striking juxtaposition of highly abstract ideas and words and a sensually concrete, earth-bound realism:

/B/y April it was the actual thin depthless suspension of false dawn itself, in which he could already see and know himself to be an entity solid and cohered in visibility instead of the uncohered all-sentience of fluid and nerve-springing terror alone and terribly free in the primal sightless inimicality. ("The Hamlet", 165)

/A/nd then he would begin to hurry, trot, not to get there quicker but because he must get back soon, without fear and calmly now in the growing visibility, the gradation from gray through primrose to the morning's ultimate gold, to the brow of the final hill, to let himself downward into the creekside mist and lie in the drenched myriad waking life of grasses and listen for her approach. (ib., 165)

/---/ the motionless fronds of water-heavy grasses stooping into the mist before his face in black, fixed curves, along each parabola of which the marching drops held in minute magnification the dawn's rosy miniatures /---/. (ib., 165)

Now he watches the recurrence of that which he discovered for the first time three days ago: that dawn, light, is not decanted onto earth from the sky,

but instead is from the earth itself suspired. Roofed by the woven canopy of blind annealing grass-roots and the roots of trees, dark in the blind dark of time's slit and rich refuse – the constant and unslumbering anonymous worm-glut and the inextricable known bones – Troy's Helen and the nymphs and the snoring mitred bishops, the saviours and the victims and the kings – it wakes, upseeping, attrive in unaccountable creeping channels: first, root; then frond by frond, from whose escaping tips like gas it rises and disseminates and stains the sleep-fast earth with drowsy insect-murmur; the, still upward-seeking, creeps the knitted bark of trunk and limb where, suddenly louder leaf by leaf and dispersive in diffusive sudden speed, melodious with the winged and jeweled throats, it upward bursts and fills night's globed negation with jonquil thunder. Far below, the gauzy hemisphere treads with herald-cock, and sty and pen and byre salute the day. /---/ Then the sun itself: within the half-mile it overtakes him. The silent copper roar fires the drenched grass and flings long before him his shadow prone for the vain eluded treading; the earth mirrors his antic and constant frustration which soars up the last hill and, motionless in the void, hovers until he himself crests over, whereupon it drops an invisible bridge across the ultimate ebb of night and, still preceding him, leaps visible once more across the swale and touches the corpse itself, shortening into the nearing leafy wall, head: shoulders: hips: and then the trotting legs, until at last it stands upright upon the mazy whimple of the windy leaves for one intact inconstant instant before he runs into and through it. (ib., 181–182)

As in Mann's description of the sea at Venice, Faulkner also uses prosopoeia by attributing man-like drowsiness to a sea-image in "half-furrowed sight like the slumbering half-satiate sea" ("The Hamlet", 181). The amazing idea, somewhat relatable to Mann's aesthetics, that the creation of well-formed images in art is simultaneously a love-act and instant of annihilation, is poetically interpretable in a passage like "T/hey lean and interrupt the green reflections and with their own drinking faces break each's mirroring, each face to its own shattered image wedded and annealed." (ib., 183)

As in Mann's stories, the ultimate (though on the unromantic level, temporary and half-illusory) unification is achieved in darkness associated with sleep and death. Together with the sun, Ike and the cow travel towards their place of rest:

They pace the ardent and unheeding sun, themselves unheeding and without ardor among the shadows of the soaring trunks which are the sun-gear'd ratchet-spokes which wheel the axled earth, powerful and without haste, up out of the caverns of darkness, through dawn and morning and mid-morning, and on toward and at last into the slowing neap of noon, the flood, the slack of peak and crown of light garlanding all within one single coronet of the fallen and unregenerate seraphim. ("The Hamlet", 183)

When they reach it, symbolically it is the same culmination as was heard in the prelude to Wagner's opera "Tristan and Isolde", with the abolition of boundaries between the self and the world, that was quoted above:

At the same moment all three of them cross the crest and descend into the bowl of evening and are extinguished.

The rapid twilight effaces them from the day's tedious recording. Original, in the womb-dimension, the unavoidable first and the inescapable last, eyeless, they descend the hill. (ib., 185)

Before their "wedding-night", the idiot actually garlands his "queen", only to see the crown immediately eaten:

/H/e lays the plucked grass before her, then out of the clumsy fumbling of the hands there emerges, already in dissolution, the abortive diadem. In the act of garlanding, it disintegrates, rains down the slant of brow and chewing head; fodder and flowers become one inexhaustible rumination. From the sliding rhythm of the jaws depends one final blossom. (ib., 184)

In similar irony, when the exasperated husband of Gabriele Klöterjahn pours out his rage at Herr Spinell, he reveals that during the scene of her maidenhood when he should have seen the "crown" in her hair she was actually discussing "a recipe for potato pancakes" (130).

Before the final quiet, a thunderstorm hits Ike and the cow. A solution of the day's tensions, once again it is conveyed by Faulkner in a highly impressionist language, resembling the broad paintings of sunrises and noons, of the changing weather in "Death in Venice". This episode in the narrative may be seen as a literary counterpart to Beethoven's Sixth, Pastoral symphony, with the threatening rumble and shrieking flashes of the thunderstorm being followed by the awakening of serene, joyful sensations:

/In an anticlimax of complete vacuum the shaggy pelt of earth became overblown like that of a receptive mare for the rampant crash, the furious brief fecundation which, still, rampant, seeded itself in flash and glare of noise and fury and then was gone, vanished. (ib., 184)

/---/ each brief lance already filled with the glittering promise of its imminent cessation like the brief bright saltless tears of a young girl over a lost flower /---/. (ib., 185)

/---/ the vivid wet of the living water which has carried into and still retains within the very mud, the boundless freedom of the golden air as that same air glitters in the leaves and branches which globe in countless minute repetition the intact and iridescent cosmos. (ib., 185)

In the final picture of the boy and the cow settling into their bed in the grass, the night is described as not falling down from the skies, but as rising from the earth, gradually filtering upwards from the roots. It is as if the mythical in the world were awakening, "Troy's Helen" and other figures from the legendary, timeless past being given new lives. The consciousness of an idiot may be dark like earth at twilight, but inside his human form there are latent, ready to

awake, to be filtered out, the same flowerings of human civilization that have produced the immortal works of art and that form the classical metaphors in Mann's writings.

Now he can see again. Again his head interrupts, then replaces as once more he breaks with drinking the reversed drinking of his drowned and fading image. It is the well of days, the still and insatiable aperture of earth. It holds in tranquil paradox of suspended precipitation dawn, noon, and sunset; yesterday, today, and tomorrow – star-spawn and hieroglyph, the fierce white dying rose, then gradual and invincible speeding up to and into slack-flood's coronal of nympholept noon. Then ebb's afternoon, until at last the morning, noon, and afternoon flow back, drain the sky and creep leaf by voiceless leaf and twig and branch and trunk, descending, gathering frond by frond among the grass, still creeping downward in drowsy insect murmurs, until at last the complete all of light gathers about that still and tender mouth in one last expiring inhalation. He rises. The swale is constant with random and erratic fireflies. There is the one fierce evening star, though almost at once the marching constellations mesh and gear and wheel strongly on. Blond too in that gathered last of light, she owns no dimension against the lambent and undimensional grass. But she is there, solid amid the abstract earth. He walks lightly upon it, returning, treading lightly that frail inextricable canopy of the subterrene slumber – Helen and the bishops, the kings and the graceless seraphim. When he reaches her, she has already begun to lie down – first the forequarters, then the hinder ones, lowering herself in two distinct stages into the spent ebb of evening, nestling back into the nest-form of sleep, the mammalian attar. They lie down together. (ib., 186)

Like the “inextinguishable visions” (“Tristan”, 128) of Mann's simultaneously heroic and pathetic artistic characters, Faulkner's love story of an idiot and a cow forms a paradoxical synthesis of the noblest and most embarrassing feelings, of the loftiest and the banal. However, rather than opposing life and art as Mann does (although, by the act of writing, doing exactly the same too), Faulkner develops a contradiction between the logic of human memory and social life on the one hand, and the ahistorical animate existence of biological beings on the other hand. What enticing powers in “Little Herr Friedemann” and “Tristan” are attributed to the social atmosphere resonant with the music of Wagner, Faulkner in his rustic love story expresses in lush Shakespearean imagery – the music which in Mann's stories defines the background, in Faulkner's narration emerges as the very quality of the sonorous words.

The most significant contrast between Mann and Faulkner in these examples lies in that while the elevations in Mann correspond to what is expected from the perspective of his romantic, artistic, intellectual male characters, Faulkner's adorned language is entirely unexpected for his low-life topic. Using a style tragically inappropriate to the essentially inexpressible world of an idiot's consciousness, to the mystical, self-contained relations outside the conventional sphere of culture, Faulkner has undertaken a radical probation into the possibilities, or impossibilities, of verbally conveying the non-linguistic reality which can only be guessed at. As Yuri Lotman writes in his “Culture

and Explosion”, there is no single ideal language for conveying the non-linguistic, but the interplay of several languages at once can still convert something of the non-linguistic into a verbal representation (Lotman 2005: 10). Like James Joyce in his eighteen different style versions of a single day in Dublin in “Ulysses”, Faulkner in the “cow episode” has juxtaposed or synthesized linguistic levels alternating between the banal, the vulgar, and the most elevated and spiritualized, to perform a radical experiment, tragicomic both in its social topic and its artistic qualities.

Generalizing on the basis of the texts analyzed above, and considering both writer’s place in the world’s literary canon, it may be said that in the sense of sociocultural memory Faulkner’s episode displays more transience than Mann’s stories in the same way as animal lives are more transient than social and cultural traditions; but it displays the same or even greater amount of endurance in the same way as nature and human contacts with nature are more enduring than human artefacts. As the writer-philosophers that they both are, Mann and Faulkner in these examples, blending shame and ecstasy, have explored the depths of human psyche to find new purposes for the reflected human existence; one may therefore speak of the teleological challenge which their works raise.

## **Mann’s and Faulkner’s Images of Incest**

The parallels in early Faulkner with Thomas Mann’s story from 1905, “The Blood of the Walsungs” (“Wälsungenblud”), are remarkable. To many the highest point of Faulkner’s fiction is his novel “The Sound and the Fury”, especially its two first sections of the brothers Benjy and Quentin, both of whom are erotically attached to their sister Caddy. Quentin in his section consciously imagines committing incest with her and confessing the incest to his father. He is also painfully jealous of Caddy’s boyfriends and real sex partners. Mann’s “The Blood of the Walsungs” depicts two young Berlin Jews, a brother and a sister, named Siegmund and Sieglinde (with the family name Aarenhold) after Wagner’s heroes from “The Ring of the Nibelungs”. Like the opera characters, the two are twins and movingly fond of each other. After watching Wagner’s “Valkyries” with their namesakes incestuously falling in love in the opera theatre, the siblings, in a resolution of embarrassed feelings and as a revenge on the sister’s commonplace fiancé, actually commit incest on a bearskin in the brother’s bed.

The question whether Faulkner had read or knew about Mann’s story when writing about Quentin and Caddy is less relevant than the indubitable influence on him of European romanticism as embodied in the Wagnerian aesthetics of death and eroticism. Part of the reason for Quentin revelling in his sinful dreams is that he, as an heir to the white Southern mythology of a chosen Southern identity, wants to be as special, specially marked, as

Wagner's heroes are and as in their wake Mann's characters imagine themselves to be.

What Mann appears to satirize are the assumptions of any human beings that they are "chosen ones", either by race, family, or status, and that two persons may be "created for each other" even if such a belief breaks the very foundations of moral law. Whether it be the Ur-Germanic heroes of the anti-Semite Wagner, or two Jews accidentally bearing the same names, Mann seems to say, human arrogance, moral short-sightedness, and sins such as incest remain the same, equally reprehensible, irrespective of race or ideological bias. Just as he is both appreciative and critical of Wagner, Mann the artist is neither anti-Semitic nor pro-Semitic but detects basic primeval shortcomings in the Jewish siblings of his fiction, as precious-looking and as movingly attached to each other as he depicts them.

The incest in Mann's story therefore is a symbol of Jewish *hubris*, or arrogance, whereas the imaginary incest between Quentin and Caddy in Faulkner's novel is a symbol of white Southern *hubris* and arrogance. Incest according to the studies in cultural anthropology is known to have been frequent in the aristocracies, in the ruling families of many archaic cultures. From the common Western heritage, Egypt is the best-known example of a civilization in which incest between brothers and sisters in the ruling circles was a norm rather than an exception.

Incest as a sociocultural phenomenon bears the significance of the inwardness of a closed circle (similar to the sign of a snake eating its tail in ancient myths), of a life voluntarily isolating itself from and refusing further communication with and dependence from the society. It is not just an uncivilized act, but a sign of civilization which can afford to refute itself because of overripeness; an asocial phenomenon possessing an enormous negative social value with its encoded network of associations and implications. Considering the custom of Egyptian pharaohs of practicing incest, one could speak of a general "egyptianization" of the artistic vision of writers like Mann and Faulkner who write about incest (in certain emphatic readings of the Bible, both Judaist and Christian, Egypt stands as a central symbol for sin, for *the* hindrance to spiritual deliverance). Such an egyptianized vision of Faulkner's South was preceded by Mann's similar one of the Wilhelmine Germany with its bourgeois cult of Wagner, and Mann's direct or indirect influence on Faulkner is the link that immediately connects Wagner's aesthetics with Faulkner's.

The fact that an incestuous relationship need not be biologically fruitless like homosexual and sodomitic relations inevitably are simultaneously makes it even a greater taboo and allows for its alluringly romantic and mysticist interpretations (the greatest Germanic hero Siegfried was born of Siegmund and Sieglinde's incest).

The motif of incest also occurs elsewhere in both writers' works, such as Mann's novel "The Holy Sinner" ("Der Erwählte") and the stories about the relations of white plantation owners with their slaves in Faulkner's "Go Down,

Moses". A drastic halt in the process of normal social interaction, a halt loaded with mythic significance, raising baffling questions about human rationality, the incestuous relationship has served both Faulkner and Mann as a source of exploring and developing their vision of humanity in the tragicomic condition of being divided between nature and culture.

## **A Comparison of Thomas Mann and William Faulkner as Artists**

For most of today's academic and literary discourses, Thomas Mann and William Faulkner are topics out of date, with relevance only for literary historians and close, specialized circles. Such an attitude itself is a mark of the fleeting character of the factionalization and marginalization of intellectual values, overlapping with the concept of post-modernism, characterized by concerns that the populist monopoly of successive trends, and a short-sightedness as to deeper historical perspectives, widely dictate to modern analysts of sociocultural phenomena.

Thomas Mann and Faulkner *are* our contemporaries, if seen from a viewpoint a little more enduring than the journalistic monopoly, "the live for the day and daily problems" kind of worship of only those celebrities and freshly hailed authors that surpass the threshold of weekly news. With the flow of electronically conveyed (and preferably, as shocking as possible) information having become the new idol, the global community has adopted the "carpe diem" principle as its ideology, to replace a more prudent philosophy of selection, "live for a life-time".

From the era previous to the advent of post-modernism, Mann and Faulkner are among the authors closest to us temporally whose aesthetic philosophy still can be categorized under the term "grand fictional narratives". The splintering of creative identities, the utter relativization of the value of the artistic message, and the primacy of the concern with political correctness, were still alien to them, as each tackled with the paradoxes and predicaments of the logic of the Western consciousness. Very few authors with their power of integrity have risen afterwards. They are our contemporaries because their work is still relevant for us, they belong to the world of yesterday, but not to a world without us, blotted out from our hopes and visions.

The sovereignty of a creative writer, if his or her modelling of stories bears the memorable imprint of emotional intensity and intellectual challenge, consists of a union and taming of contradictions such as they occur in people's lives. A universal human contradiction is that between our existence as natural, physical phenomena, and as beings encoded with historical, cultural memory; another one is that the ordinary sociocultural existence tends to survive of its own inertia, the memory of our humanity being subjected to the same feeding and breeding regulations that direct the lives of animals, the spirit staying

unambitiously content with only the pragmatic, unreflected maintenance of its physical body, while the artistic effort is seen as an unnecessary disturbance; it is in the complicated solution of this contradiction that the spirit finds its non-material essence in reaching to the utmost boundaries of physicality, of biological cycles where the customary cultural memory emerges blended with pre-historic teleological myths. Mann and Faulkner deal with both these contradictions. It might be enlightening to read a passage from Mann's novel "Lotte in Weimar" in which an acquaintance of Johann Wolfgang Goethe discusses the character of the German classic's greatness. Having referred to a blessing at the end of the Book of Genesis, in which Joseph, the son of Jacob, is said to have been blessed by the Almighty "with blessings from the heaven above and with blessings from the depths below", Doctor Riemer proceeds to explain that passage this way:

"However, we were talking about the union of greatest spiritual gifts with a most stupendous naïveté in the *same* human constitution and we noted that such a union is exactly what more than anything inspires humankind. And that is all that this word of blessing is about. What we have here is a double blessing of the spirit and of nature – which upon consideration is a blessing – but on the whole, a curse and an apprehension – for humankind in general; basically the greater part of human beings belongs to nature, but in the remaining, and, we might say, in the decisive part they belong to the realm of the spirit. So, using a somewhat ridiculous image, which nevertheless properly illustrates the apprehensive aspect of the matter, one could say that we are standing with one foot in one and the other foot in another world /---/." (Mann 1973: 80–81)

"The greatest spiritual gifts" in combination "with a most stupendous naïveté" is what easily comes to mind when one thinks of the oeuvre of William Faulkner. To this day, Faulkner is seen as a mixture of extremely high-brow and utterly low-brow elements; while he is often conceded to be one of the greatest *artistic* authorities of the twentieth century, he has not yet earned full recognition from the popular culture, neither from the fundamentalist circles of humanities, as an *intellectual* authority; while certainly recognized as a classic of *style*, he, unlike Goethe, has yet to be discovered as a classic of *thought*. Thomas Mann tends to be much less associated with a "stupendous naïveté", due to the extensive intellectual discourses about art and sciences in most of his works, such as are mainly lacking in Faulkner, but the very fact that Mann wrote fiction, not only treatises, using plots involving eroticism, conflicts, and dying, gives evidence that he also possessed a great deal of that naïveté, without which credible fictional events just do not occur.

William Faulkner's biographies quote him as saying that he considered Thomas Mann a great writer (Hunt 1967: 432). In the *Paris Review* interview with Jean Stein he stated: "The two great men in my time were Mann and Joyce" (ib. 432). Faulkner's library included the translation of Mann's novel "Buddenbrooks" and the "Stories of Three Decades" (ib. 432). Joel A. Hunt in his article "Thomas Mann and Faulkner: Portrait of a Magician", published in

1967, has found direct thematic correspondences between Mann's novella "Mario und der Zauberer" ("Mario and the Magician", published in 1929) and Faulkner's short story "An Error in Chemistry" (first published in 1946), reprinted in 1949 as a component of his collection of detective stories, "Knight's Gambit". Although the works differ in important points, Hunt presents sufficient evidence for believing that Faulkner partly modelled his story after Mann's.

Mann's pervasive focus, especially in his earlier fiction, is on people who in some ways are the weaklings of the society – mostly because they are dreamers, impractical fantasizers, a quality of their artistic temperament. To this type belong the little Herr Friedemann, Herr Spinell of the short story "Tristan", to an extent also the eponymous protagonist of the autobiographical novella "Tonio Kröger", partly Gustav von Aschenbach of "Death in Venice", and also the young Hanno Buddenbrook of Mann's first novel (to name only the most famous early works). Faulkner's characters such as Quentin Compson and Darl Bundren partly correspond to that type, but only partly, because they are driven by an irrational animal rage which the cultural restrictions of Mann's romantics do not allow for them, or which they only at climactic moments slip into. More exactly fulfilling the function of Mann's artist types are the numerous idiot characters in Faulkner's fiction. The difference is enormous, as in contrast to Mann's intelligent and sometimes verbose sufferers those characters are unable to speak anything for themselves (they speak in gestures and authorial symbols), but both writer's attention to and compassion for those incompatible with the expectations of the cruelly pragmatic society, are similar. The divergence lies in what are the main distinctions of focus in the two writers, Mann dealing with the contradictions between the artistic and practical lives, Faulkner with aberrant persons, potential sociocultural subjects, whose potential remains unrealized, who have been ejected so far into the realm of non-human (sub-human, or in some sense super-human) animate existence (into the biological human nature, or life in the universal sense) that their loneliness creates new cultural meanings when confronted with the reality of the society (culture, or life in the narrowly human sense).

Both writers deal with characters who are considered or consider themselves "chosen" in some ways. The risky and highly ambiguous designation "chosen" for such characters is a pretext for determining and illuminating all the positive and negative aspects of highly individualized *personae* or groups of them. Faulkner's chosen ones are, first, the Blacks, whose life in slavery taught them to identify with the Old Testament Hebrews in the Egyptian thralldom. The title of Faulkner's novel with dominant racial topics, "Go Down, Moses", derived from a Black spiritual, clearly expresses the nature of that mythical identification. Even when showing Black criminals, as he often does, Faulkner portrays their deep humanity and he never sacrifices the traits of a victim in them to the traits of a villain, nor vice versa. Secondly, Faulkner's "chosen" ones are also the white Southerners, whose legends of a special Southern destiny and the Bible Belt Christian fundamentalism have

trained them to consider themselves the new nation of God. (An explicit example is Anse Bundren in “As I Lay Dying” who thinks, “I am the chosen of the Lord, for who He loveth, so doeth He chastiseth” (Faulkner 2004: 98).) Both the repugnance and the admirable qualities of such self-adornment (arrogance and moral short-sightedness; courage and integrity at moments of crises) are depicted with care.

Mann’s “chosen” ones are basically all the artist types, transcending ordinary human norms and being ridiculed by the society. One of Mann’s later novels, translated into English as “The Holy Sinner”, bears the original title of “Der Erwählte”, or “The Chosen One” (first published in 1951). Narrating about a mediaeval character who married his mother and who later became the Pope, the stunning ethical paradoxes of the novel pose epistemological questions reminiscent of Sophocles’s tragedy “King Oedipus”. But Mann has also written about the Jews, the most usual designees of the dubious term. Harshly satirical of the exclusiveness of the Jewish society, ominously ironical in regard to what role Wagnerian romanticism was to play in the future of Germany, “The Blood of the Walsungs” nevertheless depicts the Jewish twins not only with Mann’s usual irony, but also with affection. The cultural, mythical connotations of incest, the dualistic significance and ambivalence of being “chosen” (in this case, both in the biblical and the romanticized Nordic, as well as the artistic sense), are illuminated thoroughly in both ways.

Several Mann’s novels, such as the Joseph tetralogy, “The Holy Sinner” and the highly successful “Lotte in Weimar”, to name but a few, may be regarded as quite closely belonging to the traditional category of historical novels. Although history flows through the whole of Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha cycle and beyond, Faulkner is not a novelist-historian to the same degree as Mann, because the accuracy of historical fact plays a lesser role in his fiction. Indeed Faulkner’s best novels, with all their governing realism, are sometimes seen as standing outside of history. In his article “Aghast and Uplifted: William Faulkner and the Absence of History”, Wade Newhouse argues that Faulkner in his earlier period of creativity (that is, until after the publication of “Absalom, Absalom!”), was not concerned so much with what happened on the historical scene but what psychic factors of given eras shaped the history into what it turned out to be (Newhouse 2005: 145–148). In a sense, Faulkner was even *revising* history, as instead of involving his characters in actual conflicts, Faulkner entered their fictional consciousness and tried to solve historical problems, analogous to events in the society, through a deep introspection of the psychological dilemmas inside the characters’ souls. Mann seems to have been less attracted to such a psychological revision. The reason may be that Mann had no acute need to break free from factual history, because Germany’s Wagnerian romanticism, along with other, centuries old, established forms of culture, favourable to philological activities, afforded him that freedom from the start. Because Faulkner’s breaking free from historical stereotypes, the load of the historical clichés, required more solitary effort, his approach was more resolute, more

psychologically tangled and more autonomous from its source material, that is, his native society. Both writers borrowed from the Bible, for example, but where Mann based one of his major works on the factually (if semi-mythologically) available history of Old Testament Hebrews, Faulkner created his own, apocryphal Old Testament world on the fictive counterpart to the American soil. With a more limited access to the teleological realm in the traditions of his native society, Faulkner sought for new meanings in turning away from the customary culture toward the unhistorical, timelessly natural world of animate existence within and around people, whose yet undiscovered teleological tensions provided him with a freshness of material where there had apparently been a gap of social consciousness.

Faulkner's last work appeared in 1962. With more than half a century having passed from the publication of Mann's last story, "The Black Swan", it might be queried whether the roles in that narrative, if brought to today's world, would not be reversed, America looking more like an middle-aged, sick lady, and Europe a man in his prime. The contemporary integrated Europe is both older and younger than the New World, with even those forces that try to cling to Europe's pre-American past already a part of a transatlantic mixture, if not synthesis. Side by side in Europe there exist trends extremely receptive to and extremely hostile to American influence, to America the core of whose culture is itself a digressive branch of European heritage. Perhaps both Europe and America could best be regarded as relatively healthy, aging persons whose relationship should be one of soberness, rationality, responsibility. But the new grand fictional narratives of their offspring, if that should come, could display some of the same qualities, in a new degree of intimacy, as the works of Thomas Mann and Faulkner.

