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# The Apollonian and Dionysian in W. Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, Sanctuary* and *Light in August*

**A Dissertation in Partial fulfillment of the Requirements of an LMD Doctorate in Anglo-Saxon Cultural Studies**

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# DEDICATION

To Imène Ghebache and to my parents.

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Among the people that have assisted me in this research work, I must first thank Dr. Mohamed Douifi. My gratitude for your patience and guidance knows no boundaries. This is also written in loving memory of Prof. Foued Djemaï, to whom I owe more than I can say. There is also no amount of gratitude that could possibly do justice to Prof. Djamila Hanifi, whose presence has simply blessed me with some of the most stimulating ideas and conversations that anyone could wish to meet. I would also like to thank Prof. Houria Ait Ammour for the amazing insight she has provided me and countless other students over the last few years. Likewise, I also had great luck in being surrounded by people who have played a vital role in having me pursue this. Friends and family alike, find here my warmest vote of thanks. Lastly, my gratitude also goes to Imène, without whom this dissertation could not have been completed. For this, and much more, I am truly grateful.

# ABSTRACT

This research work provides a philosophical analysis of William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury (1929), As I Lay Dying (1930), Sanctuary (1931),* and *Light in August (1932)* based on Friedrich Nietzsche's theory of the Apollonian and Dionysian. Its purpose is to show that the four selected novels are constructed around Nietzsche's dichotomy that he conceptualizes in his *Birth of Tragedy (1872).* It does so by first taking a glimpse at the structure of these novels and their peculiar fragmentation. In this regard, Faulkner's convoluted narrative structure is linked to Dionysian elements of chaos and confusion. The present study then moves on to discuss the thematic dimensions of all four novels. It also suggests that Faulkner fuses together various elements of the Apollonian and Dionysian in the issues that he presents. It contends that despite the dominating presence of the frenzy Dionysian, the American writer always imbues his work with Apollonian counterbalances of harmony, reason, and beauty. Additionally, the analysis also shows how other elements of Nietzsche's philosophy are embedded in Faulkner's fiction. This is particularly made event when discussing Nietzsche's concept of perspectivism, the idea that all truths or occurrences have different vantage points. Furthermore, this work also links Nietzsche's concept of *agon* to Faulkner's characters. Indeed, the current study argues that Faulkner instills a state of restless strife in his characters in which they are always struggling with themselves or their surroundings. This research work thus coalesces all the aforementioned theoretical grounds to bring to light Nietzsche's influence on Faulkner.



**Keywords**: William Faulkner, Friedrich Nietzsche, Apollonian, Dionysian, Agon, Perspectivism, Philosophy.

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# INTRODUCTION

Writers bear witness to the conflicting stresses of their time. As a writer, William Faulkner is not so much interested in transmitting information about a particular period. Instead, it is the period's feel; its impact on our nerves, hopes, fears and dreams that are front and center in his fiction. Many individuals would feel dazed when confronted by raw historical numbers or statistics, but these do not help much in acquiring an experiential sense of things. As for narrative fiction, it expands the reach of our sensorial experiences. In this light, Faulkner's work is notoriously filled with disturbing material, containing depiction of things that any well regulated society is bound to be cautious against. This point of the spectrum is described as Dionysian, and it includes lust, violence, evil and desire. In turn, these impulses face the other, gentler point of the spectrum which is described as Apollonian. The latter is characterized by currents of reason, self-control and harmony.

The distinct opposition between the Apollonian and the Dionysian has roots in Ancient Greek mythology. Their theoretical binarism, however, has first been expressed by Friedrich Nietzsche. He believes that the Greeks had lived life authentically and lived in its its full vocation because they had resolved the tension between these two currents. The German philosopher's' philosophy is full of dark and suggestive ideas. Furthermore, Nietzsche's propositions are full of opposite polarities and tendencies. To have a clearer understanding of the relevance his theories and their place in Faulkner's work, one must first provide some context. Indeed, Faulkner's work disturbs now as it had disturbed back when his texts were first published. Recent study of his work, however, has particular and predictable optics. Because these are related to the spirit of the age, Faulkner is nowadays mostly studied in light of ideological criticisms that deal with key issues such as race, class and gender. Though these issues are prevalent and should not be minimized, the current study moves away from these predicaments by bringing to light new philosophical terrains and horizons that have not been fully explored. These horizons include a wide range of dichotomies and oppositions. In this light, this study deals with the following, leading question: Are William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, *Light in August*, and *Sanctuary* constructed around

the Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy? The hypothesis behind this problematic is that these four novels are indeed framed around this binarism.