However, the European in Mann also had the limitations of his continent. While Faulkner admired Mann's writings, the German author, in a statement of 1954 (after his return to Switzerland), condemned "the overcrowded, overburdened, dragging and thoroughly opaque periods" of Faulkner, compared with which his own sentences were "graceful toe-dancing" (cited in: Heilbut 1996: 557). In his review of Faulkner's novel "A Fable", in 1955, he unfavourably compared it with Kafka (Heilbut 1996: 482).

Mann's harsh assessment of Faulkner can be understood. By the time the Southern writer emerged on the horizon of his attention, Faulkner was no longer at the peak of his powers. Moreover, Mann was totally without an active insight into the creative potentials of the peculiar blessing and peculiar curse which the literary artists of the South had to face in the historical heritage of their region. Mann was also without a trained awareness of the culture of Southern rhetoric (while everyone who seriously has read several works by Faulkner and is not guided solely by the public opinion, knows that what are called Faulkner's "difficult" sentences is just one, and not the most frequent, of his narrative styles). Mann's ignorance of these matters may be emblematic of Europeans in general, so easily and indiscriminately shrugging off America or accusing it of being a cultural wasteland of childish, crassly

materialistic opportunists. That ignorance of the universally valid appeal of the cultural achievements of the American South is understandable in terms of cultural relativism, but by the standards of transnational humanism, transcending regional prejudices, it must be judged sheer obscurantism.

What, then, are the factors that gave Faulkner's tragicomic visions their transnational relevance? An answer to this question will be sought for in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER FOUR.**

### **The Social, Classical and Universal Dimensions of Faulkner's Oeuvre**

#### **The Specific and the Universal in Faulkner. His Place in the Western Tradition**

In the last chapter of his classical monograph, Hans Bungert has provided a nearly comprehensive analysis of the structural and thematic functions of the comic in Faulkner's works. With all the time lapsed since the publication of Bungert's study, his remains a definitive landmark; attempts of analysis in the same line appear to be superfluous, as the interpretative potentials of a writer even as versatilely gifted as Faulkner can be exhausted, are not limitless by high enough scholarly standards.

However, an attempt could be made, and will, in this chapter, to analyze the ways the comic and the tragicomic visions are generally synthesized in Faulkner into a studious exploration, and attentive celebration, of life. The challenge of that lies in the necessity of recognizing the inextricable ties between the most timeless and universal, and the most time-defined and locally coloured, the complex union of these in Faulkner's fiction. Truly Faulkner wrote about the comic and the tragicomic conditions on a par with the classics of antiquity; yet in no significant way deriving his vision from them, but faithful to the original creeds, myths and perceptions of his time and place of nativity.

Even if the following discussion may at times appear to be drifting too far from the topic of comic and tragicomic, the author believes that a synthesized view of Faulkner, as a tragicomic writer of his time and for all times, requires a look at the sociocultural specifics that gave shape to many of Faulkner's focal comic motifs, and to a lot of his characters' stances. Therefore both Faulkner's native context and the way he stands out of it, relief-like in the millennia of the Western civilization, will be explored. The following array of mythological, historical, sociological, psychological, sexual, and literary factors are hoped to illuminate the character of the interwoven qualities of the bizarre and the terrible, the hilarious and the sombre, that stun, frighten, and inspire the readers of Faulkner's works.

By the character of his fiction, Faulkner stands alone among his contemporary American authors. In the whole canon of American literature previous to him, E. A. Poe resembles him most by being European in the classical humanitarian sense to his deepest core, still without being overly derivative of Europe in any way, in no way compromising his American identity. By his peculiar standing between America and Europe, Faulkner might be called a "semi-European", or a "classic European". Faulkner is European in a way which Europeans, because of unnatural social clashes

which hinder one from assessing cultural heritage in its artistic autonomy, may just no longer recognize. Before returning to the writer, it will be appropriate to cast a perspective on a few specific cultural factors of Faulkner's home region, the South.

In the analysis of American history, there is an agreement, weighing the importance of the Civil War, that whereas before the war it was more natural to say "the United States are", after the war the verb was turned singular, so now for nearly a century and a half it has been said "the United States is" (Burns 1990). The change is important as an example of the greater unification of the country achieved after the Southern secession was suppressed. Before the Civil War, the whole of the United States was more similar to a confederacy, so it is not quite appropriate to say that the Southern Confederacy tried to break the union, it rather resisted the establishment of the tight union as it exists now. After the Civil War the South gradually succumbed to federalism politically, but it preserved its autonomous spirit and tendency for much longer culturally. It is a trait of social myths that they long survive the political or practical events or conditions that initially gave rise to them. The Southern myth of its peculiarity, of the different origins and code of values of its inhabitants from the rest of America, of its almost separate nationhood(s), remained strong after the Civil War and provided its maturest and most interesting fruits during the heyday of Southern literature almost sixty years after Lincoln had made America one.

A myth, though often used in the sense of something unreal, of a lie, may have a strong reality of its own. If a myth has persisted for centuries, it may continue to shape and influence the lives of the region to which it was applied for many more centuries after it was officially declared a lie. There may be people who either pretend to believe or truly believe in it. There may be people who make the myth their creed. Some may recognize the false or appalling sides of the myth but adopt the beautiful inventions it contains and by adhering to these positive sides of the myth, they may make it the truth of their lives – by letting it determine their behaviour and their cultural orientation. The myth of Southern selfhood had one of its beginnings in the legend of original Southerners being descended from different layers of the English society, mostly the more aristocratic ones, than the Northerners (Watson 2002: 3, 11–12). That legend gave support to the emergence of the Southern code of honours. The gentlemanly valour and the ladylike elegance are well-known myths about Southern high class men and women, as is the irresistible charm of Southern beaux and belles. To say that these myths have often proven false is not to negate the fact that there have been people who personally at least have tried to prove them true.

At the time of slavery, Southern pro-slavery theoreticians attempted to extract support for the existence of "the peculiar institution" (as they called slavery) from other countries and from history. They kept reminding that ancient Greece and Rome, the cradles of Western civilization, of Western culture, and of Western democracy, had the institution of slavery, as had

ancient Hebrews. Those pro-slavery theoreticians wanted to model the South after Greece and Rome, hoping to see as brilliant an upsurge of culture, of literature and fine arts, as there was in antiquity. There were dreams in the South of conquering the entire Mexico and the Caribbean region to white English-speaking Southerners (Watson 2002: 7–8), establishing a great Southern empire with the Caribbean as a new Mediterranean, and thus bringing back to humankind a new golden age of heathen antiquity. They meant that imperial South to be democratic in the ancient Greek sense, with free citizens and with slaves. From the contemporary world, the pro-slavery idealists used the example of Russia with its serfs. Condescendingly towards the czarist empire, they claimed that the Black slaves in the South were much better off and treated far more humanely than the white serfs in Russia (Bloshteyn 2004: 4). With these arguments and, of course, with the strong argument of mutual economic profit, the South hoped for understanding from Western Europe. And at the beginning of the Civil War, when the Confederacy was still viable and successful, it indeed received certain sympathy from Europe, England and France being on the brink of recognizing the South as an independent country.

The most important trait among these external props used for the myth of Southern selfhood lies in the difference of the attitudes that the North and the South maintained towards Europe. Whereas the North, or America in general, wanted to be as different from old Europe as possible by being more democratic and more virtuous in a simple straightforward manner, the Southern attitude was more complicated and twofold. The South remained closer to old Europe in spirit, but it wanted to outdo Europe in two apparently contradictory directions, to be at once more democratic and less democratic than the regimes in Western Europe. Its ambition was so high it wanted to be not only like contemporary Europe, but like the models at the beginnings of Western civilization that the educated minds of Europe for nearly two millennia had looked up to in awe. The foolhardy attempt of white Southerners to resemble the glory of antiquity had its shadow sides, plainly evil sides, but it also had something positive in it. It cannot be denied that the essence of the idealistic Southern myth has a depth to it, a depth which is perhaps more challenging than the general American myth of freedom and success. The intellectual heritage of the South has favoured deep-going studies and probing, not necessarily uncritical re-estimation of the oldest roots and origins not only of the South, not only of America, but of the whole of the Western tradition. The best Southern writers from the “Southern Renaissance” in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both male and female, white and black, have more or less consciously mastered and put to use that underlying depth of perspective originally engendered by the myth of Southern selfhood, while enriching their vision with new influences from Europe and the rest of the world. Considering the way the mature Southern literature newly realized itself through these old myths, and adding to it the influence that the French-speaking Creoles and Cajuns of the Deep South with their conservative, outmodedly European ways

and customs have exerted to English-speaking Southerners, it might be said that Southern writing represents in spirit a region which, like perhaps Britain today, is to a degree autonomous from America, lies somewhere between America and Europe, has learned from both and has something to teach them both. Faulkner and his eminent contemporaries by no means naïvely accepted the views of pro-slavery idealists nor the self-glorifying aspects of the Southern spirit, but that heritage influenced him and others as a native background and provided an autonomous compass for their creative efforts. A moderate variant of the legend of a special Southern destiny was shared by certain Black authors, such as the Alabama-born novelist Zora Neale Hurston, who in her stern realism both to the South and the North, saw the South of different races in some aspects as a better place than the North for the flourishing of the new Black culture that had evolved in America (Washington 1979: 18).

The most outstanding Southern writer before or, by artistic values, even beside William Faulkner may be the Louisianan woman author Kate Chopin (1851–1904). The example of Chopin may excellently serve as a claim against the hordes of anti-Americanists who simplistically connect everything American, including American and Southern literature, with superficiality, thin culture, boastfulness, lack of historical depth, disregard of old world values, and narrow-minded nationalism. Although Faulkner generally is regarded as the highest peak of Southern and maybe even American fiction, it should be conceded that the public image of Faulkner in his later years was indeed somewhat damaged by the role he adopted as a messenger of America at the height of the cold war, with him along with the American government acting sometimes as a father figure to other countries and nationalities, by a black-and-white anticommunist schema professing an American world mission which to other countries may not always unfairly have appeared as a display of American cultural imperialism. Kate Chopin luckily for her public image lived at a time when America had not yet fully established itself as the leading world power. She neither had the will nor even the temptation to speak out about cultural politics. Her only message are her writings, and reading her short stories, of which there are about a hundred, one may get immersed with Southern values at one of its best. Most of her characters are poor or at any rate unpretentious Cajuns or Creoles of Louisiana countryside in the vicinity of New Orleans, speaking either French or a heavily accented version of English with numerous French loanwords. There is none of the stereotypically American sloppiness, flatness or unrefined manners in these stories, none of the insensitivity to human values in general as opposed to a special American experience, so nothing of the vices of which the critics of America generally accuse the vision of American authors. Her stories put the reader in a world and surroundings similar by the universality of their appeal to the stories of the leading French short story writers of the time, or to the short stories of Chekhov, displaying all the same fineness of form, artistic honesty and thoroughness, excellence of expression as the European masters, yet

containing also something of the pioneer approach and freshness of experience of a region and culture thinly mapped in earlier literature. Her focus mostly lies on women characters, of whom she presents many, even contrasting types, but she is a woman writer who understands and does not hate men, showing them mostly as compassionately as if she were their mother who warmly cares for them. Kate Chopin's fiction has become the basis of countless psychological and feminist interpretations throughout the world, yet it can be said without doubt that the essence of her vision is a humanist development of the myth of Southern selfhood through the eyes of one well educated in European arts and values at a level that is pure and uncorrupted by temporary fashions of the reading audience and the literary scene. If Faulkner knew about the work of Chopin, he unfortunately never seems to have publicly recognized her merit, but it seems very unlikely that her achievement in depicting the Cajun world and the dominant sense in her fiction of the presence of the past in human lives did not influence him, if only through indirect channels, and help him become as outstanding a writer as he was.

Faulkner got his education primarily through home, the influence of his widely reading mother. His readings in early youth included not only American and English classics but also French and Russian authors and the Polish writer Sienkiewicz. Later under the mentoring influence of his older friend Phil Stone Faulkner learned to esteem English romantics and especially late romantic poets such as Swinburne and Housman. One of his first contacts with new trends of European culture may have been the impact of W. B. Yeats in America. French symbolism and decadence literature with authors like Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud and Apollinaire reached Faulkner in his Mississippi hometown in his late teens and early twenties and made him write a number of imitations of those poets, some of which he published in the journal of his home university and which included the poem, his first literary product ever published in a national publication, "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune". Faulkner's liking for antiquity, for classical literature was already apparent in those early symbolist attempts. His long sojourn in New Orleans with its French air enhanced his connections with the old world spirit. But the most important contact for Faulkner with Europe came when at the age of twenty-six he spent half a year in Western Europe, travelling through England, France, Switzerland, and Italy. It put him into direct touch with Europe in change, with the new liberal values and spirit of modernism emerging on the ruins of the patriarchal values of old establishments. It is likely that with his well-known bias of trying and enacting new roles, during his European journey Faulkner envisioned himself newly experiencing the situations all his literary masters of the previous half-century had encountered among people in these old world societies, attempting to sharpen his vision even more strenuously than they had for new discoveries in matters of interest to art.

As a test of the new liberalism, the choice of an attitude to homosexuality was of vital importance. Most French decadent poets Faulkner emulated in his juvenile poetry had homosexual inclinations, as had Housman and possibly, to

a moderate degree, Swinburne. Faulkner's early European-based short story "Divorce in Naples" focused on male homosexual lovers nearly splitting apart when one of them starts having women relations (Blotner 1974: 490). The homosexual or at any rate homoerotic undertones of Faulkner's rather long partnership and cohabitation with the New Orleans artist William Spratling have perhaps been underestimated. Faulkner seems to have been torn by a strong frustrated yearning for a beautiful heterosexual love and between finding intimate comfort in warm male companionship, such as his friendships with Phil Stone, Sherwood Anderson, and later his hunting companions. Faulkner himself certainly did not feel ashamed to talk about homosexuality; his early novel "Mosquitoes" (1927) contains allusions to it and in what is often considered his most outstanding masterpiece, the novel "Absalom, Absalom!", he hints at a possible, platonically homosexual attraction between two important male characters. The decadent influence of Europe, Oscar Wilde especially, may have been a strong factor in making Faulkner conscious and openly discussing the phenomenon of homosexuality. Yet he basically was an ardent, though for the most part deeply unhappy lover of women. His ideal of a tender woman lover seems to have been too high, and his own weaknesses (most of all the servitude of alcohol) too uncontrollable, ever to let him become fully happy in his love relationships. Although after marrying at the age of thirty-two, he kept throughout his life the outward image of a model Southern husband, his sexual orientation both in his life and work was deeply paradoxical and out of the ordinary. It seems fair to say that Faulkner was neither homosexual nor heterosexual in the standard sense but rather something of a pansexualist.

Faulkner's personal inclinations, encompassing opposites and therefore unfit for easy social roles, probably served as an unconsciously autobiographical influence for his artistic perception, his creation of and preference of focusing on unconventional, half-crazy, socially ill-fitting characters. Such characters appear both in his highly comical and highly tragic pieces. Patricia R. Schroeder has noted that Darl Bundren of the novel "As I Lay Dying", the clairvoyant lunatic who acts both destructively and self-destructively but has the temperament of an artist, quite closely fits the role of the scapegoat or *pharmakos* typically found in ancient Greek comedies (1986: 35, 41). With that character and with the chorus of commenting by-standers, the whole novel is a re-enactment of a Greek comedy on specific Southern settings, including the rich lore of Southern countryside, and the ancient Greek communal values and collective consciousness being substituted for with their equally powerful Southern counterparts. The positive hero of the novel could be Darl's father Anse, but what makes him positive is not his faultlessness (he has more common shortcomings and vices than Darl has) but his healthy common sense, his adaptation to the accepted rules of the society (Schroeder 1986: 38, 39). Such a positive character also appeared in ancient Greek comedies as the protagonist.

One of the most typical traits of Faulkner throughout his fiction is the opposition of normal, socially acceptable aberrations and deviations and of types and behaviour that are so outrageously non-standard that they either lead to crime or must be judged half or full lunacy. "As I Lay Dying" is a high point of Faulkner's comic sense (the other is "The Hamlet"), but in those works where darker and tragic undertones prevail Faulkner basically uses the same opposition. There are indeed no examples among his best works that could be called only tragic or only comic, but all of them represent a combination of influences from both genres of ancient Greek drama, varying only in the degree one extreme, either tragic or comic, governs the other.

Such tragic characters as Joe Christmas of "Light in August" or Thomas Sutpen of "Absalom, Absalom!" resemble Darl Bundren in being possessed by a demonic frenzy that ultimately breaks all rules and causes their dispelling from the society. As it is known, both ancient Greek tragedy and comedy had their common origin in the cult of Dionysos and the Dionysian festivities. Faulkner seems to have gone back to that state of literature before the emergence of different genres. One is also reminded of Nietzsche's distinction between the Dionysian spirit, representing wild joy, irrational thirst for life and experience, and the Apollonian spirit, representing poise, proportionality and the prevalence of reason (Nietzsche 1959: 82). Obviously all life has both these sides to it. Exaggerate with one of them and you lose control over the other and it may destroy you (the dynamics of that opposition are at work, for example, in Thomas Mann's "Death in Venice"). It is essential of Faulkner's socially ill-fitting or frenzied characters that they are never wholly irrational, mindless, but they have either a great plan like Thomas Sutpen, or some obsessive, burning, mind-piercing spiritual or even intellectual problem to tackle with and not without some sense of justice to it. The crucial problem of those characters is that within a narrow limited field of mentality they are not just rational, but overly rational, trying to solve some mystery of their existence, a mystery which the common sense would advise them to beware of. It is that excess of Apollonian reason that ultimately leads them into the floods of the Dionysian frenzy, destructive because it comes as a revenge, and causes the climax of high tragedy or high comedy but more often them both. In "Absalom, Absalom!", Thomas Sutpen's grand design is ruined by the very factor which he leaves out as the most unfitting for the rational formula of his success story – that factor being his first son rejected because of Black ancestry, it is, after all, Sutpen's failure to embrace compassionate humanity which takes its revenge upon his all too rational and "balanced" plan. The feeling of compassion, the story shows, is what must encompass and pacify both the Apollonian and the Dionysian, the realm of reason and the irrational life force. In Faulkner's novels most frequently it is the Black race that in some way or another comes and overpowers the tragic protagonists' seeming intellectual poise. It is not meant simplistically that the Blacks are wholly Dionysian by nature, but that their life force is greater than the limits of mind and the constructions of an overheated reason. A Faulknerian novel about

racial or racist issues in 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe could obviously have different emphases. Yet the opposition is far from being restricted to race, as the example of Darl Bundren proves.

Finally in his late achievement, the Snopes trilogy, consisting of the novels "The Hamlet", "The Town" and "The Mansion", Faulkner chartered an entirely new type of tragicomedy. The protagonist, vicious schemer Flem Snopes, is both evil and commonsensical. He exemplifies how through immoderation even common sense adaptability may become a harmful madness. In the first part of the trilogy he prevails as if he were the positive comic protagonist, yet it is easier to give an understanding smile to many of Faulkner's frenzied demon-driven lunatics than to this common sense man without a heart. By the end of the trilogy he has finally proven his social destructiveness and receives his punishment as the villain. The synthesis of comic and tragic motifs in the Snopes trilogy seems almost outlandishly new by both universal and Faulkner's own previous standards. These books unite influences as different as ancient classics and new realist social awareness novels.

It was Faulkner's merit that he found in the abundance of legends, in the collective conscious and memory of different races and classes, in the bitter communal wisdom of the uneducated, in the rich vernacular, in the half-anonymous hyperbolic tall tale traditions of his native Southern region a rich, previously undervalued and sparsely used source of aesthetic vision, one which was almost lost in Europe but was similar to the conditions of primeval European communities before literature fully emerged from folklore; and that he, like Kate Chopin before him, combined these materials with the honesty, precision and excellence of literary expression he had learned from the European masters. That together with his innovations in the exploration and development of the potentials lying expectant in the deep roots of the oldest Western literary heritage, are two of the main reasons Faulkner should not be studied in the Southern or American context only, but could be called a semi-European, in some ways outdoing the Europeanness of his contemporary European writers, though perhaps not in the post-classical sense. Now as Faulkner has been firmly established as an American classic and there is a natural exhaustion of critical approaches to him in America, and now as the traditional identity of the South is no longer particularly strong, it might be quite justified to try to renew our vision with a greater focus on those sides of him which could be deemed partly or even prevalently European. Or perhaps more precisely he could be seen as a representative or a virtual region between America and Europe, receptive to and displaying some of the positive qualities of them both.

## **Sociocultural Projections of the Sense of the Tragicomic. The Inherent Premises of Conveying the Tragicomic in Faulkner's Fiction**

The comic and the tragic arise from the perception of the sanctity of time, causing a feeling of weirdness and fear, a perception produced by the memory of ancestors who have inherited the qualities of deities and whom one tries to serve either in deeds or in words. This explanation of the two terms goes back directly to the origins of comedy and tragedy in ancient Greece, in the Dionysian festivities.

It is appropriate to study any single work of ancient Mediterranean literature on the background of those general Messianist myths which ancient Greeks and Romans believed in and venerated (and occasionally, ridiculed) as much as ancient Hebrews believed in (or joked about) the laws of Moses and as much as Christians believe (devoutly or tepidly) in their teleological, eschatological conception of the world. The reason antiquity for most creative souls in the modern era continually signifies a limitless and profoundly enjoyable creative freedom (Highet 1976: 541, 544), in which sensuality and the celebration of physical human existence are not hindrances to, but two of the prerequisites of spiritual fulfilment, may lie in the ancient myths allowing a nearly limitless number of variations of the Messianist interpretation of time and epochs, unlike Christianity, which suppresses all individual human efforts under a single highly abstracted idea of a Messiah bringing salvation.

All societies have had their messiahs. Greek deities and heroes are deified human messiahs. The “ghosts” of the fictional world of Faulkner, that haunt the thoughts and deeds of his characters, are the ancestors, the former generations of the Southern society, turned into supernatural heroes or into demons and having divine powers over their descendants. The parallel with the cult of ancestors in the Japanese religion Shintoism can be detected both in the tradition of the American South and in antiquity – all of them exemplifying the idea that the victories and the sufferings of ancestors may serve as an edifying model for future generations. However, seeing the outgrowth of the Southern lore and legends, Faulkner's fictional world, or parts of it, as a pantheon of demigods, immortalized through the writing (instances of such approaches being discussed below) – taking allusions as cues for literal equations – entails its dangers of reductionism, and this is why most researches have preferred a sociological, rather than mythological, approach to Faulkner's fictionalized South.

In a class conference at the University of Virginia, Faulkner said that he preferred the Old Testament to the New Testament: “The Old Testament is full of people, perfectly ordinary normal heroes and blackguards just like everybody else nowadays /---/. It's people all trying to get something for nothing or... to be braver than they are – just ordinary everyday folks, people /---/”

(Gwynn 1965: 167–168). In this statement as well as in Faulkner's works, it is evident that he was much more inspired by the vision of Messianist qualities (in the earthy, non-fanatical interpretation) in simple humanity, free to choose between the righteous and the wrong, as expressed in the Mosaic Old Testament world ("unredeemed" from the Christian standpoint) rather than a vision with despotic inclinations, caused by the embryonic despotism inherent in all people, including religious schools and congregations, of all humanity subjected to a single supernatural Messiah.

Faulkner had a respect for the literary tradition of antiquity which he expressed in interviews, in his own comments on his works (especially when commenting on his novel "Light in August" (1932), he stressed his wish to attain the air of antiquity (Gwynn 1965: 199)), and which is evident in several of his major books. The similarity of his tragi(comic) masterpieces to ancient Greek tragedies was discovered almost immediately on the publication (Pitavy 1973: 154–158, Blotner 1991: 349); Louis Rubin noted the element of the old Greek concept of *hubris* (1966: 54); the affinity of these works in the structure, choice of characters, use of the chorus, and spiritual atmosphere with ancient comedy has been pointed out afterwards (Yamaguchi 2004: 10). Faulkner also originally and ingeniously used biblical myths (Hlavsa 1986: 47–50, 53; Gwynn 1965: 17, 21, 85–86); but perhaps inevitably, the Bible as the source of the contemporary conventional religion, a source whose literary values always have been subjected to its religious message, remained insufficient for the writer who had set out to create a private "religion" not only of ethics but of beauty.

It is worthwhile studying in which ways Faulkner in his contemporary world attempted to find a maximum impact of the tragic and the comic as they appeared in people's lives in that particular period of history.

Deep tragicism does not arise from what is brutal, uncaring, superficial, banal. Deep tragicism arises when human consciousness exerting all its powers to the last one discovers the limit of its potentials, of its opportunities and of the efficacy of its good will.

Faulkner is in some respects one of the most feminine male writers in world literature. With the same care and attention, tender and selective decisiveness that a woman governs the things and conditions and the relations between the living and the lifeless in her domestic world, he, according to his artistic vision, governs, orders and arranges things and phenomena in the fictive micro-society that he has chosen to be the topic of his studies and observance.

The wild frenzies, the excesses of Faulkner's male characters are like anecdotes, untruth, like tall tales, a lie presented in an enjoyable creative form; a fiction within his fiction. Faulkner's mastery of the highly respected Southern tradition of ingenious lies has been studied by Thomas L. McHaney (1986: 111–112) and, as noted before, the German scholar Hans Bungert has dedicated a whole book to the influences of the tall tale and Mark Twain on Faulkner's jokes. The truth of Faulkner's works is the tragic which is revealed

in the preserving eye of womanly care, in the pansexual artistic source observing and recording the wild excesses; it is the tragic in which the bridled passions and the aesthetic rationalism reach the awareness of their limitations.

A universal source of both the farcical, the tragic, and the comic is the human desire to possess. Faulkner's works nearly always dramatize the growth of possessive inclinations into some form of an obsession. John Rabbetts writes:

One obvious tragic flaw is the alarmingly obsessive nature of many of Faulkner's characters, resulting in a dangerous lack of equilibrium. If one bears in mind Faulkner's "verities of the human heart", which include courage, honour, pride, love, pity, compassion and sacrifice, one sees that the tragedy in his stories often occurs when a powerful or talented character possesses *most* of these qualities, but with some disastrous atrophy or exaggeration of one or two elements. Thus Thomas Sutpen and John Sartoris unwittingly frustrate their great designs through a lack of compassion; Quentin's sensitivity and idealism is doomed by insufficient courage and endurance; Hightower's talents are wasted by his over-developed pride and under-developed concern for the feelings of others. In each case, the lack of one essential quality interacts with the hypertrophy of a dangerous personal obsession. (Rabbetts 1989: 101)

Widely typical of Faulkner's characters is "a hyperbolic self-indulgence" (Rabbetts 1989:105), leading to bewildering discordances in interaction. Treatment of grotesque events involving the free rein of possessive instincts can be found, for example, in the widow Hait episode in the novel "The Town". Such self-indulgence has usually infected men but the case of Mrs. Hait shows (Faulkner 1999: 203–229) that women are not always excluded. However, what is comic in Faulkner's works is the opposition of the manlike wildness or bewildering way of the characters and the action, and of the lenient, restrained, ultrasensitive and extremely delicate, feminine – maidenly artistic consciousness mediating that wildness.

What is tragicomic in Faulkner's works is that within that delicate, maidenly, observant consciousness willing to hold everything in restraint, in balance, in a complete union of the beautiful and of the just, and to look upon the excesses and the cruelty, as it were, from the corner of the eye, there nevertheless is engendered and becomes evident a possessive inclination, growing like a snowball and possibly turning into an avalanche, potentially leading to splits, torturous dissonances and pain.

Faulkner's characters are all the projections of his ego in the sense of being obsessed with making some kind of art in and of their lives, with constructing something – constructing their happiness, constructing their identity, constructing their importance, their image or attractiveness, constructing meaningful social relations – in Thomas Sutpens's case (of the novel "Absalom, Absalom!"), constructing a dynasty. And maybe inevitably all these attempts at construction bear the comic and tragicomic tonalities and

undertones of what it meant for a white male Southerner like Faulkner to try to perform something.

More or less all Faulkner's male characters evade easy classification as chauvinistic men-wolves, being far too deeply entangled in the feminine, preservative side of humanity; yet they all strongly believe in some ideas of "what it is proper for a man"; in the various ways of behaviour and self-accomplishment as encoded in the Southern, American, and Western traditions (in that order of prevalence); these masculine ways apparently are infinitely varied and multitudinous in practice, yet the nature of them all is defined and restricted by the particular sociocultural surroundings. Having exhausted their impetus, several of Faulkner's male characters fall into a sickly inactivity, lethargy, nihilism – they have achieved a meaning to their lives at the cost of losing faith in life itself. Lessons learned at a superhuman price are a favourite topic of many Southern writers but the conflicts seldom bring as intolerable collisions as in Faulkner.

In Ellen Glasgow's "The Sheltered Life" (1932), which is often considered her finest masterpiece, the writer builds her tragic (bitter-sweetly tragicomic) story on young Jenny Blair Archbald's sexual affection for a much older married man. Having responded to her feelings, the man finally shoots himself, or, more likely, his wife (the girl's friend) shoots him – the solution is left ambiguous. The tragedy has a by far narrower scope than Faulkner's tragedy in "Absalom, Absalom!" – it is as if a single motif of the latter novel, young Rosa Coldfield's enchantment with her elder sister's husband Thomas Sutpen had been solely chosen and focused on, with a whole novel built on it. It is a matter of natural respect for the woman writer's preferences to admit that her version of tragedy may be seen as having more correspondence to everyday life, if less intellectual tension, than Faulkner's novel does. What Glasgow's novel definitely lacks is showing the tragedy within the man.

In Faulkner's novel "Light in August", Reverend Gail Hightower is forced to leave his congregation and is left jobless because of his disastrous, ultimately tragic family life which in turn is likely to be caused by his utterly eccentric introspection, daydreaming and a divided mind close to a schizophrenic's.

In Glasgow's novel "Vein of Iron" (1935), the female protagonist Ada's father, John Fincastle, is a former Presbyterian minister who has been defrocked and is ruined "after he had told the Presbytery he rejected the God of Abraham but accepted the God of Spinoza" (Glasgow 1995: 38).

Both the stories with similar developments and aspects have tragic undertones, yet Glasgow's minister suffers no such universal ruin, no such collapse of identity and self-respect as Faulkner's minister does. There is a notable difference in the presumptions of the intellectual approaches of the two writers to their characters; while Glasgow's characters suffer great losses and sometimes humiliation, Faulkner's male characters become grovelling nobodies, nothings – though presented through a prism of poetic richness.

Yet, with all the extremism of Faulkner's male characters' behaviour and with all the extremism of the author's methods of revealing important issues, at the invisible core Faulkner and his characters stay firmly rooted, enwombed in the stabilizing feminine traditions of the South, in the unwritten code of the covertly matriarchal Southern world stating that inactivity possibly leading to decay is better than recklessness, as progress-promising as the latter might seem. While still having their powers, Faulkner's characters are by no means inactive; yet their actions nearly always are directed *away* from what the strangers (Yankees) consider deeds leading to progress.

Among Faulkner's favourite narrative voices or standpoints is that of a young boy, of the age when boys are still children but girls are becoming sexual creatures. By making the innocent young male face the irrational, the deceptively enticing and the cunning duplicity radiating from the femininity around him – as well as perceive the still-remaining traces of childlike femininity within him – Faulkner created a conflict within the least tainted and the most corruptible in human psyche – the possessive inclination which is inescapable, which produces life and whose ominous nature is to grow out of control.

During the period of Faulkner's active creative ripening the theories of Freud had just been acknowledged and were having their heyday. Either consciously or through indirect social influences Faulkner received those new ideas, but his reception of them (as of most other signs of "progress") was also a kind of questioning.

Faulkner's novels tacitly refute the prevailing misinterpretation of sexuality; sexuality is not centred on male desire for pleasure or procreation, it is essentially not an aggressive or imposing drive for intercourse, but the essence of sexuality is in the woman's biological expectations, and, above all, in the woman's need for maternity – which is not to be understood only in the regenerative and physical sense, but as the potential of exercising womanly and motherly care for various things, virtually everything and possibly everybody, not just children nor just men, and with the accompanying strong sense of conservation.

Faulkner's male characters are ridiculous – and also awe-inspiring – most of all by the inner conflict between their nearly destructive egoistic need for individual male self-accomplishment and their sense of duty which tells them to direct that self-accomplishment into the service of the life-preserving, maternally sexual, central code of values of their regional community.

The fatalism and the pessimistic biological determinism that appeared in fiction in the late 19th century – in the Anglophone world, most notably in Thomas Hardy's novels (his last novel "Jude the Obscure" (1895) being an extreme example of that determinism and fatalism) – led to the rebellion exemplified in Freudianism, an attempt to find new creative resources, a creative outlet not by ignoring that biological determinism but through it; by achieving a new outlook in its reinterpretation.

In Faulkner's works, a source of creative tension is the conflict between world-denial, denial of sensuality – the life of senses being seen as leading to corruption, to burning-out, possibly ethical betrayal (while faithfully serving aesthetic ideals, “beauty”) – and between the worship of discoveries of the sensual world as embodied in the ancient, classical Mediterranean heritage.

Hardy's characters, Jude and his intellectual woman companion, Sue Bridehead, choose the earthly glory of ancient Greece and of Rome as their divinity, rather than the stern asceticism associated with Jerusalem (Hardy 1994: 127), even though they know that their choice probably means a worse suffering, greater pains and more hardships. What troubles Jude the Obscure entrapped in biological determinism, is the question: is life without aesthetic expression, without aesthetic aspirations ethical? On the other hand, is it ethical to sacrifice biological life, mission, to aestheticism? Choosing intellectual sensualism (which for him means aestheticism) in preference to an ordinary biological fulfilment (God-obedience) Jude and Hardy's other characters believe that they make an aesthetic choice but they only find suffering and frustration in that too. Both options seem to be an impasse, as both appear to be leading to nihilism, utter relativism and anguish. The female character Sue finally ends as “self-destructively wedded to Christian orthodoxy” (Gittings 2001: 468) which for Jude means “a betrayal almost to the point of obscenity” (Gittings 2001: 469). John Rabbetts writes:

It is to be an ironic refinement of the lovers' tragedy that while Jude gradually frees himself from all forms of blinkering dogma, partly under Sue's influences, she eventually succumbs to an especially bigoted dependence upon the social, religious and even sexual conformism which she had once derided. (Rabbetts 1989: 96)

The attempt of Faulkner's characters to repeat antiquity is more successful. It is similar to an aging person's success in finding and acting out on youth's impulses again, effacing from her or his memory all the scruples acquired through habits and repetitive experience. In the chapter of his monograph “Faulkner's Artistic Vision. The Bizarre and the Terrible” dedicated to “Light in August”, Ryuichi Yamaguchi analyzes all the central characters of that novel as a pantheon of gods and demigods fulfilling their divergent roles in a Saturnalia of mixed religious traditions, many of which resemble the rituals described by James Frazer in “The Golden Bough”, and with the ancient Greek and Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions synthesized into a new whole (Yamaguchi 2004: 166–188). A related but less successful attempt, tending to suffer from reductionism, to find exact counterparts to ancient myths in Faulkner's characters, was undertaken earlier by Walter Brylowski in his “Faulkner's Olympian Laugh: Myth in the Novels” (Detroit, 1968). In fact, throughout “Light in August”, rather than following mythical models, Faulkner has created new self-sufficient models; which may be the reason the message of the book, with all its penetration of the gloomiest abysses, is life-affirmative.

Faulkner's fiction may be characterized as an attempt to find a sense of divinity of both sensualism *and* ethics.

**Faulkner's particular contribution lies in the unification of distinct comic and tragic, anecdotal and romantic traditions.** Though probably the most remarkable, he is not the only Southern writer who has attempted that unification; Flannery O'Connor has characterized the Southern writing as "/Hawthorne's/ tradition of the dark and divisive romance-novel /---/ combined with the comic-grotesque tradition" (O'Connor 1969: 46) (the latter having first appeared in the tall tale writers and Mark Twain).

But the most original trait of Faulkner's tragicomic humour may well be his dramatization of the crises of racial identity, with him as the landmark between the America that still mainly identified itself as white, Anglo-Saxon, and deriving its culture from Western Europe, and the America of the multitude of races and ethnic traditions that was in the process of formation during Faulkner's life and became dominant in the late 20th century.

In the 1920s when Faulkner's first works appeared, the eminent writer of the Harlem Renaissance (a phenomenon parallel to, though more easily definable than the Southern Renaissance), Jean Toomer, mostly known for his hybrid book of prose, poetry and drama, "Cane" (1923) began developing ideas of a new emerging "American race" that was to replace the former divisions by the anthropological body types (Turner 1988: 122). Toomer, being himself partly of Black origins and therefore usually classed as an Afro-American writer (though he had had more white ancestors and also some Native American and Jewish background) (Turner 1988: 122, 125), in the spirit of an American Messianism viewed himself as one of the first representatives of the new racial identity (Turner 1988: 136). As it is with most innovative, courageous idealist projections, Toomer's mental construction may be seen as serving the noble ideals of humanity and equality, yet it can also entail new hypocrisies, another myth of racial supremacy – this time, centred on being of American descent. Interpreted neutrally, Toomer's vision represents an elitism – which may have been uplifting for the writer's self-image as well as for other racially mixed Americans but which for a socially sensitive author merely means an evasion of the real identity crises evident in his or her society. With no such alleviating vision as Toomer's, Faulkner, in a more realistic kind of universalism, grasped and synthesized the most backward, anti-modern racial prejudices, complexes and dilemmas, building up an almost unendurably tense, tragic conflict of changing identities. Paradoxically, what these old racial predicaments meet with in his fiction is not the new liberating common American race but the emerging signs of a world so full of factional identities that there seems to remain no possibility for a soundly universal human identity, nor even for the former racial biases which may have been tainted with injustice but still provided some stability.

Thus, an especially tragic – but quite often, also comic – effect in Faulkner's works is produced by the juxtaposition of the literally black-and-white racial identity scheme of the old Southern tradition and the new "salad

bowl” sense of identity, confusing and unnerving for members of the society from which Faulkner stemmed.

The points by which, in that new world, Faulkner and his characters try to build and support their identity, the meaning of their existence in the flow of history, their role and mission on the background of “the past /that is/ not even past” (Faulkner 1994: 535), the points by which they try to coordinate their actions, are extremely scattered and randomly attainable. That scarcity and vagueness of links to a meaningful logic of history gives an utmost powerful charge to the mental landscape as well as to the stylistic structure of Faulkner’s fiction, while, through a counter-pointing influence, also splintering his narrative, leaving his myths as a whole strangely unconcentrated, as it were, out of the focus or in the sidetrack of a universal historical narrative of humanity. In a way, Faulkner’s oeuvre represents a meaningful blank in the world’s literary canon, just like the historical South is centred around a void which its failure to establish itself as a separate entity created in its sense of history. In a way which binds the tangible and the most abstract, that feeling of cognitive emptiness is connected with the racial heritage of the region. Thadious Davis claims in her essay “The Signifying Abstraction: Reading “the Negro” in *Absalom, Absalom!*” that a Black in the South traditionally signifies a blank in the society and in cognition, a blank created through purposeful avoidance and circumvention (2003: 69, 70, 77, 101). In ““The Direction of the Howling”: Nationalism and the Color Line in *Absalom, Absalom!*”, Barbara Ladd argues that a Black as a void in the South is not so much a racial as a social phenomenon on a high level of abstracted interaction. The appearance, visualization of the Black factor in America, especially in the ultraracist conditions of the Deep South, undermines the attempts of Americans to cherish their self-image as a nation outside and above history, or as living in their own superior history (2003: 231). As an intrusion by natural history into the guarded American citadel, the abstracted Blacks seem to open an abyss in what the white Americans expect from the logic of cultural evolution.

With the Deep South “as site of the struggle between an ahistorical American transcendence of history and American history itself” (Ladd 2003: 231), in which even the racially biased white Southerners have acquired some of the confounding attributes of being a Black (as a fusion of identities into the abstracted dark blank), of being “white niggers”, the identities of Faulkner’s characters keep vacillating on the border of what is definable and of what is outside the reach of any existing myth or archetype.

A comparison with Thomas Mann shows both the similarities and divergences. Mann in his great tetralogy “Joseph and His Brothers” reinterprets the biblical tradition about the first four generations of Hebrew patriarchs. The German scholar Käthe Hamburger has written an analytical monograph about the comic key in that retelling of a sacrosanct tradition.

Mann’s work is filled with searching creative tension, with painful problems and crises of identity much like Faulkner’s works; it is also often

loaded with earthy humour even – and especially – when dealing with topics of religious intellectualism and of the sense of sacred dilemmas – that also is similar to Faulkner. But however critically and humorously, or ironically, Mann may observe and analyze the actions of a group of flesh-and-blood people claiming to be and performing their mission as the first founders and agents of the sole true faith, servants of the indivisible absolute who at times appear suspiciously close to idolatry, the groundwork of identity remains unshakable in Mann's fictional territory: racial, ethnic, religious links and traditions form an indubitable whole of clearly detectable, though sometimes – temporarily – befogged outlines (Hamburger 1965: 174–194).

Faulkner's characters and the narrative standpoint have no such compact foundation. Faulkner's Black characters may try to identify themselves with the God-chosen people sold to slavery and left in mind-corrupting misery, but they know – with what realism they possess – that the idea remains just a comparison, that they really, in the social reality that determines their fate, are not someone as clearly chosen.

Neither do his Southern whites have much inner conviction in, heart-felt clarity about their having been made to suffer for a grand historical mission as being decreed by Christ to be the new chosen people. In her essay "The Grotesque in Southern Fiction", Flannery O'Connor wrote: "/---/ while the South is hardly Christ-centred, it is most certainly Christ-haunted. The Southerner, who isn't convinced of it, is very much afraid that he may have been formed in the image and likeness of God" (1969: 44–45). The "theological conception of man", which O'Connor found central to the South (1969: 44) is grounded not on what theological certainty and perfection the people possess but what they are lacking, on how grotesque, spiritually deprived they are, on how much dependent merely on the facts of their erratic physical existence. The only way to attempt a contact with absolute values is to search for order and beauty in the imperfect, in the animalistic world of the senses.

It is then not so much in their social functions but in sensuality – that is, in the receptiveness to sensual impacts, in the aestheticized vision of life as a process and product of art – that Faulkner's characters attempt to find their salvation, or, dissolving contact with the absolute.

A tragicomic contradiction is that Faulkner's characters remain tightly entrapped in history – though in an apocryphal version of it, apocryphal because realized in the emotional vortex of an individual psyche. There is no such ready, almost foolproof myth for Faulkner's disoriented *personae* as Joyce and Mann, along with many other notable modernists, suited into their works as a salvation for, or a meaningful explanation of their characters.

Faulkner's focus forces his characters to be more real-time people, entrapped in their particularities with no all-embracing mythical symbol to guide them into eternity; yet, exactly because their entrapment in apocryphal history is more real, tangible, and severe, less transformed artistically, their

freedom of choice and their responsibility for search are also more real, tangible, and weightier.

The novel "The Wild Palms" (1939), both its alternating stories, may be seen as an ironic interpretation or indeed as a trenchant parody of the Anna Karenina plot whose other two most celebrated representatives are Gustave Flaubert's "Madame Bovary" and Kate Chopin's "The Awakening". While all these works attempt to show, often with irony but always with compassion, a liberation, emancipation of a woman from the tedious and repressive chains of marriage, Faulkner demonstrates with biting clarity and with no pretended pity that either because of social reality or because of sexual, biological necessity a woman changing her role from a housewife into an illicit lover falls into a worse slavery.

### **Parallels with Johann Wolfgang Goethe's Novel "Elective Affinities"**

Faulkner's novel "The Wild Palms", with the alternative title "If I Forget Thee, O Jerusalem" (first published in 1939), bears a resemblance to Goethe's novel "Elective Affinities" (the original title "Die Wahlverwandschaften", first published in 1809). Both deal with unhappiness in marriage leading to an unhappiness in adultery; both books are cruel, chilling, in some ways repellent in their subject matter, in their approaches and solutions. In both what is timeless in the human soul as well as what had changed during the one hundred and thirty years separating their creation, is well brought out.

Goethe's characters are rich aristocrats, safe in their mansion in which as in a haven they seemingly could enjoy forever the preservation of idyllic family values; Faulkner's characters are in a vain search of such a haven, acting on a harshly capitalistic scene of melting-pot America, a world of cold steel. Faulkner's book suggests an even greater restlessness than Goethe's, but the storms of chemical reactions inside human beings, which toss the characters helplessly in the grasp of destiny, are the same. The vanity of all human volition, the impossibility of people's powers to impose happiness as an autonomous, higher moral principle on their lives, appears to be the hopeless message of both books.

Inserted into Chapter Ten of Book Two of Goethe's novel is a seven-page *Novelle* (German for short story) entitled "Strange Neighbours", narrated by a secondary character among the book's *personae*. It is about two children of well-to-do neighbouring families, a boy and a girl whom their parents view as likely growing up to be happy spouses, but who develop a strange antipathy to each other. The change comes when they are youths. The girl has been engaged to another man, but meeting her childhood companion again she feels irresistible attraction to him. As all the three along with their parents are holding a party aboard a ship going downstream a river, the girl, in despair at

her former enemy's indifference, jumps overboard, the young man plunging after her. The end is a joyous one, as the youth saves the girl from the river and on the shore, in each other's embraces, they vow to become man and wife. With its happy, life-affirming solution, the *Novelle* stands in contrast to the rest of the novel and is in fact what "saves" it from an entire impression of doom and inhuman predestination.

Faulkner's novel consists of two weakly linked stories, alternating chapter by chapter, "Wild Palms" and "Old Man". The author has admitted that he wrote the second component story as a counterpoise to the first and main one. Thus, similarly to Goethe's *Novelle*, "Old Man" may be viewed as a conscious counterpoint to the theme of the main narrative. It also tells about a man (the tall convict) saving a woman from the river and being carried downstream with her, at the mercy of waters. Because the common device of counterpoints and with the river and rescue motif in them (and possibly also because the adulterous character, Charlotte Rittenmeyer of the first component story bears the same first name as the wife of the adulterous husband in "Elective Affinities"), it is possible Faulkner in that novel has directly absorbed Goethe's influences.

The convict of "Old Man", pathetic and heroic at the same time, saves and liberates a woman not for sex or romantic love but because he truly wants to help her; during the process, the anecdotal rather than the romantic prevails, yet the man's behaviour is really manly, fit for a man. Hans Bungert writes: "In a certain sense, as in "Huckleberry Finn", the Mississippi River is a hero of the story "Old Man" (Bungert 1971: 195). With the convict taking the pregnant woman down the Mississippi, the story is an original and witty counterpart to Mark Twain's narrative about the tramp boy – the saving of a Black man from racism and slavery being replaced with the saving – and salvation, through an immersion in true manhood, manliness – of a woman in the process of regeneration. The possessive inclination which possibly has led the woman to follow her sexual instinct (not necessarily with a worthy man) is redeemed by a sardonic convict who has never managed to find a faithful sweetheart but who safely delivers his accidental female companion and her child from the rage of the flooded river. Faulkner's "misogyny", a frequent allegation by feminist critics (especially in the 1960s and 1970s), in this story reaches an extreme in which it can rather be termed charity: he shows a man who by his stoicism and reliability fully justifies the fact that he was born to be a man. In fact, Bungert sees in the convict fighting and killing an alligator, to the admiration of Cajuns, with a plain knife, a comic, hyperbolic elevation of his character into an equivalent of the mythic dragon-killers (Bungert 1971: 151).

Goethe characterized the ending of his "Elective Affinities" (in which both the girl Otilie who caused the husband adulterously to fall in love with her, and the husband die) with the phrase: "Morality celebrates its victory" (Goethe 1994: xix).

The same can be said of the solutions of "The Wild Palms". The celebration by morality of a victory, a bitter victory, one which is half shadowed

by the incomprehensible forces outside all human control, is also perceivable in Faulkner's works as a whole. Morality emerges like a wall in a typhoon in darkness, only defined by the swirls it forms in the free rein of the elements.

Because Faulkner so expansively deals with matters that lie beyond rationality and calculation, matters which morality cannot be made to concern, he is not, strictly speaking, a moralist, a likely reason for a lot of people's dread of him. Nevertheless, the ineradicable, though not blatant presence of morality in his oeuvre grants it the quality that can be called comedic in the sense defined above.

Like Goethe's novel, "The Wild Palms" succeeds in synthesizing the irrational, the inhuman with the rational and humanely moral, the juxtaposition of the opposites being as soundly composed as the unification of stasis and dynamics in Faulkner's smaller textual units elsewhere.

### **The Central Types of Faulkner's Tragicomic Focus**

Taken as a whole, the tragicomic sense in Faulkner's works is conveyed and governed by a principle of contrast: alternating scenery, contrastive situations, juxtaposition of the hilarious and the grave – a method found in the plays of Shakespeare (both his tragedies, comedies, and histories), and in the music of Beethoven – a contrast less evident, though also present, in the works of the writers of antiquity.

By uniting the most typical aspects of Faulkner's tragicomic focus: the discovery around and within himself of the possessive inclination by a hypersensitive, uncorrupted, maidenly youth; the nearly unrestrained life through senses, sensualism, instead of clearly defined roles in the social life as the way to give meaning to one's existence; the confusion in an expanding world of ever more divergent and ungraspable identities; and the entrapment in the biological and social existence of the particular time in history which is both shackles and a way to realize one's freedom by accepting one's responsibilities; the central type of Faulkner's tragicomic characters will be reached. Quentin Compson of "The Sound and the Fury", Henry Sutpen of "Absalom, Absalom!", young Bayard Sartoris of "The Unvanquished" (1938) and Charles Mallison of "Intruder in the Dust" (1948), "The Town", and "The Mansion" all form variations of that type. Yet the purest examples of that type (in the sense of being protagonists rather than interpreters) may be Vardaman of "As I Lay Dying", Isaac McCaslin of "Go Down, Moses", and Lucius Priest of "The Reivers" (1962).