Though Nietzsche's theoretical grounds are by no means new, they provide nonetheless a fresh enlightenment to Faulkner's work. His concepts provide new prospects to a body of work that has been seemingly exhausted. Faulkner's novels have lent themselves to numeral readings; these range from Aristotle to modern-day feminist criticism. Yet, there is a missing link in the sense that there is no full-fledged Nietzschean reading of Faulkner. This is most likely due to the fact that Faulkner himself never acknowledged or mentioned Nietzsche. He has spoken at length of Freud and Dostoevsky, but never directly mentioned the German philosopher. In this sense, one of the objectives of the present examination is to bridge the gap and connect the thoughts of both writers. Besides an element of newness, why should one read Faulkner in light of Nietzsche's philosophy? The answer to this lies in Nietzsche's characterization of the Ancient Greeks. According to Nietzsche, the Greeks had a sense of *agon* that no other society has quite matched since. *Agon*, which I shall describe as a sense of struggle for now, was the soul of Greek drama and Greek lifestyle. By embracing this sense of struggle, the Greeks had "felt" life (Nietzsche 22). In other words, Nietzsche praises the Greeks for their courageous acceptance of the various realities of human life. Accordingly, this research work contends that Faulkner's fiction is as agonistic as, say, Sophocles's plays. Since his work heavily deals with trauma, Faulkner understands and writes the *agon* in a Greek-like fashion. He understands, the same way Nietzsche does, that so much at the level of one's conscious daily life is in fact a sublimation of basic instinctual impulses that individuals refuse to face. Faulkner thus probes the debts of the unconscious.

One of the other aims of the present study is determining to what extent other concepts enunciated by Nietzsche are present in Faulkner's work. In his breakthrough novel, *The Sound and the Fury*, the formal peculiarities that characterize the work are foretelling of Nietzsche's presence in the rest of Faulkner's work. Indeed, the first striking element that most readers face when reading Faulkner's novel is its apparent

fragmentariness. To this regard, Faulkner's narrative method is also linked to Nietzsche's perspectivism. Because the novel revolves around four different perspectives/points of view, Nietzsche's assertion that there is "no true knowing… only *a* perspective" provides an interesting insight on the story's multidimensionality (119). While arguing that Faulkner's narrative approach is perspectivist, I also relate it to the Dionysian current. Since *The Sound and the Fury* is structurally chaotic and seemingly unreadable at first sight, it is at antipodes with everything the Apollonian current stands for. Indeed, an Apollonian structure requires clarity, harmony and beauty. There is hardly any first reader that would attribute any of these characteristics to *The Sound and the Fury.* Instead, the chaotic and disorderly essence of the Dionysian fits better this discursive narrative method.

Another objective involves the examination of Faulkner's Existentialist currents. Key conceptual elements such as free will and determinism, that are held dear by the Existentialists, have an interesting place in Faulkner's fiction. To this regard, *Light in August* is the novel that showcases best the larger existentialist dimensions of Faulkner's work. Following the same methodological approach, the novel's analysis is first interested with the narrative structure of the novel. There are mainly two arcs that construct *Light in August*: Lena Grove's and Joe Christmas's. In these, it is argued that Lena Grove's sections should be identified as Apollonian, because of the relative clarity and linearity of her chapters. Joe Christmas's arc, however, is argued to be Dionysian due to the same disjointed patterns one finds in *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying.* After which, I begin to explore the thematic dimensions of the novel. As *Light in August* is singled out as the most existentialist novel of the four discussed, it is given a broader outlook than the initial Apollonian and Dionysian binarism. Indeed, both Faulkner and Nietzsche deal with the issue of free will. Joe Christmas's fate is examined in light of Nietzsche's determinist position that denies and rejects the notion of free will. The analysis then proceeds to view Christmas as an archetype of

Nietzsche's Übermensch. [1]In this part of the analysis it is contended that Christmas, in order to transcend himself, goes through the same phases Nietzsche ascribes in his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Finally, the analysis ends by taking a close look at the Apollonian hope and harmony that are brought forth through the characterization of Lena Grove.