All the three boys attempt a dialogue with the world whose cruelties or vagaries they recognize but cannot quite understand. To Vardaman, the world presents itself as being centred on death, the great transformer (in one of his numerous eccentric fantasies, Vardaman believes his mother after dying has become a fish (Faulkner 2004: 90)). To Isaac, the world is a prey: like the

giant bear of primeval forests in Mississippi, it is enticing with an exciting life, but better to be left untouched because of the disappointments that follow the conquest; using the image of the girl from Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" as the model (Faulkner 1994: 220), Isaac projects his pessimistic withdrawal also into sexuality, into racial questions and into the visions of future. Of the three boys, Isaac comes the closest to an comprehensive awareness of the conversation that the society of his time is willing to have with him; but because he rejects the perspective and resigns, in his story the tragic sense prevails over the comic one.

Contemplating Faulkner's last work, the novel "The Reivers", it need not be an exaggeration to see in the car of Grandfather's which the grandson Lucius Priest along with Boon Hogganbeck steal (to go for an adventure), a symbol of the human civilization since the invention of the wheel – a rolling vehicle by which human action with all its good and evil potentials attains the freedom and the magnitude to perform history. Humorously or ironically, as a paradox expectable in and characteristic of Faulkner, what the car-theft brings to the reivers are events of an emphatically anti-modern, anti-technological, or even archaic and timeless quality – an adventure in a brothel with the adult Hogganbeck and his sweetheart, a former prostitute, learning to respect love higher than sex, and with the pre-adolescent Lucius learning to know the evil in human beings that lies not at all within sex but within the moral corruption potentially linked to love-making; and a horse race with the most wretched animal becoming the winner. The fact that it was the car, a token of modernity, of the age of steel and cold mechanization, that enabled the characters to gain those kinds of experience serves as a symbolic ransom both by these fictional personalities and by Faulkner (who very probably identified himself with the young boy as well as with the grandfather) to the emerging modernism (the events of the book are set in the early 1900s), alien – though also enthralling –, to re-deliver the vision of the "old verities and truths of the heart" (Faulkner's expression from his Nobel Prize acceptance speech (Faulkner 1950)) which are so often marginalized in modern literary trends that their rare appearance evokes an association with the pre-Christian world of values of the Old Testament and antiquity.

A lot of discussion in this chapter has essentially been about the changing boundaries of the comic and the non-comic – about the shifting ways how, what in Bungert's terms may be called the comedy of deception or of limited perception, achieves its comic effect by veiling and revealing, by hints, the non-comic social or psychic reality behind it. But if the comic actually equals the joy of living, as Joyce claimed, how can it persist, giving enjoyment, if it only functions as a veil before the non-comic, to be gradually removed? How can it be that the comic, in the sense of the life-affirmative, nevertheless prevails? To arrive at what gives Faulkner's fiction its dominant, victorious comic flavour, a further examination of the textual fabric of Faulkner's narratives is necessary. The attempt at that will be undertaken in the following, last chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE. Faulkner's Comedy

### Rigid Characters Caught in a Flux

Faulkner's ninth novel "Absalom, Absalom!" resembles a fugue with parallel developments of submerging and recurring themes.

She had seen him before but she did not recognise him – a gaunt gangling man malaria-ridden with pale eyes and a face that might have been any age between twenty-five and sixty, sitting on the saddleless mule in the street before the gate, shouting "Hello. Hello" at intervals until she came to the door; whereupon he lowered his voice somewhat, though not much. "Air you Rosie Coldfield?" he said. (Faulkner 1987: 107)

/---/

– and then Wash Jones sitting that saddleless mule before Miss Rosa's gate, shouting her name into the sunny and peaceful quiet of the street, saying, "Air you Rosie Coldfield? Then you better come on out yon. Henry done shot that durn French feller. Kilt him dead as a beef." (Faulkner 1987: 165)

Wash Jones's message to Rosa Coldfield, a high point in the novel, first sounds at the end of Chapter Three, but is left unfinished there; forming an ominous suspense, its essence is delayed until the end of the long Chapter Four of stylistically refined speculations by Mr. Compson. With the ungrammatical country ruffian (one of the "white trash") using the diminutive "Rosie" to address the ladylike Miss Coldfield, and with him comparing the polished Charles Bon, killed now, to "kilt beef", the episode displays the kind of superb and implacable tragicomic humour that inspires the reader also elsewhere at the most impressive pages of Faulkner and that appears related to the revealing jokes of fools or simple blokes in the darkest scenes of Shakespeare's tragedies; related to this also is the light-hearted tone in which the news of King Laius's death was announced to Oedipus in Sophocles's classical drama (Lill 2008: 84). This episode is followed by nearly fifty pages of Chapter Five of speculative and at times arcanelly poetic periods by the woman pretentious in her loneliness, finally cut short by another, equally abrupt coda, in a dream-like way turning the soliloquy into a dialogue, as Miss Coldfield hints to Quentin that there are still secrets lurking in Colonel Sutpen's deserted mansion.

The crudeness of Jones's comically conveyed tragic message stands in tragicomic contrast with the suave melodramatic romanticism of the family conflict in the planter dynasty, that it conveys and interprets. The wooden speech of the ruffian, while a source of relaxation after the dozens of pages of Latinisms which depict a pretentious household about to perish in the vortex of its own inhumanly elaborate, stifling codes and mannerisms, is but another,

less intricate expression of the curse of the rigidity in life that has infected all the characters (except perhaps the detached narrator Shreve) in that novel.

Proceeding from this observation, a general tendency in Faulkner may be detected. Inasmuch as the writer has put his own lyrical self into his writing, his style flows free and powerful like a river; but as a creator of characters he erects mighty hindrances, like dams in a river, against that free flow, the Faulkner *personae* being literally slaves to the manifold social codings that mark them with a fatal rigidity. Naturally enough, Faulkner himself evaded oppressive, as well as some of the rewarding, social conventions to a degree only tolerated in Bohemians and poets. As his portrayals of idiots and social outcasts testify, he occasionally retreated into another, parallel level of existence aberrant from the norms of humanity as a cultural phenomenon – that of human beings as animate, or even as mineral objects. Faulkner seems to share with the Irish poet and playwright Yeats in the belief in what the latter as a young man called the Celtic imagination – a reliance on the non-human, “low” forms of life, the pantheistic, or panentheistic, sensation of life and meaning everywhere in the flux of natural phenomena. Like Yeats, Faulkner was of Celtic ancestry (he has admitted that some of his elder relatives still spoke Scottish Gaelic in his youth), and with his early literary opinions favouring the literature of Ireland – the strength of the English spoken in some of whose parts, he wrote in an early essay, was the only counterpart to the literary potentials inherent in American English (cited in: Bungert 1971: 132)), Faulkner seems to have inherited from Yeats something even more than the substantial interest in symbolist poetry and in one’s native folklore. And contrasted with the vividness of imagery, the lyrical breezes in the majority if not all of Faulkner’s prose works, with the airy semi-autobiographical stylistic messages that underlie his inventions, side by side with these is the brutality of so many of his plots, the crude realism, verging on naturalism, in his disclosures of greed and voracious lust – in the grips of which his characters appear contracted into petrified masks, rigid entities about to crumble into nothingness, still violently proud in the resistance, the preservation of their convulsive selves.

### **Parallels with Hermann Hesse’s Novel “Demian”**

Faulkner’s fiction is suggestive of almost painful competitiveness. Faulkner’s male characters leave the impression of being incapable of friendship – friendship in the sense of pure feelings, trust and unconditional loyalty. The male companion is always viewed as a rival, even when there is little to be rivalling for. The female companion is viewed as a potential mistress or a matriarch – never a bosom-friend.

Like Faulkner in his novel “The Reivers” and a great many of his short stories – those employing a naïve narrator or protagonist, conveying gloomy

issues through a deceptively comic prism –, Hermann Hesse in his novel “Demian” (published in 1919) presents a young man, both the narrator and the protagonist, who stems from an orderly family, with moral purity governing his life, but who because of his naïveté and unselective receptiveness goes down a dangerous path, first of lying and theft, later on a more sublimated level of an ambivalent perception of the closeness of evil impulses around and within himself.

With this similarity between Hesse and Faulkner generally true, the German writer possesses qualities that Faulkner’s fiction usually lacks. Hesse’s young protagonists go astray not because they *want* to taste “the forbidden fruit”, that is, not because they really follow the temptation of accepting the adult challenge of living with evil, but because they aim to remain in good standing in all eyes – both their decent family and those whom they really should distrust or completely ignore, if that were possible. Their mistake is not the thought “Yes, I want to try what committing evil feels like!” but “I want to behave so as to please everyone”. Young Emil Sinclair’s moral support in his fall and the focus of his conflicting moral obligations, Max Demian, next to his tempting mystery appears as a true friend, a foundation of trust. Something similar can hardly be said about the “friends” of the wavering young protagonists in Faulkner’s fiction – those remain, above all, rivals.

Critically assessing Faulkner the artist’s relationship with life and art, it may be said that in his painstaking life-long endeavour for a “male salvation” through literature, Faulkner found no true friends, either real or fictional, but his ultimate trust and purity of feelings are embodied solely in his artistic dialogue with his own alternating “voices”, in the very self-reflective lyrical fabric of his writings.

The role of Demian for the protagonist, Emil Sinclair, most of all resembles the tempting and enchanting influence of Charles Bon on young Henry Sutpen in Faulkner’s “Absalom, Absalom!” Both Demian and Bon appear as strangely mature and versed for their age, both seem aware of their future destiny (Demian looks like he can read other people’s thoughts), both are surrounded by mystery and have a secret. Taciturn, ironical towards most people, both are extremely friendly to and engage in long conversations with their young companions, introducing them to the matters of the world. The major difference lies in the fate of those relationships: Henry finally murders Charles as the embodiment of the (both figuratively and literally) dark realm that endangers his family honour, Emil in his mature youth just slips away from the excessive magic of Demian and instead forms rather intimate a relationship with Demian’s middle-aged mother.

As the benevolent guide of Emil from his “sanctioned world” to the less controllable and inexplicable forbidden things of the society of adults, Demian seems to stand outside official cultural norms. He represents an eternal wisdom based on truths beyond the human sense of measured time: “He listened to me more attentively than he had ever before and peered into my eyes so that I was forced to avert mine. For I noticed in his gaze again that

strange animal-like look, expressing timelessness and unimaginable age.” (Hesse 1989: 63) As in the comparison between Faulkner’s “cow episode” and Thomas Mann’s early short stories, here is a case of the rationality of man-made culture being opposed to the realities of animate lives, measured by aeons, covertly also present in human existence.

As a confession in the psychoanalytic vein of a single young person, “Demian” does not have the social grasp of components of *comedias* in world literature, but the course of its narrator’s development closely resembles the generalizable fictional journey within Faulkner’s oeuvre, from impotent rage and suffering through progressive sublimated eroticism to a calm and poised sense of and living with loss.

## **Epiphanic Action-in-Arrest and Its Tragicomic Reverberations**

The view of Faulkner as a serious writer is fully justified. To those who jovially look for light entertainment, he may appear gravely serious, because he never takes life as a superficial joke. His comic is intended as the creative expression of an essential aspect of life, and is conveyed with serious elaboration. Faulkner’s being comic and his seriousness are entirely compatible.

Occasionally, Faulkner’s tragicomic situations are comic without being humorous in any straight way. Such include some of his most memorable episodes. The scene with the fighting show at the end of Chapter One of “Absalom, Absalom!” is an example. Thomas Sutpen, the white planter, is organizing fights among his Black slaves in a stable: brutal fights, with the combatants, naked to the waist, gouging at one another’s eyes. Sutpen has entered the ring himself as a grand finale and is just about to vanquish the Black opponent, covered in blood, when his wife Ellen enters the stable, desperately looking for their two pre-adolescent children. Then the son Henry emerges from among the slaves, screaming and vomiting, evidently unable to stand the cruelty of the show. There follows a page of frenzied dialogue between the husband and the wife, with the latter questioning him about where their daughter Judith could be. Once the narrator, Rosa Coldfield, makes her presence felt in the narration, and then, after more than a page of suspense, the readers are offered a revealing picture: “But I was not there. I was not there to see the two Sutpen faces this time – once on Judith and once on the negro girl beside her – looking down through the square entrance to the loft” (Faulkner 1987: 33).

The stunning juxtaposition of the frantic scene below, the mother hysterical and the son led away, vomiting, with the probable calm intent with which the sister is watching the show from the loft-window, her nerves evidently stronger than her brother’s, her mind, in a feminine poise, unswerving from the horrors which her father is creating, forms a kind of tragicomic static dynamism related to the concept of hiatus discussed above, and is here delivered

with the additional device of prolonged suspense. Analogous epiphanic moments of action-in-arrest – in style, imagery, narrative perspective, plot-lines – are observable throughout Faulkner’s works but especially in those of his early period, previous to “Intruder in the Dust” (1948). Remarkable in this example is that while the discovery of Judith’s apparently calm presence has a tragicomic tonality, it by no means evokes laughter – the kind of tragicomedy not the most widespread in Faulkner’s works, but the most characteristically Faulknerian.

Such epiphanies are the most arresting when the reader has a reason to believe that the character really feels them, that they do not remain on the level of the authorial focus only but that the author’s and the character’s perceptions of them are interacting in unison. John Rabbetts writes about this kind of narrative moments of illumination:

Such images offer the reader paradigms of meaningful human experience which show, rather than tell, the reader that man should balance his fondness for abstract ideas and “words” against the experiential necessity for flexibility, change, motion and “doing” (Rabbetts 1989: 193).

Using an expression from the book “Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha Comedy” (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1980) by Lyall Powers, who in turn has adopted it from a phrase of Matthew Arnold, Rabbetts calls the characters, capable of such a desirable equilibrium between abstractions and epiphanic action or “seeing”, the “Saving Remnant”.

However, taking a closer look at Faulkner’s perspectives, it appears that what these authors call the “Saving Remnant” is applicable not so much to the individual characters as human types, not to their lives as self-contained wholes, but rather to the states, or movements, of their minds so much as there exists, or to the degree there remains, something in them of the capability of receiving such epiphanic moments. Thus, even the wicked Jason Compson, certainly not one of the “Saving Remnant” as the group of individuals the way Powers and Rabbetts mean it, has his moments of somewhat serene contacts with the vast powers of the universe, as the tragicomic epiphany in the fourth part of “The Sound and the Fury”, fully quoted in Chapter Two, shows. This way even he has his own, however minute, share in the “Saving Remnant”.

On the basis of such and contrasting instances, the epiphanic action-in-arrest can be defined as the “Saving Remnant” of being human, and as a hiatus in the vision of the crushing logic of a microcosm entangled in the intricate complex of his problems. Problems which are the most relevant for an individual, those of his mortality and of his success, momentarily dissolve for the instant he steps outside the closed world of his ego – and however transient, such transcendental perceptions really offer the solutions to his microcosm. Powers and Rabbetts are right in that there are tremendous differences how much various characters are able to accept these solutions, and in this respect,

their separation of the “Saving Remnant” as a group of individuals, as much as the uncertainties of fiction allow it, is justified.

Memorable instances of tragicomic action-in-arrest include the runaway Black slave in the short story “Red Leaves”, fleeing from a certain, ritual death, who voluntarily lets a poisonous snake bite his arm for several times, just in order to feel, through the pain, that he is still alive, and the scene at the end of the story when the men about to sacrifice him have caught him and he makes a deliberate delay at the well, pretending to be drinking from the gourd, while in fact the water is washing down his chest. Such episodes, like the one from “Absalom, Absalom!” described above, are both comic and sublime in the sense defined by Kant, while being far removed from joking of any kind.

In the chapter on Joyce’s novel “Ulysses” of his book “The Comedy of Language”, Fred Miller Robinson writes: “In a fine phrase Stanley Sultan calls the charm of Joyce’s style “the charm of harmonious unfailing wrongness”, and it is the clash between harmony and wrongness that is the source of its comic life” (Robinson 1980: 35). Focusing on the “Ithaca” episode of Joyce’s book, in which he finds the foundation to a number of post-modernist comic novels, from Beckett to Pynchon, Robinson explains the paradox of its comic use of language as “/t/he paradox /---/ that the reality of the situation is best revealed in a language inappropriate to it” (Robinson 1980: 33). While “Ithaca”, set in the form of a mock catechism, because of the utter detachment of its form from the actual subject matter, “demonstrates with a vengeance Bergson’s idea of the mechanical encrusted on the living” (Robinson 1980: 34), the following “Penelope” episode (the interior monologue of the adulterous Molly, lying in bed beside her snoring husband), according to the American scholar, represents a sheer joy at, and a potential reconciliation with, the gap between the reality of language and the reality of the tangible world, the possession of whose contradiction makes the comic joy in a fictional form possible. Molly’s comedy, in Robinson’s view, is “an interplay between the natural and the poetic” (Robinson 1980: 46).

It is quite possible to regard Faulkner’s episode with the idiot Ike and the cow, discussed above, in Chapter Three, as relying on similar linguistic resources of the comic as these chapters of “Ulysses”, and as in fact establishing a synthetic parallel to the “Ithaca” and “Penelope” episodes viewed together. In a paradox similar to Joyce’s, the sodomitic love relationship conveyed in the language of high romanticism, rich with allusions, is a case of “the reality of the situation best revealed in a language inappropriate to it”, for the purity and freshness of the imagery is what the idiot (but hardly anyone else) in his elementary animate existence is likely to feel. However, unlike the highly abstracted meanderings in scientific expressions of the “Ithaca” episode, the reference of the cow episode remains firmly in the social interaction (as much as sodomy can be called social), and the foundation of its pastoral, florid style lies in the non-linguistic, non-cerebral – in the physics of reality. More like the “Penelope” episode, therefore, fluctuating between the poetic and the natural, the cow episode not

only describes “a comic gap between the power of language and the power of reality”, but it also acts as a reminder that such a gap exists only in the reader’s mind. The lofty omniscient narrator of Faulkner’s episode, perceiving reality from close to the idiot’s viewpoint and yet incompatible with it, recording Ike’s sensations in details and words impossible by any realistic expectations, can be seen as uniting the comic paradoxes of both Bloom’s and Molly’s narrative voices in the last chapters of “Ulysses”.

## **The Comedic in Faulkner**

The editor of “Portable Faulkner”, first published in 1946, Malcolm Cowley, was among the first who wrote about Faulkner’s works as a continuous cycle, intertwined thematically, similar to Balzac’s “The Human Comedy”. On page xv of his Introduction to the “Portable”, Cowley has written:

All /Faulkner’s/ books in the Yoknapatawpha cycle are part of the same living pattern. It is this pattern, and not the printed volumes in which part of it is recorded, that is Faulkner’s real achievement. Its existence helps to explain one feature of his work: that each novel, each long or short story, seems to reveal more than its states explicitly and to have a subject bigger than itself. All the separate works are like blocks of marble from the same quarry: they show the veins and faults of the mother rock. Or else – to use a rather strained figure – they are like wooden planks that were cut, not from a log, but from a still living tree. The planks are planed and chiselled into their final shapes, but the tree itself heals over the wound and continues to grow. (Cowley 1977: xv)

Very similar to these are the thoughts of Willard Huntington Wright in his “The Creative Will: Studies in the Philosophy and the Syntax of Aesthetics”, written long before Faulkner became a novelist, that Joseph Blotner quotes in his biography of Faulkner as very likely having had a formative influence on the future writer:

Balzac creates first a terrain with an environmental climate; and the creatures which spring from this soil, and which are a part of it, create certain inescapable conditions, social, economic, and intellectual. Furthermore, the generations of characters that follow are, in turn, the inevitable offsprings /---/ of this later soil, fashioned by all that preceded them. (cited in: Blotner 1974: 321)

Besides Dante and Balzac, the Russian writer Nikolay Gogol may be considered as having consciously tried to write in the vein of comedic. His “Dead Souls” was intended as a Russian counterpart to “The Divine Comedy”, with the protagonist meeting an array of types in various ethical states on three progressive planes during his journey. Both rich emotional intensity and the portrayal of wide social and moral strata are present in Gogol’s work, which, however, he was unable to complete according to his plans.

The social canvases of Ivan Turgenev and Leo Tolstoi could also be seen as displaying qualities of comedic in the narrow specified sense used here. Seldom, however, has the coherence of the cyclical nature of an oeuvre been as pervasive as in Faulkner. In accordance with Jay Martin's views in his article, there is a good ground to believe that the theories of Bergson and Freud exerted as strong, though perhaps indirect, theoretical influence on the formation and structure of Faulkner's works as the scholastics of Thomas of Aquinas did on Dante's masterpiece. But with the role of contemporary theoreticians present, it would be wrong to underestimate the real achievements of Faulkner's own psychological and sociological research, a conscious scholar-like attitude to the life material available to him, which he analyzed and moulded into new artistic syntheses in rational attempts also resembling Balzac.

The view of Faulkner as a writer of a *commedia* has been introduced (without using the term "comedic") most importantly by Jay Martin, whose theses have been given a brief review above, in the Introduction. That Faulkner dramatizes the loss of the world of women (personalized first in the mother), the later phallogocentric attempts to re-establish contacts with it, and the potential, final reconciliation with the loss, that are characteristic of the development of all male individuals, in Martin's vision becomes more significant an interpretation of Faulkner's oeuvre than the customary acceptance of him as the chronicler of a fictional county. Martin writes:

Faulkner's vision of maleness and his achievement of imaginative masculinity provides us with a new psychological paradigm that will continue Faulkner studies forward. The core of Faulkner's myth lies in the psychology of maleness. /---/ Not the Biblical and literary myth of Eden, but the psychological Eden of bliss, separation and loss which comes so early in a boy's development is the source of Faulkner's great myth, growing from his own struggle to live into manhood and write out of its heroic, tragic vision of failure and grief. Once this is said, the way beyond the main problem of the Yoknapatawpha paradigm is obvious. /---/

In fact, Faulkner's vision of the difficult, often baffled, occasionally (but guardedly) triumphant process of achieving manhood is sufficiently comprehensive that it anticipates and includes major aspects of the main contemporary approaches to maleness. (1994: 157)

The essential *commedia* of such a male narrative accordingly lies in the man's triumphantly finding a source of calm joy within the very grief of his loss – the fact that while a male can never be as central to the continuity of human life and of family values, as women can, he needs to and can be creative in other ways.

Certainly such an optimism within hardships is not alien to Faulkner. The famous quotation from one of Faulkner's public performances, provided on page 16 in the Introduction, about "even tragedy" being "in a way walking a tightrope between the ridiculous – between the bizarre and the terrible", testifies to the writer's many-angled (including the whole-heartedly comic,

doggedly kind-natured focus) look at human predicaments. That the artistic self, emanating into the various protagonists and narrators, is on a stoical quest for a distant optimistic goal, a final reconciliation with the losses he has had to suffer, is obvious also from Faulkner's frequently expressed liking for the character of Don Quixote:

Faulkner's choice of favourite literary characters indicates the close relationship which he envisaged between tragedy and comedy. His frequent affectionate references to Don Quixote, whom he regarded with "admiration and pity and amusement", suggest that the latter's quest helped to form Faulkner's vision of man as a harried, bemused creature whose plight is both terrible and funny (Rabbetts 1989: 98).

Despite the fact that the quests for such a reconciliation of many of Faulkner's male characters are crushed by their own weaknesses, by conflicting pressures inside and around them, the author's artistic optimism always takes the reader further – towards the immeasurable universe, from some of whose countless angles even the most tragic of fates may obtain a comic flavour, without losing its tragic significance as the destruction of a microcosm.

Turning back to quite another layer of Faulkner's creative achievement, the characters' brilliant, stunning, exhilarating contacts with the joys of a world greater than and above their fates are often realized in passages of "experiential moments" (Michael Millgate, cited in: Rabbetts 1989: 212) that in Joycean terminology can be called epiphanies (discussed as such in a previous subchapter). These illuminations, involving the whole atmosphere of the fictional settings and the inner psychic landscape of the characters, are usually triggered by seemingly trivial remarks or observations. To add one more example to the ones given above, Joe Christmas of the novel "Light in August", after he has murdered Joanna Burden and having escaped into the wilderness before his own violent death, has such epiphanic moments. A source of excitement also for the reader, such devices are comic in the Joycean sense of opening one's eyes to the inherent flux of creativity and wonders of the world, as John Rabbetts writes in the following excerpt, comparing Thomas Hardy's epiphanic imagery to Faulkner's:

His /Hardy's/ anthropomorphism and "familiar conjunctions of things" form /an/ imaginative resource which often corresponds precisely with Faulkner's art; their sensitive responses to the qualities of *things* are able to convey poetic impressions of a kind which continually transcend the workaday requirements of narrative fiction. /---/ /This kind of/ artistic dedication /---/, even in the minutest particular, /---/ adds so much to the reader's enjoyment of the novels' texture; while on a larger scale each writer demonstrates a quality defined by one Faulkner critic /Alfred Kazin/ as "a velocity of memory... /an/ insistence on embracing all actuality in the moment... an attempt to realize continuity with all our genesis, our "progenitors"... with all we have touched, known, loved". This attempt relies upon techniques whereby the reader's absorption in specific

naturalistic details is suddenly expanded to accommodate a larger, if nebulous, significance (Rabbetts 1989: 210–211).

But how is the exhilaration of epiphanies, sprouting from minute details in the text, related to the impression of Faulkner being a comedic writer in general?

In Chapter Four of his book “From Hardy to Faulkner. Wessex to Yoknapatawpha”, John Rabbetts writes:

*/T*he Southern consciousness remained outside the general preoccupations of American literature, which as C. Vann Woodward has remarked, frequently sees man as an isolated individual who does not “belong” anywhere, whereas the Southern writer sees man as a social and historical creature, “an inextricable part of a living history and community, attached and determined in a thousand ways by other wills and destinies”. (Rabbetts 1989: 163)

Elsewhere in his study, Rabbetts quotes the critic Irving Howe as saying of the American South: “It had been left behind. It was living on the margin of history – a position that often provides the sharpest perspective on history. /---/” (cited in: Rabbetts 1989: 218).

“An inextricable part of a living history”, “on the margin of history” – by uniting these apparently contradictory truths about the Southern society with the figure of Faulkner as a chronicler of his native environment, the following can be said.

Faulkner was living and writing in a society on the margin of history, a society to whose other “wills and destinies” (both the past and the contemporary ones), as within a tight network, he was powerfully linked. A context providing a significant historical value to its individual members, yet historically marginalized as a whole – this is the paradox of the background and ore-mine of literary themes and focuses, that shaped Faulkner’s fiction.

Hence Faulkner’s vacillations between the joy of the proprietorship of a whole world of imaginative “voices”, representing fictional characters whose real counterparts abounded in his psychosocial memory, in the pulses of his associative mind (a complex synthesis of highly personal factors of his growing up into manhood, and of social influences), fuelled by highly creative urges, and between the grief of his loneliness as an individual male within the harsh reality of the large-scale historical context of his time, indifferent to his personal literary efforts as well as to the marginalized, and vanishing, sociocultural reality of his background.

But neither was the former plane of his life without its grief and the latter without its joy: for his Southern identity also oppressed him, the way tight, heavily encoded societies do, and loaded him with moral obligations (such as wrestling with stereotypes within and around himself) that were a hindrance to his artistic liberties; and his grief as a lonely individual, a meaningless pawn in history, also provided him with a reclusive standpoint from which, as a sovereign on-looker, to express both the yearning for and the repulsion from, to

analyze both the vices and the virtues of, the lost corner of history that had given birth to the imaginative fabric, the psychosocial workshop of his mind.

Thus, the texture of Faulkner's writings, in a way parallel to his fluctuations between tradition and modernity, could best be seen as oscillations between the joy of living in a solitude with a rich mental company – a joy of living which, on a most philosophical level, is equivalent to the comic in Joyce's aesthetic terms – and the pain which the disconnections with both that solitude and with the accompanying world of "voices", outgrowths of real destinies respectralized within the author's psyche, cause in the creative focus. But such disconnections themselves are what produces the sense of hiatus – the source of the feeling of the comic in Kant's definition. These disconnections, stunning, bemusing, frequently amusing, perplexing, nearly always entailing a free fall into the unexpected, a hiatus in the predictable logic, pervade Faulkner's narration from the smallest textual units through its larger constituents to the whole structure of his oeuvre.

It was in the later period of his creativity, variously dated 1936–1962 or 1948–1962, that Faulkner wrote works which, though widely considered less deep and striking, tamer than the early novels, met his primal optimistic belief in the worth of the artistic endeavour. These works, by more yielding conforming to the rational expectations of fiction-writing, granted him the position that had been his presumptive motive from the start, the position of a Balzacian secretary of the society, of social chronicle. In writing his earlier, more spontaneous, more demon-driven works Faulkner in the process of solving the predicament of his psychic entanglement with nihilist views on individualism, and the conflict with his own irrational lyrical self, was formulating an antithesis to the self-conscious, calculative writer's rationale. Though that antithesis with its dark abysses of introspection may be the most engaging part of his oeuvre, it was his crowning victory that he managed to synthesize his vision, out of the extremely individualized respectralization of social reality, into a new hard-won belief in the meaningfulness of art's role as a mirror of the society, still in disagreement but at peace with his native background. Seen as a whole, Faulkner's oeuvre might be called by the name Balzac designated for the third, unaccomplished part of his "Human Comedy", "Analytical Studies /of the Society/".

Thus Faulkner, in his progressive conviction in the analytic potentials of social chronicles (his debt to Balzac), in later career turned increasingly into a social theoretician, creating such characters verbosely commenting on social manners and causes as Gavin Stevens. What Faulkner shares with Balzac and in what he differs from a writer like Thomas Hardy, is their optimism as to the research-like rationality of epic efforts.

The philosophy of later Faulkner, as much as it can be detected from the arguments of his characters, is notably similar in type to the principles of Balzac, as can be read in the following passages from the French writer's Introduction to his "Human Comedy":

Man is neither good nor bad; he is born with instincts and capabilities; society, far from depraving him, as Rousseau asserts, improves him, makes him better; but self-interest also develops his evil tendencies. Christianity, above all, Catholicism, being – as I have pointed out in the *Country Doctor* (“*Le Medecin de Campagne*”) – a complete system for the repression of the depraved tendencies of man, is the most powerful element of social order.

In reading attentively the presentment of society cast, as it were, from the life, with all that is good and all that is bad in it, we learn this lesson – if thought, or if passion, which combines thought and feeling, is the vital social element, it is also its destructive element. In this respect social life is like the life of man. Nations live long only by moderating their vital energy. Teaching, or rather education, by religious bodies is the grand principle of life for nations, the only means of diminishing the sum of evil and increasing the sum of good in all society. Thought, the living principle of good and ill, can only be trained, quelled, and guided by religion. (Balzac 2004)

In the case of Faulkner, who instead of established religions like Christianity professed a religion-like belief in stoicism, the trust in the guiding role of religion could be seen as replaced by the idea of the edifying function of art, by the spiritual salvation and invisible church created through fictional depictions of grand dramas of human passions, cathartic solutions of men “in conflict with themselves”. Some of the founding ideas beneath this religion of art are the same as in Christianity, and Faulkner laboured hard in re-writing the Christian message according to his own stoicist interpretation in the novel “*A Fable*” and in various other works. And what Balzac says later in his Introduction can be read as applicable also to the creative credo and apprehensions of Faulkner’s: “I do not share the belief in indefinite progress for society as a whole; I believe in man's improvement in himself. Those who insist on reading in me the intention to consider man as a finished creation are strangely mistaken” (Balzac 2004). The comedic character of Faulkner’s oeuvre is proved by the fact that he, like Balzac, remained true to “/a vast/ plan which includes both a history and a criticism of society, an analysis of its evils, and a discussion of its principles” (Balzac 2004).

## **The Grotesque as Poetry of Existential Tension**

In Estonia, probably the (epic) poet Uku Masing (1909–1985) of all cultural figures up to the end of the 20th century displays the greatest affinity to the bitter comic and wry grimaces of Faulkner’s Calvinist-inspired world vision, the verbal edifice of his which in the wake of his talented heir Flannery O’Connor’s consciously Catholic fiction has become to be characterized as „an invisible church“ – that is, a construction solely made of words on the passions of the region of the Deep South in which the story of redemption has to be acted through anew without the safe conditions of a liturgy in each new piece of fiction. Like religion in its primal essence, as regarded by George

Santayana, that kind of construction is poetry, and poetry extended from lyric into the epic dimension, into multi-narrative poetry, becomes an invisible church. It therefore becomes exactly the sort of clerical intervention (though only within verbal framework) into life that Santayana objects to in institutionalized religion (Santayana 1911: v – x). As a source of freedom in expression, such poetry embodies the comic in the radical Joycean sense; but its systemic wilfulness in playing with (albeit fictional) human destinies and intervening in the protective response areas around the sensitive egos of its readers, bring about the effect of the tragicomic. The counterpart in material church conditions to that tragicomic would be present in the dilemma: how moral (how Christian) is it to expect an alcoholic anonymous, repentant of his sin of drinking, to take partake of the wine, religiously seen as Christ's blood, at the Holy Communion, knowing that a single taste of alcohol can trigger off another cycle of alcohol abuse in his secular life?

Faulkner's achievement is a strong response to "the twin dangers of private anarchy and public uniformity" that Santayana saw as entailed in the American democracy (cited in: Saatkamp 2002) – a response dialectically both containing and resisting those dangers. On the other hand, the exasperating verbal excesses and Calvinist scenery of fatalism of Faulkner's fiction make it exactly the kind of instance of poetry and religion turned into science that Santayana viewed as the objectionable tendencies in those „festive celebrations of life“ (cited in: Saatkamp 2002) – that is, through which these phenomena tend to hoodwink, rather than elevate, consciousness. However, the poetic and religious sense in Faulkner are redeemed by the epiphanic attribute, through which consciousness, or „spirit“ in the Santayanan sense (Saatkamp 2002), achieves liberation from the solely pragmatic. The opposites of the successful and the unsuccessful, even in the moral sense of good and evil, even in the strictly Calvinist interpretation of redemption and sinfulness, as well as in the sense of literary fulfilment, are supervened by the joy of the perceiving consciousness. In this way, the scientificized fiction about the Calvinist predicament of being or not being able to find the divine grace reaches its supplementary inherent trait of naturalistic liberation, demanding for the reason just because it is contained in the conceptually ungrounded expressions of, in Santayana's terms, „animal faith“ (Saatkamp 2002).

All of Faulkner's fiction is essentially autobiographical – developed in the line of what Mikhail Bakhtin saw as the corrective opposition of the intrinsically communal carnivalesque to Don Quixote's individuation (1984: 21–23), with the Quixote role transmuted into that of an author, capable of being perceived in a virtual way and dissolved into the narratorial multiplicity. Faulkner's fiction operates on the interplay, leading to a gradual reconciliation, of Wolfgang Kayser's and Bakhtin's, the romantic, or death- and fear-prevalent, and the Renaissance, or life- and laughter-prevalent, views of the grotesque. The romantic, individuating grotesque (regarded by Bakhtin as a decline of the Renaissance spirit (1984: 37 – 40, 44)) gains strength, is afforded primacy exactly because and as much as it accepts the communal one. Whether ap-

pearing in its Renaissance or Romanticist form, the expression of the grotesque is the sign of the affirmation of life – life in its sinfulness, imperfection, split between dichotomies. More than Bakhtin's concepts of carnival and polyphony, it is the Russian scholar's concern with the exploration of the dialogue, shared with Martin Buber, that highlights the foundation of literary endeavours on ethics of a Christian character in a universal sense. The profound Christian trait of Faulkner's oeuvre, outweighing the qualities of his grotesque, is how later in his works (and nowhere as clearly as in the last novel „The Reivers“), Faulkner narrates about elderly men stepping aside of their free will to offer space for a younger man's course of experience (Zender 1989: 138), thus pre-emptively clearing off the likelihood of an Oedipal conflict. In the presentations of an act like that, the writer's craft culminates in a harmonious union of what Santayana saw as the common ground of poetry and religion.

Faulkner's comic operates by both affirming and surpassing his characters' individuality through first introducing them into and then absolving them from the grotesque – which is also tragic because the absolution from the grotesque also means a cessation of dialogue, means oblivion. The older man, worn out by life in the romantic sense of the opposition to the grotesque, unselfishly steps aside, clearing the way for the younger one to face a similar tragic individuation against the fearsomely grotesque – this is the unifying principle of symphonism underlying the apparent carnivalesque polyphony in Faulkner's oeuvre. This is the transmodernist course, sparing the artwork the exuberance of the peccable appeals to senses, of achieving a concord, for the mind and heart at work with the word, of One and the All.

This argumentation aspires to discuss the phenomenon of grotesque apart from its emotional connotations. It therefore rejects the commonplace concept of grotesque in literature (a character, thing or situation evoking both empathy and disgust, or both hilarious and abhorrent), repairing to its original sense as it was applied to visual arts, and then extending that sense back to the art of letters, as much as such extension is possible. The emotionally overcharged concept of grotesque as it has been used for centuries in literary criticism (see the problem discussed with clarity by Gysin 1975: 21–34) is seen as undesirable for any development of thought that attempts to be based on reason, on scientific analysis. Not only does such emotionalism lead to arational biases, but it endangers the very validity and legitimacy of the whole concept, it being ultimately possible to regard the whole of literature as grotesque, the sense of grotesque, to paraphrase a common saying, lying in the viewer's eye. The view on grotesque in any form of art preferred in this discussion is „a twining (or an arabesque, the term used as the closest approximation to the essential quality of the phenomenon) of animate and distinct inanimate forms (with an entwinement of distinct representation and fancy)“. The definition is by the present author. The substance of the grotesque is thus seen as a free dance of forms human and non-human, animate and inanimate, mentally shaped and naturally grown, beyond any emotion or assessments, a dance which humanity

and the animate world have performed with nature for aeons, involving, all in the neutral key, both death and renewal, and which human beings have attempted to reproduce in arts, at the best capturing some of the primordial movement of shifting forms at a point where the clear border between natural actuality and representation dissolves. By delving deeper than the late 15th century excavations in Domus Aurea and other villas of ancient Rome, from whose wall paintings the term „grotesque“ (meaning „cave-like“, “related to caves”) first sprang into being (Meindl 1996: 16), and stressing the presence of non-human natural forms, the grotesque is observed an ideal of a fugue, brought down to earth, of relative harmony and tolerable discord of the interacting modes of existence in the human life in the world. With an emphasis on the avoidance of unilateral anthropocentrism, characteristic of urbanism, the grotesque is treated as a pagan mode of art, reaping, mowing, harvesting, foresting, digging, herding, and other primal physical exercise, the traditional pagan activities, being where the grotesque in its preferred definition most of all emerges as the immediate, actual phenomenon. Furthermore, since the New Testament was first and foremost offered to and accepted by the pagans (as opposed to the Hebrews), the grotesque may be seen as a Christian, the more so by being earthly, as much as a pagan form of art. As strange as it may seem to interpreters accustomed to the commonly used literary concept of grotesque, the Eclogues of Virgil, to give just one pastoral example, as well as his other works fall into the category of grotesque purified from its vague emotional connotations. In the later history of literature, Gustave Flaubert’s novel „The Temptation of Saint Anthony“ provides a notable example of the primal sense of the mode of art, as a dance of grotesque both highly spiritual and earthly, and far beyond any simple provocation of the hilarious or the abhorrent.

The derived meanings and definitions of grotesque, such as the contradicting characterizations elaborated on the basis of history of literature from the Middle Ages through Romanticism by Wolfgang Kayser and Mikhail Bakhtin, are persistent, each from their own perspective, in their search for a unitary theory of the grotesque, but they suffer from the inconsistency of trying to apply an allegedly scientific term to what are fiction writers’ and poets’ emotionally selective and arbitrarily defined fantasies. Characteristic of Bakhtin are attempts of forming an absolute basis of evaluation of the human body, of „the grotesque body“ of the people (1984: 303–367). He stresses that “the grotesque ignores the impenetrable surface that closes and limits the body as a separate and completed phenomenon” (1984: 318). Yet, although Bakhtin associates the grotesque with the transcendence of the limits of the human body, and shows the grotesque body as encompassing “elements common to the entire cosmos” (1984: 318), the main line of thought in his study of Rabelais and the grotesque focuses on “a double body”, “/i/n the endless chain of bodily life /retaining/ the parts in which one link joins the other, in which the life of one body is born from the death of the preceding, older one” (1984: 318). It is still a concentration on the body, specifically the human one, a super-body, that most of all interests Bakhtin. Thus, even though understood

without individuation as a cosmic organism of virtual immortality in a folkloristic, limitless time space, Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque with all its largeness cannot quite escape the limitations of being anthropocentric. However, the grotesque body could also be seen as an entwining of the human and the non-human of equal value, always distinct yet inseparable, equally life-affirming and deadly, but basically consisting, as stated above, of free forms pure from and beyond any emotional assessments, positive or negative. What is, in the wake of Bakhtin's views, usually meant as the tragic individuation and isolation inside grotesque (of post-Renaissance literature), is rather an existence without the affirmative power of the grotesque, the deprivation of the healthy placement within a grotesque, as a symphony or fugue of complementary forms, in its preferable sense.

The rather unique way, in the context of 20<sup>th</sup> century literature, in which Faulkner occasionally offers glimpses, both tragically tense and relieving, into the non-human world, can be seen in the following excerpt from the chapter "The Bear" of the novel "Go, Down, Moses".

Then he was up, on the one-eyed mule which would not spook at wild blood, looking down at the dog motionless at Major de Spain's stirrup, looking in the gray steaming light bigger than a calf, bigger than he knew it actually was – the big head, the chest almost as big as his own, the blue hide beneath which the muscles flinched or quivered to no touch since the heart which drove blood to them loved no man and no thing, standing as a horse stands yet different from a horse which infers only weight and speed while Lion inferred not only courage and all else that went to make up the will and desire to pursue and kill, but endurance, the will and desire to endure beyond all imaginable limits of flesh in order to overtake and slay. Then the dog looked at him. It moved its head and looked at him across the trivial uproar of the hounds, out of the yellow eyes as depthless as Boon's, as free as Boon's of meanness or generosity or gentleness or viciousness. They were just cold and sleepy. Then it blinked, and he knew it was not looking at him and never had been, without even bothering to turn its head away. (Faulkner 1973: 237–238)

Like an endless relation of reflections and counter-reflections between the human and the non-human (leading the mind to its normal limits of being able to question the validity of these very concepts), such passages come close to a primal and purely rational meaning of the grotesque.

Contrary to Kayser's first definition of the grotesque: „/it/ is the estranged world“ (1981: 184), the present writer considers it correct, to avoid, as much as possible, mystifications in reasoned arguments, to paraphrase it this way: „the grotesque is the world from which human beings have estranged themselves“. That this definition has a responsible agent which Kayser's lacks is significant. This position finds enough support in Bakhtin's similar response to Kayser's claim (Bakhtin 1984: 48). Kayser's second definition, „/it/ is a play with the absurd“ (1981: 187) could be replaced with „the grotesque is the world beyond absurd“.

The arbitrariness of Kayser's delineations of the grotesque, of his regarding it as the strict opposite to the sublime, a view he derived from Victor Hugo (Kayser 1981: 58), is illustrated through a multiplicity of instances in literature, which he obviously was not familiar with or chose to ignore. Meindl's diachronic distinction between the old, or „upwards“ metaphysics, and the new, or „downwards“ metaphysics, with grotesque in the latter emerging as the angst of the individual mind at the awareness of an indefinite Being (Meindl 1996: 7–10), is likewise a neat but sectional classification, assuming that all authors and readers should recognize and follow what the existentialist philosophers saw as their world revolution of metaphysics.

It may be possible to find characters and situations in literature that in no way are grotesque (as in French classicist tragedy) but the limited focus and frames of a genre cannot remove the grotesque element from anywhere in literature where characters live their lives as veritable human beings.

The healthiness of grotesque appears in Faulkner in the scene in „Go Down, Moses“ with the bear Old Ben defending himself on his hind legs while Boon Hogganbeck, armed with a knife, and the dog Lion are clinging to the beast, a scene both of arrested motion and of ornamental fancy, in which the grotesque as a mode congenial to naturalist philosophy, and the pathos and ecstasy marking the transcendental values of religion, co-exist in unison. Cases of grotesque in Faulkner also include the centaur imagery in „Absalom, Absalom!“, the combined animal and human sacrifice that is planned in the story „Red Leaves“ along with the snake and the gourd intimately converging with the mind of the protagonist in the same work, the entwinement of the mechanical and the natural in Luke's incessant hiccupping in the story „A Bear Hunt“, the merging of the rustle of palm leaves with Harry Wilbourne's moral descent in „Wild Palms“, and the symbolism of the insects in „Mosquitoes“, to name a memorable selection. Also a pure dance of grotesque is the spotted ponies chapter in „The Hamlet“, while a ghoulish form of the phenomenon appears in Jack Houston's corpse hidden and stinking in the hollow tree, in the same novel. The life-affirming, albeit weird entwinement of the human and the natural, the animate and the inanimate is to be found in the cow episode. The Rabelaisian spirit of grotesque is the most present in the episode of „The Mansion“ with the dogs urinating on the deceitful politician.

While the energy and momentum of the bear chase in „Go Down, Moses“ may even suggest the spirit of Goethe's Euphorion (son of Faust and Helen of Troy) – in a great likelihood, though the author hardly reveals it, Ike McCaslin at the very young age in this episode not only sensed but was if only little carried along by the excitement of events, as youths normally are – from another angle all the ecstasy, power and high dramatics of the company reaching the beast and Boon and the dog Lion breaking him down are merely a thin veil to a basically unromantic, crude, vulgar act of living beings slaughtering each other. Present in this scene is the spontaneity of the entwinement of forms, living and inanimate, human and animal, that by being the primal and inevitable course of the world is approvable beyond human judgment; present also,

conceived in the very movement involving the deaths of the hunted and a hunting animal, is a transference to the grotesque as understood in the Kayserian sense of limited, anthropocentric humanity, as the angst in face of an intractable Being. The bear's „loverlike“ grasp of the dog, and Boon, loverlike, clinging to the immense beast with his knife to deal the infinitesimal death blows, both are and are not sublime; both are and are not grotesque. What can be said with certainty, reading the following examples from “The Bear” chapter of “Go Down, Moses”, is that even when presuming Kayser's opposition of the sublime and the grotesque to be applicable to parts of literature, in these instances they emerge inseparable.

He saw the blood from General Compson's shots, but he could go no further. He stopped, leaning against a tree for his breathing to ease and his heart to slow, hearing the sound of the dogs as it faded on and died away. (Faulkner 1973: 225)

This time Boon didn't even curse. He stood in the door, muddy, spent, his huge gargoyle's face tragic and still amazed. (225–226)

Now they were in cane: a brake. He knew the path through it as well as Sam did. They came out of the undergrowth and struck the entrance almost exactly. It would traverse the brake and come out onto a high open ridge above the river. He heard the flat clap of Walter Ewell's rifle, then two more. „No,“ Sam said. “I can hear the hound. Go on.”

They emerged from the narrow roofless tunnel of snapping and hissing cane, still galloping, onto the open ridge below which the thick yellow river, reflectionless in the gray and streaming light, seemed not to move. Now he could hear the hound too. It was not running. The cry was a high frantic yapping and Boon was running along the edge of the bluff, his old gun leaping and jouncing against his back on its sling made of a piece of cotton plow-line. He whirled and ran up to them, wild-faced, and flung himself onto the mule behind the boy. „That damn boat!“ he cried. „It's on the other side! He went straight across! Lion was too close to him! That little hound too! Lion was so close I couldn't shoot! Go on!“ he cried, beating his heels into the mule's flanks. „Go on!“

They plunged down the bank, slipping and sliding in the thawed earth, crashing through the willows and into the water. He felt no shock, no cold, he on one side of the swimming mule, grasping the pommel with one hand and holding his gun above the water with the other, Boon opposite him. Sam was behind them somewhere, and then the river, the water about them, was full of dogs. They swam faster than the mules; they were scrabbling up the bank before the mules touched bottom. Major de Spain was whooping from the bank they had just left and, looking back, he saw Tennie's Jim and the horse as they went into the water.

Now the woods ahead of them and the rain-heavy air were one uproar. It rang and clamored; it echoed and broke against the bank behind them and reformed and clamored and rang until it seemed to the boy that all the hounds which had ever bayed game in this land were yelling down at him. He got his leg over the mule as it came up out of the water. Boon didn't try to mount

again. He grasped one stirrup as they went up the bank and crashed through the undergrowth which fringed the bluff and saw the bear, on its hind feet, its back against a tree while the bellowing hounds swirled around it and once more Lion drove in, leaping clear of the ground.

This time the bear didn't strike him down. It caught the dog in both arms, almost loverlike, and they both went down. He was off the mule now. He drew back both hammers of the gun but he could see nothing but moiling spotted houndbodies until the bear surged up again. Boon was yelling something, he could not tell what; he could see Lion was still clinging to the bear's throat and he saw the bear, half erect, strike one of the hounds with one paw and hurl it five or six feet and then, rising and rising as though it would never stop, stand erect again and begin to rake at Lion's belly with its forepaws. Then Boon was running. The boy saw the gleam of the blade in his hand and watched him leap among the hounds, hurdling them, kicking them aside as he ran, and fling himself astride the bear as he had hurled himself onto the mule, his legs locked around the bear's belly, his left arm under the bear's throat where Lion clung, and the glint of the knife as it rose and fell.