Redemption and hope are also argued to color Faulkner's selected four novels. This assessment may go against the first readerly impulse which sees Faulkner's fiction as mostly chaotic or Dionysian. To this respect, one of the aims of this present study is to spotlight the redemptive elements of Faulkner's stories. Most of these novels display grim tales of loss, selfishness and even evil. Equally true, however, Faulkner provides an alternative to these coarse aspects of human experience. Tending to these matters, Faulkner abides by Nietzsche's principle that the artist must embrace life in its fullest possibilities, be they good or bad. In *The Sound and the Fury*, for instance, there is hardly a moment of rest. Indeed, the reader is confronted at all times to the characters' emotional rollercoasters. The story revolves around people that are utterly incapacitated and done in. Their moments of grief, loss, selfishness, and incest are all linked to the Dionysian. Faulkner, like Nietzsche, faces the horrors of life and writes them unapologetically. These horrors of life will then be contrasted with the redemptive dimensions of the *The Sound and the Fury.* Doing so has required to closely examine the fourth and last section of the novel. Two elements stand out from the previous chapters: the clear narrative structure and the redemptive apotheosis of the story. Both of these are linked to Nietzsche's Apollonian images of clarity and hope.

Evidently, the Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy is the focal theoretical point of my examination. In dealing with these concepts, this research work argues that literature negotiates and makes visible the crises that individuals experience in their lives. Because Nietzsche's assessment is perspectival in essence, the analysis of this research work heavily depends on the multi-vocality of the works discussed. The Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy is a fitting theoretical framework since it

[1] Nietzsche describes the Übermensch in his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In short, it refers to a form of individual renewal. See P177 for the analysis.

precisely expresses that the language of art enjoys a richness made of ambiguity and multiple meanings. Broadly speaking, Nietzsche's theory argues that life is made of two currents or perspectives. To deny any of these perspectives is tantamount to denying life itself. On one hand, The Apollonian current is the gentler current that is described best by reason and self-control. On the other hand, the Dionysian current is one of chaotic energy. The Greeks, Nietzsche argues, had fused these two currents to create dramatic perfection. It is in this this light that Faulkner's novels are read as texts that have an even more extended range of perspectives and whispered voices.

Furthermore, the Apollonian and Dionysian conceptualization is situated within the larger framework of *agon.* This concept is first introduced when dealing with the essence of narrative fiction, its common approaches, misconceptions and its general value. As a concept, I argue that *agon* widens the reader's optic and horizon. A great deal of space is allotted to showing how literature can render the notion of order and harmony into something illusory and brittle; that one is often disturbed when reading texts of the past or of one's own moment. Most texts, especially Faulkner's, make visible the speciousness of unity and harmony. As such, the depths and reaches of *agon* allow literature to provide an unparalleled access to the feelings, discoveries, wisdoms, but also flaws and mistakes of other lives, other people. Individuals, after all, are condemned to see the world through their own equipment. To this regard, narrative fiction bridges the gap and offers an opportunity to have different, vicarious experiences. It allows its readers to feel something tangible of the lives of others. In this sense, literature is a special record of what one could not have otherwise. Faulkner's fiction does no less because it attempts to provide the great subjective record of what people love, fear and desire. These records, although one might try, cannot be quantified. The inner experience, in other words, is something blurry for most people when it comes to the external world. This is precisely what the writer yields and bequeaths: an inner vision. For readers, this vision comes with its own perk - a sense of empowerment. Indeed, it gives them a widened and deeper sense of human possibility. It shows the intensities of feelings, conflicts, and crises that are not easily

seen in any other way. All of these are on display in *The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, Sanctuary,* and *Light in August*.