It fell just once. For an instant they almost resembled a piece of statuary: the clinging dog, the bear, the man stride its back, working and probing the buried blade. Then they went down, pulled over backward by Boon's weight, Boon underneath. It was the bear's back which reappeared first but at once Boon was astride it again. He had never released the knife and again the boy saw the almost infinitesimal movement of his arm and shoulder as he probed and sought; then the bear surged erect, raising with it the man and the dog too, and turned and still carrying the man and the dog it took two or three steps toward the woods on its hind feet as a man would have walked and crashed down. It didn't collapse, crumple. It fell all of a piece, as a tree falls, so that all three of them, man dog and bear, seemed to bounce once.

He and Tennie's Jim ran forward. Boon was kneeling at the bear's head. His left ear was shredded, his left coat sleeve was completely gone, his right boot had been ripped from knee to instep; the bright blood thinned in the thin rain down his leg and hand and arm and down the side of his face which was no longer wild but was quite calm. Together they prized Lion's jaws from the bear's throat. „Easy, goddamn it,“ Boon said. „Cant you see his guts are all out of him?“ He began to remove his coat. He spoke to Tennie's Jim in that calm voice: „Bring the boat up. It's about a hundred yards down the bank there. I saw it.“ Tennie's Jim rose and went away. Then, and he could not remember if it had been a call or an exclamation from Tennie's Jim or if he had glanced up by chance, he saw Tennie's Jim stooping and saw Sam Fathers lying motionless on his face in the trampled mud. (239–242)

In the last long episode, within the general ecstasy and agony of the hunt, the hounds (animal forms) are transformed into an almost plant-like, leaf-like quality, swirling in a biomorphic arabesque.

Contrary to the widespread interpretation, the grotesque involves something more advanced than the solution to the painful dichotomy of ideas and matter in an irruption of sensualism: it involves the possibility of the very happiness of being sentient, by way of the intertwining of the sentient and (appar-

ently) non-sentient existence. Knowing to appreciate one's power of sentience and living up to its benefits also entails being truly sensible.

While the commonly accepted designation of grotesque by and large relates it to the bewildering and ridiculous, its original meaning nearly converges with the epiphanic. According to Fritz Gysin, the grotesque can appear either in character, object, or situation (1975: 46–47). In Gysin's theory, grotesque characters and situations are always bizarre, while a grotesque object is what constitutes the strangeness and unexpected animism of the Other. While a grotesque character is merely comic, abhorrently or pathetically ridiculous, a grotesque object as perceived by the self presents the incredibility made evident of a world faced in its potential of being fully objectified, or objectifiable – and strangely sentient and alive nevertheless.

Writing in „The Tragic Theatre“ (1910) on the tragicomic, W. B. Yeats says that Shakespeare is always tragicomic. In Yeats's words, it is only the comic that has its house solidly on the character („/In writers of tragicomedy (and Shakespeare is always a writer of tragi-comedy) there is indeed character, but we notice that it is in moments of comedy that character is defined, in Hamlet's gaiety let us say /---/“ (Yeats 1910: 503)). The tragic, the tragic ecstasy is a stepping out of character (the breaking by the flood of the dykes on which the comedy keeps his house); and, as Yeats's argument can be continued, the tragic being a loss of the clearness of character borders, it is a leap, at least an attempted one, into what presents itself to our reason as the world beyond the subject. Such an ecstasy is an interplay with the grotesque object(ivity), congruent with the epiphanic (tied up with the sensuous and the sentient). The grotesque object also bears the imprint of subjective sensations, but lying beyond the pure anthropocentrism of relations that form a character, it is TRAGIcomic.

## **The Autonomy Inherent in Faulkner's Comedic Apocrypha**

Faulkner's oeuvre has the autonomy of a significant hiatus – a hiatus in the logic of the customary sociological rendering of history.

In that, the contemporary author most related to him in continental Europe, despite their vast differences, is Thomas Mann.

On the other hand, the majority of fiction writers tacitly conform to the verities about their society, as verbalized by historians and sociologists – those writers probably proceeding from the presumption that fiction has entirely other aims and different functions to fill than sociological research.

By expressing creative forces that underlie both academic research and poetic spontaneity, Faulkner in his apocryphal history (Urgo 1986: 221–223) paints a picture of humanity stretched out between the most personal and the most universal, entangled in tragic while also comic in a wide variety of ways,

a canvas similar in its breadth and scope to Balzac's oeuvre, and as complexly tragicomic as the plays of Shakespeare.

On the level of small textual units, such as images, figures of speech, lexical items, as well as on the level of major narrative devices, Faulkner stuns the reader into recognizing a larger flux of reality beyond and beneath the customary flux of sociocultural phenomena – that recognition producing a procession of sensations of hiatuses in the logic of the mind, and these hiatuses being a source of both the feelings of the comic and the sublime.

By opposing the “despotism of fact” (Yeats 2001: 375), the rigidity of the customary perceptions of the accepted reality, with a rule of fiction, by creating a conscious apocrypha – apocryphal both to social reality and the former established mythic artefacts, by casting away the rigid factual norms of all levels of being human as if these norms were a ballast, and by laying bare the unwordable, non-human (i. e., ahistorical, socioculturally unassimilated) truths of the existence of people as animate entities, Faulkner stuns the reader into more hiatuses at the recognition of how much an imagined world, usually downplayed as “mere literature”, may speak to and answer the basic human needs for meaning in life.

By depicting a rich variety, similar to a large historical canvas, of male struggles in full awareness of the reality in which women are both biologically and culturally defined as the primary sources of life (being child-bearers) and of family values, by showing the predicaments of men as marginalized carriers of sociocultural meaning and by displaying, in the more positive of his male characters, a heroic stoicism in the face of defeat, a perseverance with holding values even if losing some of their mission as individuals, Faulkner is not only comic and tragicomic, but comedic, in view of his oeuvre.

In the tragically coloured psychology of sexes of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha, the *femme fatale* who takes the writer's vision to a new level and simultaneously lays bare the truth about the role of Faulkner's own (probably most intimately personal) weaknesses in his preferences of character creation and delineation, may be the former sex goddess Eula's daughter Linda Snopes Kohl, with her evolution into a fully emancipated woman and the scene of her decisively final departure from the county. Having been married to a Communist Jew, a participant of the Spanish Civil War, herself deaf from the battles, childless, she is totally beyond the gender stereotypes of her native ground. One may agree with Diane Roberts writing in her essay “Eula, Linda and the Death of Nature” that she is in whom the figure of woman as Mother Nature (nodding to be relied on and yet so devouring, uncontrollable) transcends itself. Unlike her mother Eula, a Danae-like passive *hortus conclusus* (Roberts 1999: 171) (that is, a closed garden of Eden), Linda, if also a *hortus conclusus* – because in her new, hard-to-recognize fashion she still carries some of the magnetic womanhood of male yearnings – is different in being one that is mobilized to relocating herself, swift in a dizzyingly swift world, free from stereotypical reductions to natural cycles, in an interactive sphere of high social abstraction, in the modern world of technological

sophistication and a society of egalitarian directions based on a Cartesian-type concept of individualism, regardless of the attributes of the individual's physical identity. Linda Snopes Kohl thus contains the paradox of being a modern Eden impersonated and yet of a volatile mobility. To word it simply and essentially, Linda is the rare Faulkner woman who the writer succeeds in convincing the readers truly loves, not just copulates with, her man – even beyond the grave. This means both recognizing the limitations of Faulkner the artist individual and the broadness he nevertheless possesses. Most likely it was not easy for him to nourish empathy with a character that was fatally to undermine the contours of his favourite image of the suffering male. Linda took her creator's gaze to a world that was alien and seemed hostile to him – a world in which Samuel Beckett felt at home but which for Faulkner meant silence.

By a turn of logic of literary perspectives, the topic of this work on Faulkner may lead to a comparative thought on the degrees of the serious and the relieving in the epic works of Samuel Beckett. With the solidly rational, Cartesian trait in Beckett's writings, especially novels, where Faulkner has the shaky leanings on folk ways of reasoning, a folksiness inevitably half-laden with the arational and the arbitrary, Beckett is the closest to what there is of a parallel counterpoint to Faulkner's writings; often regarded as the harbinger and the founder of post-modernism of language-game-centred narratives, hearkening to the ultimate remainder of meaningfulness on the verge of silence, Beckett is at once more serious – because of his grave Cartesian investigations of consciousness, similar to scientific tests of elementary particles (versus the vexed lushness of Faulkner's and other folk-influenced authors' narrative circumambulations) – and lighter than the inventor of Yoknapatawpha, lighter because of his break of minimalism with the romantic-realistic story-telling tradition, heavy-weight in its persuasive reliance on the power of the author's and co-authoring readers' imagination. Yet, Beckett's intonations having been anticipated already in Laurence Sterne, Faulkner and Beckett can be seen as equally powerful competitors for the title of the effective promoter of the voice of tradition in the twentieth century literature, both displaying comic and tragicomic, serious and relieving and amusing in their pointedly diverging, contrastively varied ways. The debates can continue for decades (probably for as long as the term postmodernism stays in use) as to which of them more importantly introduced the stage at which the early modernism of Proust, Kafka and Joyce surpassed itself into the indeterminate plurality of fictional realities and meta-realities that bloomed in the latter half of the twentieth century.

## CONCLUSION

Faulkner's importance as a writer of grave, tragic themes has long been recognized. His comic sides were noticed early as well, but monographs on that subject took a considerable time to appear.

The pioneering work with Faulkner's comic has mostly been done in the last three decades of the 20th century. The German scholar Hans Bungert has provided an analysis of the influences on Faulkner by the tall tale writers of his native South, while also offering one of the first comprehensive classifications and functional analyses of the comic in Faulkner. Fred M. Robinson, developing and re-synthesizing Henri Bergson's metaphysical and aesthetic views, has provided a philosophical rendering of Faulkner's novel "As I Lay Dying", probing deep into the epistemological-linguistical structure of the world in that work. In Robinson's view, the development of a sense of the comic is inextricable from any creation of linguistic forms, but Faulkner's is one of the most condensed dramatizations of that development. Joel A. Hunt has published trailblazing articles on the influences of François Rabelais and Thomas Mann on Faulkner. John Rabbetts has examined the parallels in the tragicomic world views of Faulkner and Thomas Hardy. Ryuichi Yamaguchi, well acquainted with Faulkner's imaginative networks of relations, has studied the interaction of the tragic and the comic ("the bizarre") in the writer's first nine novels.

Of the findings of these researches, Hans Bungert's division of Faulkner's comic into the comedy of exaggeration, or of epicized tall tales, into verbal comedy, into the comedy of counterpoints and into the one of concealment, or of limited perception, has been followed, to different degrees, in the observation of a selection of works in this study. The stress in this work is not on Faulkner's folk humour, as in Bungert's approach, neither on his sarcasm, burlesques, and satires, as in the studies by Yamaguchi, but on the occasions when his comic borders on the sublime.

As Faulkner very much belonged to the traditional, even ancient type of a story-teller, the halts in his descriptive use of language – such as seemingly aberrant images, sentence structures apparently jamming the free flow of thought, choice of words calculated to bring along new associations and unexpected turns – cannot be fully separated from such elemental aspects of the craft as character and situation presentation. Faulkner's recurrent focuses on idiots and the other feeble-minded, on criminals "innocent" in their primitiveness, and on people clinging to some rigid stance towards life, all reflect the halting questioning way in which he aspired to explore the tragicomic mysteries of life. The direction in this study is from the small levels of descriptive language towards the tragicomic implications of social portrayals. Halts on an intermediary scale, such as flashbacks, counterpoints or comic codas, extensively studied by earlier scholars, are observed but given less analysis.

For the very complicated structures of the tragicomic in Faulkner, a method of observing halts has been employed throughout the study. Those halts range from the ones in descriptive language (growth and resolutions of suspense, Chapter One) and on various narrative levels (Chapter Two) through the ones depicted as occurring in social interaction and linguistic reliability (Chapter Three) to the ones in the view of the logic of history, discussed in Chapter Four, in which Faulkner's works are seen as a mirror reflecting the "frozen motion" of an "eternal return" (in Nietzsche's phrase) of the historical and yet timeless values that first flourished in the Greek and Roman antiquity. The relevance of these values for Faulkner's South, America and the whole West is interpreted through the shape and impact that they received in Faulkner's artistic self. Chapter Five finally took the concept of halts back to its original use by Faulkner in his critique of Sherwood Anderson, regarding the tragicomic as arising from Faulkner's own "halting questionings" on all textual levels, from the shortest phrases to his oeuvre.

In the Introduction, along with finding definitions for the tragicomic and the comedic, the principles of interpreting the comic according to the views of Henri Bergson were laid out. Whereas Bergson in his essay "Laughter" saw the essence of the comic as "something mechanical encrusted upon the living" (analyzing such instances on the levels of situations, language, and characters in the corresponding parts of his essay), the Bergsonian scholar F. M. Robinson has synthesized that approach with Bergson's general metaphysics. In his interpretation, the comic in literature is the dissolution of forms (that is, anything rigid, resistant to change, be it words, formulas, images, expressions, or character traits) in the flux of (non-linguistic) reality of which these forms are a function; in other words, the comic is a triumph of life expressed through the emergence and disappearance of the static forms resistant to the life current (and themselves a mere approximation to reality). Adding to this Immanuel Kant's definition of laughter as "an affection arising from a strained expectation being suddenly reduced to nothing", the basis for the following discussion of Faulkner's comic and tragicomic was attained. The Introduction also includes a survey of Faulkner's borrowings of comic motifs and character types from the humour of the American South, as provided by Hans Bungert. Bungert's classification of Faulkner's comic was overviewed as well, with especially his term of the comedy of limited perception being widely used in the following chapters.

Chapter One dealt with the tragicomic in episodic sharpness – "episodic" being an adjective characteristic of all of Faulkner's imaginative expression. Such sharpness occurs, in a way strongly resembling visual arts and photography, in scenes of "frozen movement", a term long used in Faulkner studies. On the purely stylistic level, the counterpart to the "frozen movement" is the hiatus, a concept first defined and tentatively employed in Chapter One. The hiatuses are defined as stops in the linear progression of the narrative, often directly involving the original use of one or a combination of several figures of speech. Hiatus-like groupings of images into textual moments of

arrest also occur in Shakespeare, as shown with a quotation from "Macbeth". The analogies with the English drama writer are also extendable to Faulkner's verbally achieved cinematographic effects, with the "frozen movements" and hiatuses, in their union of stasis and dynamism, being an approximate equivalent to still shots taken of objects in action.

Among Faulkner's works, the one richest in the use of hiatuses is the novel "As I Lay Dying". Accordingly, a selection of various types of the device from that work are quoted and analyzed. It is not necessary to apply the concept of hiatus on situational levels but traces of it are found in the halting effects produced by long rhetoric periods in the story "Old Man".

The chapter also includes a development of the theory of oscillation as an inherent quality of the comic by Immanuel Kant, contained in the quotations "/A/ joke must have something in it capable of momentarily deceiving us. Hence, when the semblance vanishes into nothing, the mind looks back in order to try it over again, and thus by a rapidly succeeding tension and relaxation it is jerked to and fro and put in oscillation" and "/m/usic /---/ and what provokes laughter are two kinds of play with aesthetic ideas, or even with representations of the understanding, by which, all said and done, nothing is thought. By mere force of change they yet are able to afford lively gratification". Synthesized with the observations of halts and hiatuses, the comic oscillations establish a foundation for the approaches to follow. In Faulkner's numerous comedies of the limited perception, the unconscious comedy of the narrator's or protagonist's perspective covers and gradually reveals the non-comic, often tragic, subject matter like a veil; however, once the suspense is resolved, a deeper sense of comic as the joy of existence appears as an aspect of the very non-comic, bridging the gap of the narration and reality, causing a climactic sensation of hiatus in the logic of expectations, a hiatus as the source of the comic sense in Kantian terms. Style, choice of syntax and vocabulary, imagery, narrative perspective, turns of plot, all serve the sense of oscillation which makes the comic falls into the unexpected possible.

In Chapter Two, the tragicomic growth and resolution of suspense in various narrative structures (from the stylistic to situations and character traits) of a number of Faulkner's works was viewed. At the beginning of the chapter, it was noted that very frequent in Faulkner are farcical elements which need not even entail a sensation of the comic and the tragicomic. But when they do, the contradictory effect of the low and the sublime is powerful. In such cases, the sublime feelings emerge as a reaction to the impression of the grotesque or the farcical.

In an analysis of the Benjy section of the novel "The Sound and the Fury", the idiot Benjy was found capable of sensing life only as disconnected, separate forms, movements only as states, therefore suffering from an abnormal rigidity of mind, comic in the Bergsonian, mechanistic sense. However, in certain poetic passages a different kind of Benjy's consciousness emerges: one which through primitive intuitive metaphors of sensation is

capable of sharing its existence with the fluidity of the non-human universe. Paradoxically, then, Benjy is at once one of the most rigid and of the most fluid creations of Faulkner, comic and tragic in a profound, perplexing way.

In view of one of Faulkner's last novels, "The Mansion", the ingenuity with which he elaborated on a motif borrowed from Rabelais was discussed. The borrowing was discovered by Joel A. Hunt. In his argument, Hunt has pointed out the comic parallels between Faulkner's trickster figure in that episode, Ratliff, and Rabelais's character Panurge. Generalizing from their affinity, Hunt emphasizes the development of the narratorial voice towards one of popular ethos in Faulkner's later works. Important for this study in that observation is the contribution of that popular ethos to Faulkner's growth from earlier irrational individualized visions into the comedic qualities of him as a social researcher and analyst.

On the basis of two versions of Faulkner's narrative "The Spotted Horses", an exploration of the author's wide-ranging use of hyperbolic imagery was undertaken. The finds in the narratives included metaphors and similes from areas encompassing images with people, images involving biological objects, the ones involving inanimate nature, ones involving substances; images with tools, with other man-made objects; with ghosts, with cultural prototypes; and images with body parts and with bodily functions. Many of these images were comically stunning, or even seemingly inappropriate in the detachment from the object designated, all displaying a hyperbolism, dizzily taking unexpected turns in the reader's expectations (and therefore viewable, by extension, as related to the concept of hiatus). In the hyperbolic devilry that happens when the wild ponies break free in "The Spotted Horses" (along with the mortification befalling the naïve characters who bought them) there was seen a prefiguration of the later school of magic realism.

In the short story "A Portrait of Elmer", the comic was found, next to the hilarious twists of the plot and the impressionist, playful lyricisms, in the bold use of new compound words spelt together and suggesting surreal associations, in the vein of similar original neologisms by James Joyce in "Ulysses". The comic in the only mature story which Faulkner wrote solely for amusement, "Afternoon of a Cow", was seen in the conveyance of an entirely low-life, even embarrassing subject matter through the select vocabulary and highly formal syntax of 18th and 19th century British prose classics, contrasted with the ungrammatical Black vernacular.

In the first component story of the novel "Go Down, Moses", "Was", another occasion of the "comedy of concealment", or of limited perception, was found. Set mainly in a jovial comic key, an instance of frontier humour, it nevertheless presents a harsh satire of the hypocrisies and injustices of the antebellum South, with Blacks and women shown as exchange items, and the ridiculous pretensions of the planter families revealed. It was demonstrated to share motifs and character types with the Italian tradition of *commedia dell'arte*, and was found possessing the flavour of the lighter comedies of

Shakespeare which, as in Shakespeare, does not rule out the seriousness of certain topics.

“Pantaloone in Black”, another component of “Go Down, Moses”, whose title refers to *commedia dell’arte*, is paradoxical in uniting a character, comic in the rigidity of his primitive “innocence”, with a series of entirely sombre events that befall him or which he performs. The title is seen as containing the code of that tragicomic paradox. All in all, the story has been viewed as one of Faulkner’s most unique syntheses of the morbid and the laughable, and as embodying one of the most unexpected halts in the logic of emotional reasoning.

Unfortunately, despite the intellectual weight of many of Thomas Hardy’s episodes, his works are easily reducible to the image of melodrama, more easily so than Faulkner’s. In a short discussion about the similarities and differences in Hardy’s and Faulkner’s tragicomic visions, using quotes from John Rabbetts in his book “From Hardy to Faulkner. Wessex to Yoknapatawpha”, Faulkner was observed as sharing “Hardy’s habitual irony /---/ a double-edged weapon which even in his most impassioned tragedies is frequently used to undercut the pathos of his protagonists’ experiences.” Both writers were noted to use the device of comic codas as a counterweight, such as the ones in Hardy’s novel “The Woodlanders” and in Faulkner’s “Light in August”, with Faulkner’s final chapter about Byron Bunch’s amorous pursuit of Lena Grove being a comic counterpoint to the preceding high tragedy (and a development of the Southern tall tale motifs of courtship and a shy lover). The sublimity of a tragicomedy was detected in both writers when their characters, often imbued with the sociocultural mores of their time, contact with the phenomena expressing the aeons of non-human nature, a particularly striking example of which from Hardy’s “A Pair of Blue Eyes”, along with parallels in Faulkner, were provided. Both writers widely employed folk humour, frequently deepened by fatalism. A comparison of Faulkner with the Irish writer W. B. Yeats most of all showed the similarities in both the writers using the comic potentials of juxtaposing formal and informal speech levels and expressions, as well as noble and commonplace characters. A tragicomic atmosphere to a plot in both writers may be achieved through some dark, haunting presence of unseen powers, addressed by the characters but left unidentified.

At the end of Chapter Two, it was concluded that the number of Faulkner’s devices of conveying the comic and the tragicomic can hardly be all-inclusive because, as John Rabbetts writes, Faulkner’s is a creation of “entire imaginative worlds which cannot ever be fully described or contained”. The comic and tragicomic devices looked upon in that chapter included deliberate withholding of meaning, selective provision of information, direct ridicule through anecdotal tricks, rich hyperbolic imagery with surprising allusions and colloquialisms, lexical innovations, gradual revelations of hidden motifs, juxtapositions of contrastive narrative lines, ironies of fictional fates,

comic codas, and suggestive presences-in-absence – all as full of the joy and pain of existence, as thick with tragicomic instances, as life itself.

Chapter Three presented a contrastive study of embarrassing love relationships such as occur in the episode with the idiot boy Ike and the cow in Faulkner's novel "The Hamlet", and in Thomas Mann's early short stories with artistic themes. While both authors use sparkling irony mingled with compassion, the settings in their narratives are vastly different, the dignified interiors in Mann's stories establishing a formidable contrast to Faulkner's stables and rustic landscapes. The more ironic it is, that the sodomitic lover in Faulkner's episode bears a notable resemblance, in his postures, faltering steps and mutterings, to Mann's educated lovers of refined European beauties. The highly poetic and lyrical passages in both authors, sharing the density and intensity of classical allusions, point at a similarity verging on the interchangeable, that has perhaps been overlooked. Musical qualities, especially those related to romantic composers like Wagner, can be followed in both authors' narratives. The finale of Faulkner's idiot and cow "eloping" and finding each other in the idyllic countryside at sunset, is interpreted as a love-in-death (or ecstasy-in-darkness) motif, common in the operas of Wagner and expressed in the musical elevations in Mann's short story "Tristan".

After the cow episode, accompanied by stylistic examples from Mann, attention is paid to Faulkner's and Mann's shared interest in depicting other kinds of complicated love relationships. The motif of incest is viewed, with incestuous relations regarded as the ultimate anti-social halt of human interaction, different from but as rich in negative connotations as the usual view of sodomy. In a comparison of Faulkner's and Mann's artistic selves, the conclusion is reached that to fulfil his aspirations Faulkner was impelled to undertake a process, more radical than Mann's, of distillation, from an environment unfriendlier to aesthetic values, of previously unexplored teleological potentials of his background: such as the questions of how the collective self-reflections, derived from mythicized traditions, were to or could be interpreted in the uniqueness of the early modern society of America, consciously attempting to break ties with centuries dominated by the thought of the Old World. Proceeding from this conclusion, a number of key aspects within and beneath Faulkner's fiction, universalizing the claims from the specific historical context, have been observed in the following chapters.

Chapter Four forms a notable contrast to the long stylistic classifications found in parts of Chapter Two, as instead of observing the comic traits in Faulkner's use of language, it concentrates on the tragicomic inclinations in the perceptiveness and sensitivity of characters as projections of the authorial self. The chapter proceeded from the application of the comedy of limited perception, or of deception, with its primal childlike or even childish expectations, to the gravity of the sociocultural issues that form the background, the spiritual environment of Faulkner's oeuvre. As noted before, that type of comedy, the most characteristic of Faulkner, consists of the gradual revelation of the non-comic through a comic prism. The factors of the

tragedy of being male in Faulkner's time and place were discussed, with the experience of male tragedy seen as a prerequisite of the conditions from which the achievement of a fictional male *commedia* could develop.

In his formative years of youth, Faulkner was influenced by trends in literature led by homosexuals. The models of antiquity with their bacchanal and languidly homoerotic ideals exerted an influence on Faulkner as well. Unlike the case with Thomas Mann, Faulkner's own possible homoerotic tendencies have not been documented but they cannot be excluded. A hidden form of homoeroticism, however spiritual (the platonic passion possibly being the most powerful of all), which by definition belongs to the type of sexuality not directed towards procreation but solely, in artists, towards aesthetic joy, may have been a source for the emergence of Faulkner's tragicomic vision of male individuals, incapable of establishing satisfactory, trusting unions with women.