Selecting these four novels for the present study has not been coincidental. In light of Faulkner's prolific career, these four books are among his earliest productions. When compared to his later works, these stand as more homogenous and fitting to the framework of this study. Indeed, there is a clear emphasis on the issue of race when it comes to books such as *Absalom! Absalom!* (1936) and *Intruder in the Dust* (1948). The later work thus shows a narrative voice that begins to be different. It has a more tortured and violent treatment of race. Faulkner's later narrative voice closes in some ways with the rather singular *Hamlet (1940),* a book about Southern community. It stands out as one of his most extended effort in creating a black subjectivity, and trying to understand the black mind. This is not to say that race, as an issue, is not present the selected works. *Light in August,* after all, tells the tale of a white-skinned man who has black blood. When paired with the other novels, however, Faulkner's early emphasis is rather towards the inner experience, and how burdening the mind can be for individuals. The issue of race becomes full-fledged in Faulkner's work only later on in his career. In this light, the selected four novels make perfect sense for the larger framework of this research work. Both elements of *agon* and Nietzsche's conceptualization of the Apollonian and Dionysian deal with inner experiences that are unique to all individuals. From this perspective, race is only one fragment of interest rather than an entire focal point. Furthermore, selecting these four novels for examination makes sense because they provide more or less similar structural arrangements. The lack of linearity in these novels provides, ironically, a form of homogeneity. In turn, this allows the use of perspectivism as an analytical toolkit. The homogeneity of these novels is further noted in the themes and issues they deal with. Indeed, consciousness, time, free will versus determinism, and good versus of evil are all heavy themes that are recurrent. Once more, this sense of oneness in the selected material allows a synoptic analysis.

Faulkner's themes are indeed heavy and it can even be said that, for most people, they are incompatible with the givens of their external worlds. This is why reading these works in light of Greek *agon* and Nietzsche's dissection of the Apollonian and Dionysian can prove extremely insightful, since unconventional conditions and forms are themselves inner experiences and visions that individuals carry within. Indeed, both Faulkner's and Nietzsche's elements may seem quaint, because their work is the work of agitators. The texts examined in this research work have, in one way or another, disturbed the peace. No one, after all, wishes to commit murder or incest like Quentin Compson or Joe Christmas do. Yet, this is one of the great merits of literature; that it performs in such a way that it obliges its readers to play out scenarios as if they were true. Narrative fiction, in other words, is precious because it allows readers to imagine scenarios and futures they cannot afford or wish to experience. It is in this light that this study examines Faulkner, because Nietzsche's theoretical assumptions seem best fitted to explore the perspectival essence of the American's prose. Here comes, with both Faulkner and Nietzsche, the subjectification of knowledge; that there is no external truth that is reached by an objective method of sorts. At times, both seem to suggest that everything is, at bottom, interpretive. The search for universal values and universal truths subsequently turn into essentialism. Like any given essentialist perception, it simply ignores the fact that any event is subject to various interpretations and various lenses. To read Faulkner through Nietzsche, in different terms, is to move away from the notion of an *aeterna veritas*. Indeed, it shall be seen how both make it amply clear that hardly anything could remain constant amidst all sorts of fluxes.

How does one understand death, for example? Can death be spoken? Writers have constantly tried to harness this subject, but can the pain of the dying be transmitted - can it be uttered? To read Faulkner in light of Nietzsche's philosophy allows one to have a new insight on this matter. To read Addie in *As I Lay Dying*, a dead voice that speaks from the coffin, is to understand both Faulkner's and Nietzsche's perspectivisms. We hear what we cannot hear and see what we cannot see in the givens of our real world. The Apollonian and Dionysian framework thus allows to deal with

subjective issues from a new lens. It is therefore argued that there are ways for individuals to enter intellectually, morally, and sensuously into other lives, times, experiences, and then return to take the measure. The eerie and disturbing factors one may find in Faulkner are accordingly reasoned to be elements that allow readers to widen their repertory of human possibility and human experience.