Also discussed in Chapter Four was the universal possessive inclination in people as a tragicomic resource when it develops into obsessions, viewable as another halt in social relations. The comedy of limited perception as a universalizing device in specific historical contexts is connected with the myth of antiquity, with its comic and tragic heritage, as a recurrent reflection of ever-lasting problems. The tragicomic limits of social self-images are often tested by the adherence to, or negation of, such dominant myths as the myth of antiquity. In a comparison of Faulkner's novel "The Wild Palms" with Johann Wolfgang Goethe's novel "Elective Affinities" ("Die Wahlverwandschaften"), similarities were found between the two works, especially in the grim persistence of their ethical messages, but also in the details of plot developments.

As concluded at the end of Chapter Four, taken as a whole, the tragicomic sense in Faulkner's works is conveyed and governed by a principle of contrast: alternating scenery, contrastive situations, juxtaposition of the hilarious and the grave – a method found in the plays of Shakespeare (both his tragedies, comedies, and histories), and in the music of Beethoven – a contrast less evident, though also present, in the works of the writers of antiquity.

Having arrived at the most typical aspects of Faulkner's tragicomic focus: the discovery around and within himself of the possessive inclination by a hypersensitive, uncorrupted, maidenly youth; the nearly unrestrained life through senses, sensualism, instead of clearly defined roles in the social life as the way to give meaning to one's existence; the confusion in an expanding world of ever more divergent and ungraspable identities; and the entrapment in the biological and social existence of the particular time in history which is both shackles and a way to realize one's freedom by accepting one's responsibilities; the central type of Faulkner's tragicomic characters was reached. The examples listed included Quentin Compson of "The Sound and the Fury", Henry Sutpen of "Absalom, Absalom!", young Bayard Sartoris of "The Unvanquished" (1938) and Charles Mallison of "Intruder in the Dust" (1948), "The Town" (1955) and "The Mansion" (1957), but especially

Vardaman of "As I Lay Dying", Isaac McCaslin of "Go Down, Moses", and Lucius Priest of "The Reivers" (1962).

Chapter Five focused on the transcendence of tragicomic oscillations of suspense between the expected and the unexpected onto all narrative levels. The roots of Faulkner's overall sense of the tragicomic were sought for in his psychosocial specifics (in a comparison with Hermann Hesse's novel "Demian", Faulkner was found relatively incapable of portraying true friendships, a trait perhaps mirroring his own loneliness). These psychosocial specifics were explained partly in terms of the American South at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century having been a society with a strong sense of history, providing its members with values and meaningful links to other lives, while as a whole marginalized in the larger American and Western contexts. From this paradoxical position, the equally paradoxical oscillations of Faulkner between the grief and liberties of loneliness and the joys and burdens of social obligations seem to have sprung, which were then echoed in the fabric of his writings, from the smallest textual levels to the largest.

The phenomenon of the grotesque, intensely studied in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Wolfgang Kayser and Mikhail Bakhtin, was found occasionally to emerge in Faulkner in a form close to the original sense of the concept as used in the 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, or as a verbal counterpart to the pictorial entwining of human and non-human forms, causing the sensation of extrasensory, even metaphysical experience, but relatively uninfluenced by the muddle of contradictory, derived meanings, from the low to the ghoulish, which the centuries of chaotic literary interpretations have heaped on the concept. As occasions of such primary-sense grotesque, examples from the chapter "The Bear" of the novel "Go, Down Moses" were quoted.

On the basis of such instances as the hypothetically empathic passages of the Benjy section of "The Sound and the Fury", the story "Afternoon of a Cow", and especially the cow episode of "The Hamlet", it was proved that Faulkner sometimes employs a deliberate inappropriateness of style to the subject matter (the more inappropriately described as it may even appear impervious to any successful verbal representation), which has been termed a "harmonious wrongness" in reference to similar endeavours by James Joyce. Or more precisely, Faulkner uses a combination of different linguistic levels, the only way, as Yuri Lotman has implied in his "Culture and Explosion", of arriving at any kind of authentic correspondence to the non-linguistic reality. As deliberate "lies", such inappropriate stylistic devices are comic in their mastery and self-contained persuasiveness, but their detachment from the non-linguistic truth invests them with the sublimity of a tragicomedy. The inauthenticity of perceiving or rendering reality was seen as overcome in spontaneous narrowings of a character's or of authorial focus, momentary halts of expectations which constitute the elemental act of creation and open, through psychic spectralization, revelatory perspectives on the vastness of the truths of the universe. Beginning with James Joyce, such halts have been called epiphanies. Thus, the view of various halts and oscillations was

synthesized into one of epiphanic effects. The ability to experience epiphanies, either on the narratorial or character levels, was seen as the factor that gives Faulkner's works their triumphantly tragicomic and comedic qualities. It can be concluded that Faulkner seldom makes light-hearted jokes, he may not even be particularly humorous, but he is, organically and indomitably, and often sublimely, comic.

At the end of his monograph „The Comedy of Language“, Fred Miller Robinson quotes Humbert Humbert's description in Nabokov's „Lolita“, of the comic artist: „We all admire the spangled acrobat with classical grace meticulously walking his tight rope in the talcum light; but how much rarer art there is in the sagging rope expert wearing scarecrow clothes and impersonating a grotesque drunk!“ (cited in: Robinson 1980: 177). It is precisely when his strenuous stretching leads to creating characters and resolutions uncomfortably outside his personal limitations, like Linda Snopes Kohl of the novel „The Mansion“ who is in some ways beyond the author's grasp, that Faulkner, as in a meta-textual counterpoint, deliberately seems to reduce himself to such an impersonator of a grotesque scarecrow drunk walking a sagging rope, the sublimely tense „walking /the/ tightrope between the ridiculous – between the bizarre and the terrible“ of his own phrase having finally resolved into something at once more relieving and more demanding, that takes the topic of the comic and the tragicomic in Faulkner to where all stories inevitably end: silence.

## SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Käesoleva ingliskeelse doktoritöö “The Comic and the Tragicomic in the Works of William Faulkner” – “Koomiline ja tragikoomiline William Faulkneri loomingus” eesmärgiks on uurida koomika ja tragikoomika rakendusvõtteid ja avaldumisvorme William Faulkneri (1897–1962) loomingus, teoreetiliseks põhialuseks Immanuel Kanti, Henri Bergsoni ja Fred Miller Robinsoni arutlused koomika teemal. Väitekirja taotlus põhineb selle autori veendumusel, et koomilisus ja tragikoomilisus on Faulkneri üks olemuslikumaid tunnusjooni, mille avamine võimaldab kõige paremini uurida kirjaniku humanistlikku sõnumit tervikuna: seega pole teemas sisalduvad mõisted eesmärk omaette, vaid tee, mis aitab mõista kirjaniku teoste kestva kõnekuse põhjuseid. Koomikaga on seostatud lõigud Kanti teosest “Otsustusvõime kriitika” (1790), kus ta muuhulgas väidab: “Naljas peab olema midagi, mis meid hetkeks ära petab. Ja seetõttu, kui näiline mulje hajub, vaatab teadvus tagasi, et seda uuesti läbi proovida, ja nõnda, kiiresti vahelduva pinge ja lõtvumise kaudu liigub teadvus edasi-tagasi ning pannakse võnkuma” ning “/m/uusika ja see, mis naerma ajab, on kaht liiki mängud esteetiliste ideedega või isegi mõistmise kujutusviisidega, mis läbi kokkuvõttes midagi öelda ei taheta. Ometi on nad pelgal muutuse jõul suutelised elavat rahuldust pakkuma”. Henri Bergson oma teoses “Naer: essee koomika tähendusest” (1900) seletab koomikat jäikusega, “millegi mehaanilisega, mis elavale peale surutakse” ning seega kõiksuse alalise muutumise ja vooluga kontrasti moodustab; Fred Miller Robinson, kes Bergsoni ideid edasi arendab, aga käsitab keelt kui seisundeid, mitte liikumist väljendavat vormide kogumit loomuldasa jäigana, seega koomilisena, ning peab parimaiks koomikuiks neid kirjanikke (nagu James Joyce ja Faulkner), kes seda keele ja tegelikkuse vastuolu kõige dramaatilisemalt kujutavad.

Väitekirjas on rõhk juhtudel, kus koomika puutub kokku ülevaga (ka ülevuse käsituses tuginetakse Kantile). Tragikoomilist mõistetakse avaramalt kui “halenaljakat”; see on teadvuse võnkumine ootamatu tunnetustühiku piiril, kus kõrgema intellektuaalse tundege tajutakse ülevat.

Uurimus jaguneb sissejuhatuseks, viieks peatükiks ja kokkuvõtteks. Töö suund on konkreetsetelt tekstivaatlustelt üldistatuma käsitluse poole. Lisaks koomikale ja tragikoomikale eristatakse komööodialikku tahku Faulkneris, mis tähistab autori koguloomingu eepilist paljuhõlmavust, sotsiaalset haaret, emotsionaalset intensiivsust, läbivat struktureeritust ning kokkuvõttes optimistlikult meelestatud edusuunitlust. Mõiste “komööodialik” aluseks on maailmakirjanduses tuntuks saanud Dante ja Balzaci “komöödiad”. Säärane mõisteeritus on vajalik, sest kirjanik, kes on konkreetsetel juhtudel koomiline, ei tarvitse olla komööodialik, ega vastupidi, kuid nagu näidatakse, on Faulkner mõlemat.

Üheks kesksamaks koomika avaldumisvormiks on Faulkneril “piiratud tajumuse koomika”, mis on üks selle kirjaniku neljast koomilise põhiliigist (ülejäanud on liialduste ehk hüperboolide ehk eepiliste luiskelugude koomika, keelekoomika ja kontrapunktiline koomika), nagu on oma klassifikatsioonis näidanud saksa uurija Hans Bungert. Piiratud tajumuse koomika avaldub sel-

les, kui tõsiseid sündmusi esitatakse taipamatu või naiivse jutustaja või peategelase silmade läbi, miskaudu mittekoomiline või traagiline koomilise varjundi omandab (samasse liiki kuulub ka see, kui mitte eriti tõsist taipamatuse tõttu liiga traagiliselt tõlgendatakse). Kuid nagu on ühes noorpõlve-esses, mida sissejuhatuses tsiteeritakse, märkinud James Joyce, kujutab koomikatunne endast “sügavat tajumis- ja reageerimisvõimet asjade olemuse suhtes”, seega hõlmab koomiline lähenemisviis tegelikult ka mittekoomilist, liidab selle ühe ja sama elujaatava meelelaadi osaks. Niisiis on piiratud tajumuse koomika “petlikkus” tegelikult näiline, sest samal ajal kui loor mittekoomiliselt kerkib, ilmnevad ka mittekoomilises kätkevad, tõelises tähenduses koomilised aspektid.

Teadvuse kokkupuude tühikuga loogilistes ootustes, mis ajutiselt “petab” ja seeläbi teadvuse pinevusseisundis võnkuma paneb, seisakud (“halts”) tajumuste ja interaktsiooni protsessis, mille kaudu jäigastunud tunnetusvormid purunevad ning mingi kõrgem tõetundmus nagu paisu tagant vallandub (Kanti, Bergsoni, Robinsoni ja Bungerti tähelepanekute süntees) – selline on järelikult gnoseoloogiline alus koomika ja tragikoomika käsitlemiseks Faulkneri loomingu näidetes.

Lisaks säärase teoreetilise lähenemise algvaidete esitamisele on sissejuhatuses antud ülevaade kriitikute tõlgendustest Faulkneri koomika teemal läbi Faulkneri-uurimise ajaloo. Kuigi enamik on tunnistanud kirjanikul tugevaid koomikaelemente, on ülekaalus siiski tragikoomiline tõlgendus, leitakse, et koomika pole Faulkneril, erinevalt kitsas mõttes humoristidest, mitte eesmärgiks, vaid üheks jutustuse dramatiseerimise vahendiks.

Sissejuhatuses on käsitletud ka ameerika kirjaniku Sherwood Andersoni arvatavasti tugevat formeerivat mõju Faulkneri tragikoomika eripärale. Lõunaosariiklasest eelkäijas Mark Twainis ei nähta niivõrd otsest mõjutajat kui teatud piirides vaimusugulast, kelle hingelähedust Faulkner pigem ala- kui ületheadvustas. Lihtne eristus, nagu oleks Twain ülekaalukalt koomiline, Faulkner aga traagiline kirjanik, kummutatakse, sest ka Twain, eriti oma tõsisemates teostes nagu “Huckleberry Finn” ja “Elu Mississippil”, viljeleb valusnaljakat, lõbusust, kurbust ja hirmuäratavat ühendavat kirjelduslaadi.

Sissejuhatusse kuulub läbivaade Hans Bungerti saksakeelse monograafia “William Faulkner ja Ameerika lõunaosariikide humoristlik traditsioon” sellest osast, kus ta analüüsib 19. sajandi Lõuna luiskelugude (“tall tales”) autorite mõjusid Faulkneri teostes; vaadeldud on ülekandunud motiive, tegelastüüpe ja iseloomulikke olukordi. Märkida tuleb käesoleva väitekirja rõhuasetust Faulkneri paralleelidele laiemas mõttes maailma, eriti Euroopa kirjandusega. Kui senised uurijad, sealhulgas Bungert, on vaadelnud kirjanikku eeskätt (omas ajas õigustatult) Ameerika lõunaosariikide traditsiooni kontekstis, või vähemasti eelistanud toonitada USA-siseseid seoseid, siis kaudsemad ühendusjooned Euroopa kirjandusega on jäänud vähemuurituks. Just seetõttu vaadeldakse väitekirjas paralleele niisuguste kirjanikega nagu Goethe, Hardy, Yeats, Thomas Mann, Bulgakov.

Esimeses peatükis “Koomilise ja tragikoomilise loomine otsustamatuse läbi Faulkneri teostes” käsitletakse esmalt Faulkneri varaseimat tragikoomilist meistriteost, novelli “Loojak” (1925). Selles avaldub juba küpsele kirjanikule omaseid tugevusi ja eripärasid: pinge meisterlik kasvatamine, paradoksaalsed situatsioonid, oma naiivses “süütuses” kaasaelamist ja kurba muiet esilekutsuma kurjategija motiiv, lahenduse ülevus ja traagika, samuti rassiteema. Järgnevalt on vaatluse all neli hilisemat Faulkneri novelli “Laudasüütaja”, “Sindlid Issandale”, “Pikad mehed” ja “Karujaht”. Jälgitakse muuhulgas selliseid võtteid nagu raamjutustusega seonduvad kahekordsed kulminatsioonid ning ettenägematud pöörded oodatud koomikast traagilisse, samuti keelekoomikat. Üldiselt on esimese peatüki rõhk Faulknerile iseloomulikul episoodilisel teravusel, kus tegevuse kulg justkui aeglustub ning fookus aheneb eriti tähendusrikkale “pildile”. Niisugust nähtust on uurija Darrel Abel ja paljud teised nimetanud “tardunud liikumiseks” (“frozen movement”). Analoogiat võib leida Shakespeare’i näidendite pikkades monoloogides, mille kujundikogumid otsestest mõttes ei teeni draama arengut, kaudses mõttes aga seda veelgi võimendavad. Katseliselt võtab käesoleva väitekirja autor kasutusele mõiste “hiaatus” ehk “tühik”. See tähistab ootamatut seisakut teose loogikas ja seda on määratletud kui “lineaarset narratiivi edasiviiva informatsiooni tagasihoidmist viisuaalsete või muul viisil mällusööbivate kujundite ning kollektiivsete metafooride või võrdluste teel, mis sageli kavatsetult teenib narratiivi dramaatilise tonaalsuse kõrgendamise eesmärki”. Samuti võib hiaatust määratleda kui “tühikut kas stiili, kujundistiku või episoodide tasandil, millesse kuulub kliimaks (huviäratavuse ja emotsionaalse kaasahaaravuse kasv) ning järgnev antikliimaks (äkiline üleminek oodatavalt tähenduslikkusele ootamatule). Sageli seostuvad hiaatusega sellised kõnekujundid nagu hüperbool, litootes, apooria või prosopopeia. Pärast alapeatükki, milles vaatluse all hiaatuse ja “tardunud liikumise” tihe seos Faulkneri ülddramaatilise omapäraga (juba nendes nähtustes kätkevas staasis ja dünaamika sünteesis nähakse traagiliselt suurejoonelise ning koomilis-naerdava ühendust), keskendutakse vastava võtte avaldamisele romaanis “Kui ma olin suremas” (1930). Valitud tsitaatide näitel käsitletakse hiaatuse tüüpilisi ja erijuhtumeid, kusjuures kõige rohkem näiteid pakub romaani skisofreenikust tegelane Darl Bundren. Peatüki lõpus otsitakse hiaatuse esinemisjuhte jutustusest “Vanamees” (1939), milles need ilmnevad väiksema episoodilise teravusega, pigem sulandunult retooriliste perioodide tulva.

Järgnevate peatükkide põhiline rõhuasetus tunnetuslikus plaanis kandub tragikoomikale, mille tekitab kitsas mõttes inimlik-kultuurilise vastuolu keelega haaramatu, inimajas mõõdetamatu loodusliku eksistentsiga inimeste sees ja ümber, teadvuse hälvetega maailmakõiksuse paradoksidesse, millega kokupuutes ootuste loogika seiskub ja vangub. Rakenduslikul tasandil saab üha suuremat tähelepanu Faulkneri võime mitmekihiliste keeleabstaktsioonidega neid vastuolusid ja paradokse “nähtavaks” muuta.

Teise peatüki põhisisu võtab kokku selle pealkiri “Tragikoomika vahendid valikus Faulkneri teostest”. Peatüki alguses käsitletakse lühidalt Faulkneri

valdavalt sünete farsside suhet tema tragikoomikasse. Nenditakse, et mitmetel puhkudel ei ole kirjaniku farsilikkuses ei erilist koomikat ega ülevust, kuid kui viimaseid adutakse, siis paradoksaalse reaktsioonina groteskile ja jandile. Uurimuses ongi keskendunud juhtumeile, milles pelgast farsilikkusest siiski mingi kõrgem koomiline tundmus välja kujuneb.

Romaani “Hälin ja raev” (1929) kõigis neljas osas esineb tegevuses kõrvalkaldeid ja seisakuid, mida tinglikult võiks vaadelda “hiaatustena episoodide tasemel”. Mõnele sellisele on ka viidatud. Romaani esimeses jaotuses ehk “Benjy osas” satub lugeja idioodi teadvuse maailma, kus põhjuslike seoste tajumine puudub ning sündmusi nähakse üksnes juhuslikult vahelduvate seisundite jadana: selles suhtes on Benjy teadvus jäik, mehhaaniline, Bergsoni mõistes koomiline. Samas on see teadvus ajuti suuteline võimsaid metafoore tulvil lüüristeks puhanguteks ning tajub sääraseid argielus tundmatuid maailma ürgrütme, et võib rääkida sellest kui reaalsuse voolu loomulikust osast, ühest kõige voolsamast Faulkneri loodud mikrokosmosest üldse. Niisiis osutub Benjy ühtaegu äärmuslikult koomiliseks ja äärmuslikult traagiliseks tegelaseks, kelle sisemonoloog kummastab ja olemasolu mõistatustesse süüvima paneb. (Selles alapeatükis on kasutatud tähelepanekuid Jaapani uurija Ryuichi Yamaguchi monograafiast.)

Faulkneri hilisromaanis “Häärber” (1959) leidub koomiline episood, milles ausameelne Ratliff petturlikule poliitikuhaakatsisele urineerivate koertega vembu mängib. Uurija Joel A. Hunt on tõestanud, et see motiiv, olgugi uues leidlikus lahenduses, pärineb otseselt François Rabelais’ romaanist “Pantagruel”. Väitekirjas on käsitletud kahe kirjaniku analoogiliste vembumeeste seostust rahvaliku moraaltundega, kusjuures hilisemas Faulkneris süvenenud rabelais’lik vaimulaad toetab teesi tema laiahaardeliselt optimistlikust suunitlusest.

Kahes versioonis eksisteeriva narratiivi “Laigulised hobused” hüperboolitulva vaadeldakse konkreetsete kujundinäidete varal, jagades kõik teoses leiduvad võrdlused ja metafoorid temaatilistesse klassidesse. Kujundite ootamatud, rabavad assotsiatsioonid võimaldavad neid kaudselt seostada esimeses peatükis käsitletud hiaatuse mõistega. Lisaks on vaadeldud keelekoomikat. Teoses avalduv peadpööriv sündmuste virrvarr, nii-öelda vaba langemine moraaltühiku sügavustesse, meenutab Mihhail Bulgakovi saatana-teema arendusi (kuid väiksema üleloomulikkuse komponendiga), samas võib tegelaskujude hüperboliseerituses aimata hilisema kirjandusnähtuse, maagilise realismi eelmärke.

Kaks Faulkneri novelli, mille suunitlus ülekaalukalt humoorikas, pakuvad omapäraseid näiteid keelekoomikast. Teoses “Elmeri portree” avaldub see lüürikselt mänglevates lõikudes, milles tuntud sõnad teistesse sõnaliikidesse kanduvad, ning ootamatutes liitsõnades, mille sürrealistlike seoseid tekitav uudsus meenutab James Joyce’i neologisme romaanis “Ulysses”. Piinlikkustundega segatud koomiline fookus valitseb ka novelli süžees. “Lehma pärastlõuna” on Faulkneri ainus puhtal kujul meeelahutusena kavandatud novell. Äärmiselt lihtlabane ja piinlikkusttekitavate detailidega vahejuhtum on esita-

tud 18. ja 19. sajandi briti proosaklassikute keerulises lauseehituses ja valitud, peenutseva maiguga sõnavara abil, millest tekib koomiline kontrast. Seda võimaldab veelgi mustanahalise kõrvaletegelase ebagrammatiline murdekeel. Teemaaliselt on novell seotud kolmandas peatükis vaadeldava "lehmaepisoodiga" romaanist "Küla" ning esindab samamoodi sihilikult "kohatu" stiili meisterlikku kasutamist.

Koostislood "Oli" ja "Must pajats" romaanist novellides "Mine tagasi, Mooses" (1942) seostuvad mõlemad itaalia *commedia dell'arte* mõjudega. Teos "Oli" jälgib lõbustav-satiirilisel Kodusõja eelse aja valgete istanduseomanike veidraid nõrkusi ja silmakirjalikkust. Tegu on piiratud tajumuse koomika ühe puhtama avaldusega. Itaalia näidendite koomilist traditsiooni kehas tab eelkõige riukaliku teenri kuju. "Must pajats" esindab paradoksaalset sünteesi koomiliste tunnusoontega protagonistist, kelle lugu ja saatus on ülekaalukalt traagilised. Mõlemad novellid näitavad ilmekalt, millise orgaanilise ühendusjõuga oskas Faulkner rakendada maailmakirjanduse mõjusid oma kodukoha ainestikul, nii et tulemuseks ühtne rikastav elamus.

Teise peatüki lõpetavad Faulkneri koomika ja tragikoomika lühemad võrdlused Thomas Hardy ja W. B. Yeatsi vastavate rakendusvõtetega. Võrdlustes Hardyga on tuginetud peamiselt John Rabbettsi märkustele raamatus "Faulknerist Hardyni. Wessexist Yoknapatawphani". Leitakse, et mõlemat kirjanikku iseloomustavad üldiselt fatalistlikku nägemust mahendav iroonilishumorikas kõrvalpilk, rahvapärane, folkloorse koomilise ainese kasutamine ning traagiliste süžeeleiniidiga paralleele moodustavad kõrvalliinid või "koomilised koodad". Kirjanike loomingust tuuakse konkreetseid näiteid tragikoomilise vastasseisu kohta inimteadvusest ja kultuurilis-ajaloolisest sfäärist väljapoole jäävaga. Faulkneri tragikoomilised analoogiad Yeatsi näidenditega avalduvad formaalse ja mitteformaalse keelepruugi (stiili) kontrastiivses kasutamises ning üllaste kangelaste vastandamises koomiliste või grotesksete tüüpidega (Yeatsil näiteks narrid ja sandid). Tragikoomika erijuhtumina esineb mõlemal kirjanikul nähtamatu, tumeda jõu kohalolek, mille või kelle poole pöördumisega paljastavad tegelased oma hirmu ja abitut teadmatust.