Beyond the focus of this study, there are a number of limitations that I face. To this regard, I return to the ideological issues of race, gender and class. Though these issues are not entirely discarded, they remain nonetheless beyond the scope of my focus. These issues are certainly interesting to examine and prove to be as relevant, but the attention and space they require would unfortunately deviate the objectives of the present analysis. Likewise, a contextual reading of these works, be it biographical or historical, cannot be provided. Indeed, this would come in opposition to the semi-formalist approach I that am opting for – which is a close reading of the text itself. That being said, I am certainly much indebted to the literature that has been written in regard to these particular issues. Jay Parini's *William Faulkner: A Life* (2005), for instance, has been particularly invaluable in the insight it has given on how Faulkner viewed and approached the racial issues of his time. Philip Weinstein's *Becoming Faulkner* (2012) has also been of great value in its analyses of gender dispositions in Faulkner's novels. I am even more indebted to these works, because they have opened new doors and new possibilities. While they have brought forth great insights, they have also made visible the lack of correlation between Nietzsche and Faulkner. This missing link has undoubtedly played an important role in having me pursue this link. To this regard, I must now show my gratitude to those who did make the link between the German philosopher and the American writer. James Canfield's own essay in his *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of Sanctuary (1982) and* Donald Kartiganer's *The Fragile Thread: Meaning of Form in Faulkner's Novels.* (1979) have been immeasurably helpful in supporting the hypotheses that lead this research work. There are a number of other works this study is indebted to although they do not support similar arguments. One example of such works would be Marco Abel's *One Goal Is Still Lacking: The*

*Influence of Friedrich Nietzsche's Philosophy on William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury.* (1995). The title is explicit enough to suggest some sort of similarity between his analysis and the present study. The conclusions he comes up with differ quite significantly from mine, but they proved to be insightful nonetheless. In short, the existent literature on Faulkner, regardless whether or not it supports the arguments made in this analysis, has been immeasurable in the way it has led and nourished the ideas made throughout the following five chapters.

The first chapter thus examines the central theoretical concepts of this research work, namely the Apollonian and Dionysian. Furthermore, it examines other key concepts related to Nietzsche, such as perspectivism. Additionally, it situates all these concepts within the larger framework of *agon* in narrative fiction. The second chapter examines Faulkner's first breakthrough novel, *The Sound and the Fury.* It first analyses the narrative structure of the novel, and makes the case that it is both perspectivist and Dionysian. Moreover, the chapter analyzes the thematic dimensions by identifying the Apollonian and Dionysian elements of the story. The third chapter examines the sibling text of *The Sound and the Fury,* namely *As I Lay Dying.* In it, I contend that the sheer number of perspectives present in the novel – fifteen – are part of Faulkner's Dionysian and perspectivist narrative method. This chapter also examines the Apollonian and Dionysian currents in their thematic dimensions, but also explores other aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy that are present in Faulkner's work such as their similar critique on language itself. The fourth chapter explores the larger existentialist dimensions of Faulkner's work. The analytical methodology remains the same as both *Light in August's* structural and thematic dimensions are read from a Nietzschean perspective. Finally, the fifth chapter deals with Faulkner's grimmest novel, *Sanctuary.* In many ways, *Sanctuary* marks a break in Faulkner's career. Indeed, the analysis first argues that Faulkner has parted ways with his old Dionysian narrative method to opt for a clearer, Apollonian narrative approach. The thematic dimensions of the book, however, remain fairly similar to the first three discussed novels. In fact, this chapter argues that *Sanctuary* is Faulkner's closest work to an Ancient Greek tragedy. As such, the many

Greek-like elements that are present in *Sanctuary* provide this work with the most fitted closing statements in regards to the Apollonian and Dionysian essence of Faulkner's work.

# Chapter I:

# *Agon*: Apollonian Reason and Dionysian Frenzy

This first chapter provides the theoretical footings on which this research work stands. It explains thoroughly the theories it aims to use and the way in which it intends to use them. It also shows by means of brief illustrations how they fit in William Faulkner's fiction. Moreover, this chapter contextualizes both Faulkner's and Nietzsche's works. It takes a glimpse not only at their lives, but also the eras in which they lived. It is indeed important underpinning the movements in which they belonged as well as the movements they were reacting against. The biographies provided in this chapter serve a larger purpose than merely acquainting ourselves with Faulkner's and Nietzsche's lives. In fact, these biographies denote some of their recurrent themes that are relevant to the present study.