Kolmas peatükk "Teleoloogilised otsingud tragikoomika vallas: Faulkner ja Thomas Mann" võrdleb pealkirjas nimetatud kahe kirjaniku teostes leiduvaid seisakuid sotsiaalses interaktsioonis, rõhuga sellistel hälvetel nagu ühiskonnas ühel või teisel moel keelatud armusuhted. Esimene ja pikim alapeatükk põhineb Faulkneri romaani "Küla" kolmanda osa "Pikk suvi" 2. peatüki kontrastiivsel kõrvutamisel Manni varaste novellidega "Väike härra Friedemann" ja "Tristan" ning pisut hilisema "Surmaga Veneetsias". Faulkneri narratiiv kujutab idioodist poisi Ike Snopesi kõikehaaravat armastust lehma vastu algelistes maa-oludes. Kontrast Manni suurilmalike taustade, haritud armastajate ning peente iludustega on määratu, ometi valitsevad mõlema kirjaniku armastajakujude tragikoomilistes poosides, liigutustes, reaktsioonides ning pateetilises õhinas hämmastavad sarnasused. Tuues arvukalt näiteid kõigest vaatlusalustest teostest, nähakse Faulkneri loos kaugemaleulatuvat, see tähendab äärmuslikumalt iroonilis-romantilises võtmes arendust nendestsamadest

wagnerlikest ja nietzschelikest motiividest, mis aluseks Manni novellidele. Mõlema kirjaniku puhul esineb labase ja üleva kõrvutamist, poeetilises kõrgstiilis tundepaisutusi, hulganisti antiigiteemalisi allusioone. Faulkneri peatüki võimsale finaalile, milles “armastajad” päikeseloojangul (wagnerlik “ühine mine-surmas”-motiiv) teineteist leiavad, vastab Manni muusikaliste motiivide eksalteeritus.

Teises alapeatükis on kõne all verepilastuse teema, mille näiteid pakuvad Manni novell “Völsungite veri” ja romaan “Väljavalitu” ning Faulkneri romaanid “Hälin ja raev” ja “Mine tagasi, Mooses”. Verepilastuses nähakse kultuurilise ja loodusliku piiride lõhkumist, viimase astme ummikut ja seisakut normaalses inimsuhetes, mille eesmärk kirjandusteoses on kummastada lugejat rahutukstegeva ootuste tühikuga. Kolmas alapeatükk keskendub sellele, kuidas Mann ja Faulkner oma kultuurikeskkonnas kasutadaolevat müütilist ainet rakendasid. Tõdetakse, et ühiskondliku alusmaterjali kunstiline teendamisprotsess, mille Faulkner pidi uute tunnetussihptide selgitamiseks käsile võtma, oli keskkonnast tingituna vaevalisem kui Mannil ning nõudis äärmuslikumaid meetmeid.

Neljas peatükk “Faulkneri loomingu sotsiaalsed, klassikalised ja universaalsed mõõtmed” uurib mitmes plaanis konkreetse ja üldise ühildumisvormi, kusjuures tegelaste tragikoomikat on tõlgendatud autoriisiksuse projektsioonidena loomingus. Seetõttu on oluline mõista, mis Faulkneri autoriisiksuse eripärasid määras. USA lõunaosariikide ajalooline taust, Faulkneri kasvutegurid ning tema noorpõlve aegses kirjanduselusel valitsenud suundumused moodustavad peatüki esimese arutlusteema. Tuuakse esile antiikkirjandust kui Faulkneritki mõjutanud ideaali, mille mõningate struktuuride, motiivide ja tegelastüüpidega on uurijad tema teostes olulisi sarnasusi leidnud. Näiteks esineb paljudes Faulkneri narratiivides hübrise ehk kõrkuse motiiv, mitme romaani ülesehitus meenutab antiikdraamat, kus tähtsal kohal koori osa, ja vasteid leidub ka vanakreeka komöödiate tegelastüübile *pharmakos* ehk patuoinas. Kaudsem antiigi mõju võib seisneda ilusa homoerootilise armastuse ideaalpildis, mida mitmed Faulknerit mõjutanud kirjanikud järgisid. Erinevalt Thomas Mannist ei ole Faulkneri homoerootiliste kalduvuste kohta tõendeid (peale selle teema arenduste tema teostes), kuid seda tegurit ei saa välistada, võttes arvesse, kui raske on enamikul Faulkneri meestegelastel naistega usaldavaid suhteid luua. Tragikoomika allikana nähakse peatükis inimeste “oma(sta)miskalduvust”, mis painajaks arenedes suhteid pingestab ja lõhub ning traagilisi ummikseise tekitab. Teine allikas on Nietzsche poolt kirjeldatud “apollonliku” ja “dionysosliku” kokkupõrge, kus ühe või teise alge ülekaal vastasjõu hävitava “kättemaksu” esile kutsub. Apollonlikule mõistuse ja tasakaalu algele vastanduva dionysoslikult irratsionaalse elujõu kandjaks, mis enesekindlad kalkultatsioonid purustab, on Faulkneril sageli mustanahalised, kuid see algete konflikt ei ole lihtsustatav rassierinevusteks. Uurijad on demonstreerinud, kuidas Lõuna ühiskonnas on “neegrist” sihiliku mõödavaatamise läbi saanud kõrgel interaktiivse abstraherituse tasandil paiknev tühik tõelusetunnetuses ning kuidas isegi rassieelarvamustega valged lõunaosariikla-

sed on kultuuriteadvuses omandanud identiteetide hämara segunemise käigus “neegri kui abstraktsiooni” tunnusjooni, nii-nimetatud “valgele neegrile” osakssaava suhtumise atribuute (Thadious Davis). Säärase abstraktsiooni nähtavakssaamine lööb mõra ameeriklaste katsetesse oma maad ajaloost väljaspool, kõrgemalseisvana pühitseda (Barbara Ladd).

Eraldi alapeatükis on käsitletud paralleele Faulkneri romaani “Metsikud palmid” (1939) ja Goethe romaani “Sugulashinged” vahel. “Metsikute palmide” koostisloos “Vanamees”, milles ajutiselt vabakspääsenud sunnitööline suurt isetust ilmutades raseda naise Mississipi jõe tulvavetest päästab ja tema lapse ilmale aitab, nähakse vaimukat edasiarendust Mark Twaini “Huckleberry Finnile” (selles kirjeldatud mustanahalise emantsipatsiooni asendab sardoonilises valguses nähtud naistegelase emantsipatsioon). Stoilises sunnitöölises, kes, nuga käes, alligaatoriga võitleb, leitakse avalduvat müütilise lohetapja arhetüüpi. Niihästi “Vanameest” kui “Metsikuid palme” tervikuna ühendab Goethe “Sugulashingedega” üldiselt sünge otsus harmooniliste inimsuhete võimalikkuse kohta (füüsilises armastuses näevad mõlemad autorid inimitahete allumatut, piinarikast keemiliste protsesside tormi), kui ka kokkulangevused mitmetes üksikmotiivides.

Neljanda peatüki lõpus jõutakse Faulkneri tragikoomilise fookuse tüüpilisimate aspektideni: omamiskalduvuse avastamine enda sees ja ümber ülitundliku ja seni rikkumata nooruki poolt; ohjeldamatu meelteteenimine, sensualism, mis annab elule rohkem mõtet kui kindlad ühiskondlikud rollid; segadus avarduvas maailmas, kus identiteedid üha hajuvamaks ja hõlmamatumaks muutuvad; ja aheldatus konkreetse ajalooajalooperioodi bioloogilisse ning ühiskondlikku olustikku, mis ühtaegu rusub ning vastutustunnet ärgitades tegutsemisvabadust pakub. Nende tüüpaspektide alusel jõutakse Faulkneri tragikoomiliste tegelaste keskse paradigmani, mida esindavad romaani “Hälin ja raev” Quentin Compson, romaani “Absalom, Absalom!” (1936) Henry Sutpen, romaani “Alistamatud” (1938) noor Bayard Sartoris ning romaanide “Põrmu häirija” (1948), “Linn” (1957) ja “Häärber” Charles Mallison, eriti aga Vardaman Bundren romaanist “Kui ma olin suremas”, Isaac McCaslin romaanist “Mine tagasi, Mooses” ja Lucius Priest romaanist “Autoröövlid” (1962).

Kõiki neljandas peatükis vaadeldud tahke võib käsitada kui Faulkneri loomingu paljuski läbiva piiratud tajumuse koomika üksikfaktorite valgustamist. Kuivõrd aga see koomika kujutab endast mittekoomilise (või traagilise) nägemist läbi koomika prisma, siis kerkib küsimus, mis siiski annab Faulkneri loomingule selle üldomase, (sissejuhatuses defineeritud) optimistlikult komöödiliku põhinoodi. Sellele probleemile ongi pühendatud viimane, viies peatükk.

Viiendas peatükis “Faulkneri komöödia” jälgitakse koomikatunnet sünnitavate tähendustühikute ja -võngete kandumist kirjaniku kõikidele narratiivsetele tasanditele, alates fraasidest ja lõpetades koguloominguga. Tegelaste tragikoomiline jäikus kesk eluvoolust, põimuvad ja kontrapunktilised teemad, teoste lähtealus kui tühik üldtunnustatud ajalookangas seostuvad kirjaniku üksildusega ning katkeliste kontaktidega teda kujutlusvõimes saatvate “hää-

tega” kodukeskkonna inimtegelikkusest. Võrdluses Hermann Hesse romaaniga “Demian” paistavad Faulkneri “Absalom, Absalom!” ja teised teosed silma sellega, et neis ei esine tõelisi, siiraid sõprussuhteid, tähelepanek, mis võib osutada autori enese üksildustundele. Tragikoomilise, kuid siiski headuse ja vooruste võitu uskuva elutunnetuse lähedust Faulknerile näitab tähtsus, mille ta omistas Cervantese Don Quijote kujule. Faulkneri imetlusväärseimad mees- tegelased meenutavad kõik “kurva kuju rüütli”. USA lõunaosariigid 20. sajandi alguses olid tugeva ajalootundega ja eriomase värvinguga regioon, mille elanikud tundsid end tihedalt seotuna kodupiirkonna kogukonnasuhetes, samas oli see regioon USA ja Läänemaailma ajaloo laiemas kontekstis marginaalne ning hääbuva identiteediga. Niisugune paradoksaalsus seletab ka Faulkneri autoriisiksuse ja selle loomeavalduste paradokse. Nagu Thomas Hardy, nii ka Faulkneri puhul on see, mis nende tegelasi ahtrasse masendusse kuhtumast päästab, nende võime tajuda üllatavaid selgumis-, nägemushetki – see, mille kirjanduslikku vastet James Joyce’i eeskujul nimetatakse epifaaniaks. Viendas peatükis on varem käsitletud “tardunud liikumine” ja hiaatuse mõiste sünteesitud epifaaniliste selgusehetkedega kõiki kirjaniku tekstitasandeid läbivaks nähtuseks, romaanidest ning novellidest uusi näiteid tuues.

Grotesk, nähtus, mida 20. sajandil on põhjalikult uurinud Wolfgang Kayser ja Mihhail Bahtin, leitakse Faulkneril paiguti ilmnevat lähedasena mõiste algtäheendusele, kirjandusliku vastena inimlike ja mitteinimlike loodusevormide pildilisele põimingule, mis võib küll jätta kummastava, justkui meeltevälise või metafüüsilise kogemuse tunde, kuid on suhteliselt sõltumatu sõnale „grotesk“ sajanditepikkuse stiihilise tõlgendamise vältel kirjandusteades omistatud tähenduste sasipuntrast (labasest kuni õõvastavani). Algtäheendusele lähedase groteski näitena tsiteeritakse lõike romaani „Mine tagasi, Mooses“ peatükist „Karu“.

Nenditakse, et Faulkneri varasemate teoste demonlikult irratsionaalset lüriismi ja äärmuslikku individualismi hakkas hilisemates töödes asendama moraliseerivam, didaktilisem ja paljusõnalisem, samuti deklaratiivsemalt optimistlik toon. Kuigi seda muutust on sageli käsitletud langusena, avaldub just selleski loominguline edu. On tõenäoline, et kainem ja kaalutletum sotsiaalse analüütiku roll oli Faulkneril sihiks juba loometeed alustades, varasem, “demonlik” järk oli loomulik, möödapääsmatu etapp kirgede uurimise ning selitamise protsessis, mille lõpptulemus, üldsegi mitte halvas tähenduses “sekretäri” roll meenutab väga romaanitsükli “Inimlik komöödia” looja Honoré de Balzaci eesmärke. Seega koguloomingule tagasipilku heites pole Faulkner, nagu Balzacki, mitte üksnes spontaanne kunstnikunatuur, vaid lausa teadusliku rangusega arvestatav uurija niihästi esteetika kui eetika valdkonnas.

Kokkuvõttes korratakse tihendatumas vormis eelnevate osade käigus avastatud koomika ja tragikoomika tüüpilisemaid võtteid, avaldumisvorme ja rõhuasetusi. Leitakse, et Faulkneri looming on mitmes mõttes paljuhäälnne, see tähendab, kasutab mitmeid keeletasandeid. Nagu väidab teoses “Kultuur ja plahvatus” Juri Lotman, on mitme keeletasandi üheaegne kasutamine, vastastikune koosmäng sisuliselt ainus võimalus (sest “ideaalset keelt” pole olemas)

saavutada keelise kujutusviisi ligilähedanegi vastavus mittekeelisele tege-  
likkusele. Just sellist eri “keelte” koosmängu kasutab Faulkner. Tõdetakse, et  
nagu ka James Joyce’i puhul, on Faulkneri keeletasandite kohatine taotluslik  
stiilisobimatus kujutatuga, stiili niinimetatud “harmoniline valskus” oma töö-  
delduse ja vaimukuse poolest üks olulisemaid koomika allikaid (eriti avaldub  
see romaani “Hälin ja raev” Benjy osas, novellis “Lehma pärastlõuna” ja ro-  
maani “Küla” “lehmaepisoodis”), samas kui teksti distantseeritus kujutatust  
mõjub paradoksaalse, tragikoomilise lõhena. Uurimust kokku võttes võib  
öelda, et Faulkneri teostes ei saa alati igapäevases mõttes nalja, nendes ei või-  
dudse isegi alati ühemõtteline huumor, kuid tema looming on vaieldamatult ja  
orgaaniliselt ning sageli ülevalt koomiline.

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1. Main research interests: William Faulkner and the literature of the Southern states of the USA in connection with the literary tradition of Western Europe (see the list of publications); Geoffrey Chaucer and older English literature; partial translation and editing of Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales"; the translation of the mediaeval epic poem "Pearl" by the anonymous "Gawain-poet"
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  - MA thesis "'Southern Gothic': the Development of the Depiction of Violence and Spiritual Degeneration in the Works of William Faulkner and Cormac McCarthy", Tartu 2004.
  - "William Faulkner as a Semi-European" in the collection of presentations of the 7th International Tartu Conference of North American Studies, "Tensions and (Re)solutions", pp. 156–163, Tartu 2007.
  - "The Creation of the Comic and the Tragicomic through Suspense in the Works of William Faulkner", *Interlitteraria* 12, pp. 125–141, Tartu: Tartu University Press 2007.

- “Belated Nations: Grand Apocrypha as a Challenge to the Mythic Establishment”, *Interlitteraria* 13, pp. 73–85, Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2008.
3. Received scholarships: none
4. Conference presentations:
- “William Faulkner as a Semi-European”, the 7th International Tartu Conference of North American Studies, “Tensions and (Re)solutions”, April 2005
  - “Grand Narratives of Europe and of America: Thomas Mann and William Faulkner”, the 8th International Tartu Conference of North American Studies, “A Return of History?”, April 2007
  - “Belated Nations: Grand Apocrypha as a Challenge to the Mythic Establishment”, the 7th International Conference of the Estonian Association of Comparative Literature, “Contemporary Fate of Great Cultural and Literary Myths”, September 2007

### **III. Professional training**

Literary training through reading works of scholarship, writing analytical studies and translating works of world literature

### **IV. Literary activities**

- Afterword to his translation of William Faulkner’s short story “Carcassonne”, the journal “Akadeemia” 9, 1992
- Afterword to his translation of Henrik Wergeland’s epic poem “Christmas Night”, the journal “Vikerkaar” 1, 2002
- Afterword to his translation of the chapter “Waiting for Glory” of Thomas Wolfe’s novel “The Web and the Rock”, the journal “Akadeemia” 4, 2002
- Afterword to his translation of the first chapter of Esaias Tegnér’s verse epic “Frithiof’s Saga”, the journal “Akadeemia” 1, 2003
- Afterword to his translation of James Joyce’s short story “Giacomo Joyce”, the journal “Vikerkaar” 7/8, 2003
- Afterword to his translation of Thomas Wolfe’s novella “The Lost Boy”, the journal ““Loomingu” Raamatukogu” 17, 2004
- A novel in short stories, „Lohejas pilv“ („A Dragon Cloud“), Tallinn: Tuum, 2004
- The speech at the reception of the Betti Alver literature award, November 2004 (published in the literary journal “Vikerkaar” in 2005)
- The essay “Editing “The Canterbury Tales”” in the journal of the British Estonian Association, “Lennuk”, Summer 2006

The critical review “Alasi udusulgede sees” (“An Anvil in the Down”) of the novel “Tema” (“S/he”) by Jan Kaus, the journal “Keel ja Kirjandus” 11, 2006

The critical review “Unenäod ookeanist ja merevahust” (“Dreams of Ocean and Sea Foam”) of Reet Sool’s book of poetry “õrn morpheus/sweet morpheus”, the journal “Looming” 8, 2007

The critical review “Meel kannab mesipuu poole” (“The Mind Bears Us to the Beehive”) of Juhan Liiv’s book of poetry “Meel paremat ei kannata. The Mind Would Bear No Better”, the newspaper Eesti Päevaleht, 19 October 2007

Afterword to the Estonian translation of William Faulkner’s novel “Absalom, Absalom!” by Kersti Unt, ““Absalom, Absalom!” kui paljuhäälneline tragöödia” (““Absalom, Absalom!” as a Polyphonic Tragedy”), Tallinn: Tänapäev, 2008, pp. 379–388.

The critical review “Üleliigset ilu ei ole” (“There Is No Excessive Beauty”) of Carlos Vitale’s bilingual book of poetry “Kohäühtsus” (“Unity of Place”), the newspaper Eesti Päevaleht, 3 January, 2009

## **V. Interests and Hobbies**

Classical music, fine arts, amateur painting

# CURRICULUM VITAE

## I. Üldandmed

1. Ees- ja perekonnanimi: Lauri Pilter
2. Sünniaeg ja -koht: 15. oktoober 1971, Tallinn
3. Kodakondsus: Eesti
4. Aadress, telefon, e-post: Tähe 29–6, Tartu 50103, +372 53 973 275, lauri.pilter@ut.ee
5. Praegune töökoht, amet: Tartu Ülikooli filosoofiateaduskonna Kunstide ja Kultuuriteaduste Instituudi maailmakirjanduse õppetooli lektor
6. Haridus: Haapsalu 1. Keskkool 1989; Tartu Ülikool, inglise filoloogia 2002, BA; Tartu Ülikool, inglise filoloogia 2004, MA
7. Keelteoskus: eesti keel, inglise keel – väga hea, vene keel – hea, saksa keel, rootsi keel, itaalia keel – rahuldav
8. Töökogemus (teenistuskäik): 1997–1998 – Noarootsi Gümnaasiumi inglise keele õpetaja; 1998–2007 – vabakutseline tõlkija; 2007–2008 – Tartu Ülikooli filosoofiateaduskonna Kultuuriteaduste ja kunstide instituudi maailmakirjanduse õppetooli erakorraline lektor; alates 2008 – Tartu Ülikooli filosoofiateaduskonna Kultuuriteaduste ja kunstide instituudi maailmakirjanduse õppetooli lektor

## II. Teaduslik tegevus

1. Peamised uurimisvaldkonnad: William Faulkner ja Ameerika lõunaosa-riikide kirjandus seostes Lääne-Euroopa kirjandustraditsioonidega (vt. publikatsioonide loetelu); Geoffrey Chaucer ja vanem inglise kirjandus, Chauceri “Canterbury lugude” osaline tõlkimine ja toimetamine (“Maailmakirjanduse Tõlkevaramu”, Tartu 2006); anonüümse, nn. Gawaini-poeedi poeemi “Pärl” tõlge (keskinglise keelest)
2. Publikatsioonide loetelu:

Magistritöö ““Southern Gothic”: the Development of the Depiction of Violence and Spiritual Degeneration in the Works of William Faulkner and Cormac McCarthy” (““Lõuna gootika”: vägivalla ja vaimse mandumise kujutamise areng William Faulkneri ja Cormac McCarthy teostes”), Tartu 2004.

“William Faulkner as a Semi-European” (“William Faulkner kui pooleurooplane”) 7. rahvusvahelise Põhja-Ameerika uuringute Tartu konverentsi ettekannete kogumikus “Tensions and (Re)solutions” (“Pinged ja lahendused”), lk. 156–163, Tartu 2007.

“The Creation of the Comic and the Tragicomic through Suspense in the Works of William Faulkner” (“Koomilise ja tragikoomilise loomine otsus-

tamatuse kaudu William Faulkneri teostes”) teadusajakirja “Interlitteraria” 12. numbris, lk. 125–141, Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli kirjastus, 2007.

“Belated Nations: Grand Apocrypha as a Challenge to the Mythic Establishment”, („Hilinenud rahvused: Suured apokriivad kui väljakutse ennastkehtestanud müütidele“) teadusajakirja “Interlitteraria” 13. numbris, lk. 73–85, Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli kirjastus, 2008.

3. Saadud uurimistoetused ja stipendiumid: puuduvad

4. Konverentsiettekanded:

- Ettekanne “William Faulkner as a Semi-European” (“William Faulkner kui pooleurooplane”) 7. rahvusvahelisel Põhja-Ameerika uuringute Tartu konverentsil “Tensions and (Re)solutions” (“Pinged ja lahendused”), aprill 2005.
- Ettekanne “Grand Narratives of Europe and of America: Thomas Mann and William Faulkner” (“Euroopa ja Ameerika suured narratiivid: Thomas Mann ja William Faulkner”) 8. rahvusvahelisel Põhja-Ameerika uuringute Tartu konverentsil “A Return of History?” (“Ajaloo tagasitulek?”), aprill 2007.
- Ettekanne “Belated Nations: Grand Apocrypha as a Challenge to the Mythic Establishment” (“Hilinenud rahvused: suured apokriivad kui väljakutse ennastkehtestanud müütidele”) Eesti Võrdleva Kirjandusteaduse Assotsiatsiooni 7. rahvusvahelisel konverentsil “Suurte kultuuriliste ja kirjanduslike müütide saatus tänapäeval”, september 2007.

### **III. Erialane enesetäiendus**

Enesetäiendus erialase kirjanduse lugemise, analüüsivate uurimuste kirjutamise ning maailmakirjanduse autorite lugemise ja tõlkimise teel

### **IV. Kirjanduslik tegevus**

Saatesõna enda tõlkele William Faulkneri novellist “Carcassonne”, “Akadeemia” 9, 1992

Saatesõna enda tõlkele Henrik Wergelandi poemist “Jõuluõhtu”, “Vikerkaar” 1, 2002

Saatesõna enda tõlkele Thomas Wolfe’i romaanikatkendist “Kuulsust oodates”, “Akadeemia” 4, 2002

Saatesõna enda tõlkele Esaias Tegnéri eepose “Frithiofi saaga” esimesest laulust, “Akadeemia” 1, 2003

- Saatesõna enda tõlkele James Joyce'i novellist "Giacomo Joyce", "Vikerkaar" 7/8, 2003
- Saatesõna enda tõlkele Thomas Wolfe'i lühiromaanist "Kadunud poiss", "Loomingu" Raamatukogu" 17, 2004
- Romaan novellides „Lohejas pilv“, Tallinn: Tuum, 2004
- Auhinnakõne Betti Alveri debüüdiauhinna kätteandmisel, november 2004 (ilmunud ajakirjas "Vikerkaar" 2005. aastal)
- Essee "Editing "The Canterbury Tales"" ("Toimetades "Canterbury lugusid")" Briti Eesti Assotsiatsiooni ajakirjas "Lennuk", suvi 2006
- Jan Kausi romaani "Tema" arvustus "Alasi udusulgede sees", "Keel ja Kirjandus" 11, 2006
- Reet Soola luulekogu "õrn morpheus/sweet morpheus" arvustus "Unenäod ookeanist ja merevahust", "Looming" 8, 2007
- Arvustus "Meel kannab mesipuu poole" Juhan Liivi luulekogule "Meel paremat ei kannata. The Mind Would Bear No Better", Eesti Päevaleht, 19. oktoober 2007
- Järelsõna William Faulkneri romaani "Absalom, Absalom!" eestikeelsele tõlkele (tõlkija Kersti Unt), "Absalom, Absalom!" kui paljuhäälneline tragöödia", Tallinn: Tänapäev, 2008, lk. 379–388
- Arvustus "Üleliigset ilu ei ole" Carlos Vitale kakskeelsele luulekogule "Kohaühtsus", Eesti Päevaleht, 3. jaanuar 2009

## V. Huvialad

Klassikaline muusika, kujutav kunst, harrastusmaalimine

## DISSERTATIONES PHILOLOGIAE ANGLICAE UNIVERSITATIS TARTUENSIS

1. **Kristina Mullamaa.** Towards a dynamic role conception of liaison interpreters: an ethnographic study of self-descriptions of practising liaison interpreters in Estonia. Tartu, 2006.
2. **Raili Põldsaar.** Critical Discourse Analysis of anti-feminist rhetoric as a catalyst in the emergence of the conservative universe of discourse in the united states in the 1970s–1980s. Tartu, 2006.
3. **Pilvi Rajamäe.** John Buchan's Heroes and the chivalric ideal: gentlemen born. Tartu, 2007.