## 1. *Agon* in Narrative Fiction: Widening the Optic

Narrative literature fundamentally enriches and expands the horizon of the reader. It provides an unparalleled access to the feelings, discoveries, wisdom, the flaws and mistakes of the human psyche. It gives us a glimpse of a life of other times, other people. It is nearly impossible to overestimate its reach because in one's own life, the individual has a limited range of maneuvering room. Locked in their own mindsets, individuals are condemned to see the world around them through the perception that is uniquely lent to each one of them. Accordingly, the current study presents the genesis which allows to spotlight and illuminate the human mind in literature: the *agon*. It is best understood as a "Greek word meaning 'contest', 'competition', 'strife' or 'struggle" (Burnham 23). The Ancient Greeks had used the term to reflect on the general landscape of their society. In brief terms, *agon* refers to the changing essence of human nature. Hence, it is contended that William Faulkner's fiction is an agonistic literary meditation. It is an experience that attempts to bridge the gap of one's private, eclipsed views by encountering and feeling something tangible of the lives of others - their own *agon*. Needless to say, when attempting doing so in real life one finds out how delicate and intricate this process of seeing, reaching others can be.

Narrative literature's primest aim is to is to colour this sense of *agon* in the stories it tells. Narrative fiction in particular is akin to an existential adventure that comes with its own different price tags. It is not to be reduced to knowing the important data about the text studied or its writer. Neither is it a museum tour whereby one approaches things from a distance and reflects on them. Instead, as Nietzsche argues about tragedy, it is what "life has *really* been like." (22). The German's admiration towards the Greeks stems from the fact that they had transcribed life's *agon* in their literature. In writing struggle and strife as both internal and external human experiences, the Greeks had "felt" life (22). Picking on Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud enunciates similar thoughts in regard to human behaviorism. In his *Civilization of Discontents (1930)*, Freud argues that civilization and natural behavior are incompatible with each other. Indeed, civilization is a form of "suppression and repression." (49). Human beings, in other words, have various forms of internal desires, instincts and feelings that all some kinds of cultural orthodoxies deny. Under the pressure of civilization, these desires are in turn internalized and repressed.

Within these internalized instincts and drives, there is a state of constant struggle: the *agon*. Literature, as art, is a succinct record of this constant struggle. It is the great subjective record of what people love, fear and desire. These parcels of the human mind and heart are things that are not so evident in the reality surrounding individuals. One might find records that spell in very basic terms how a specific person's life has been like, but it is much more delicate to find a record of what this person's inner experience has been like, and this is where literature fills the gap. Narrative literature makes visible what other have felt, done and experienced. The written word, in other words, gives one's *agon* a well rendered visibility. In theirs, one finds forces such as: love versus hate, clarity versus confusion, madness versus sanity, innocence versus experience, body versus soul. All of these are tugs of war.

These tugs of war find their way in the guise of palimpsest literature takes. As any palimpsest, literature is composed of several layers of writing. A first readerly impulse is to see what is on the surface, but one must tend its whole mix to see what is beneath; to discover its multi dimensionality. Indeed, literature is deeply linked to two forces of life. Forces that, in literature as in life, stand opposite to one another on the spectrum of things. This spectrum's first end must be thought of as a current of tenderness. Its other end, however, must be seen as a one of ferociousness. In turn, the language given to these forces provides the logic that permits readers to reach them. As Arnold Weinstein argues in his *Fiction of the Self (1981),* language does not merely "render" reality, but expands it.

> Does language extend or lessen our estate? What provinces can we en- ter through words alone? Death, for example, can be available to us only as a concept, a word, a metaphor; literature can mediate for us here, allowing us a peculiar kind of appropriation and ersatz of the "real thing." But, what happens when words about love or freedom tend to replace love and freedom, when language itself fulfills, when speech acts become the only acts? The very presence of literature testifies to the appeal and beauty of such verbal displacement. Writers are wooed by the enabling powers of language, its capacity not only to "render" experience but also its indigenous virtues as experience. So, too, readers annex new realms each time they enter texts. (Weinstein 2)

Indeed, readers and authors are both situated within a large cultural framework. There is much flowing into the artist's work which they cannot be conscious or know about. Indeed, individuals are conditioned to be part of a sort of cultural system in which they are inscribed into systems of beliefs they do not see clearly. It is the air they breathe but cannot

be seen. Its contours though cannot be seen are spoken and actualized. In this light, fiction provides readers a palimpsest that is filled with subtexts, antagonistic currents, voices and layers. All of these make it hard to provide one bottom-line, frozen, and ultimate clear picture of any work of literature. To claim there is would be blinding oneself to the other morals and voices within the text. Literature itself is more than mere ultimate message.

> Only fiction gives us that fuller picture, that larger tableau which relegates language to relative status, thereby assessing it as tool while simultaneously exploiting it as medium. Fiction, then, encompasses projects that are more than verbal. Novels are capacious and may depict acts of love as well as declarations of love, thieving as well as talking, mingling of souls as well as self-reflections. In looking at fiction, the critic is privy to the entire range of human energies, the multiple projects and all the assorted data which constitute the fiction. (Weinstein 3).

Because it is panoptic in essence narrative fiction is "capacious" in its discovery of realities. It has a plenitude few other mediums have. Consequently, it kills any narrow tags that could be placed on it. Indeed, in fiction "various levels of reality may meet while remaining distinct and separate, or else they may melt and mingle and knit together, achieving a harmony among their contradictions or else forming an explosive mixture" (Calvino 70). Texts, in other words, are neither deterministic nor fatalistic in aim. The texts of the other times still live but they alter greatly, because art is more than a mere passport to the past. Fiction is a wakeup call to the drama of one's own moment, for it creates both order and chaos by "rendering" and "extending" one's *agon*. (Weinstein 3)

One of the incentives that drive individuals to read is the knowledge surrounding the unsteadiness and murkiness of their own lives that are sometimes filled with contradictions and lack of pattern. Subsequently, literature could seem like a desirable, seductive retreat and escape from reality. Indeed, "the circle, the vision of experience - that [individuals] encounter through socialization is [sometimes] inadequate," because "it doesn't put them into a satisfying relation to experience (Vischer Burns 13). While fiction does give us such a picture by containing and packaging its rival forces in an orderly way, it also creates chaos. In fact, it signals the fragility of order and its illusory nature; that when one reads texts - be they of the past or one's own moment - the individual is often disturbed by them. They may complicate one's life rather than simplify it. The "beautiful illusion" of order becomes "mere appearance." (Nietzsche 2). In this light, narrative fiction makes one see the speciousness of unity and harmony, and brings about the silencing of voices at large and within.

The aesthetic of literature is not immune to chaos, either. As noted earlier, there can be an immense amount of disorder, of feeling that is unresolved, of tension. Though some texts seem structurally chaotic, a closer examination reveals not only a pattern but a "better way to apprehend the world" (Edmundson 52). This realization that centers around chaos and order allows one to see that there often lurks a great deal of unresolved tension behind the text being read. Likewise, one spotlights a great deal of pattern and design behind texts that seem aimless or maddeningly unreadable. Narrative fiction becomes an "ideal macrocosm for road both taken and untaken." (Weinstein 3).

The conflicts that this research work analyzes are also large cultural, historical conflicts. As postmodernist Italo Calvino reflects in his *Uses of Literature*, "we have to

consider the work as a product, in its relation to the outside world in the age when it was created and the age when we received it" (72). Works of literature are, in other words, of their moments. Indeed, when one reads *The Sound and the Fury*, one faces conflicts within religion, love, humanity, obsession and mania. What do these mean? These are all crises that speak volumes about their particular cultural moment, but they also speak volumes about the readers' own possibilities since they allow them to widen their own optic about what life may be about. They are parables that open up, enlarge, question and challenge the narrow perception that most individuals deal with on a regular basis.

Relatability is an important credo within the realm of narrative fiction. Regardless of how long ago a text has been written, what often happens is the reader realizes how similar the material they are reading is to their own moment. A second important step, however, is to signal how different the text is from the reader's world. "Literature arises from the exercise of one's imagination, a going out from one's self toward other lives, other forms of life, past, present, and perhaps future." (Donogue 75). This signals "its relation to sympathy, fellowship, the spirituality and morality of being human" (75). It is in this sense that texts that are constructed around the dichotomy of Apollonian and Dionysian allow readers an entry, a look into worlds that are not like theirs. One sees, for instance, how notions of sanity, madness and belief change over time which in turn gives one a certain clarity about their own moment. It is only when looking at other cultures, at other voices, that something of one's life comes into visibility.

Transcribing *agon* with its the constant state of strife and struggle in narrative literature is a way of coming to terms with the darkness of life. The present novels discussed in this research are often perceived as disjointed, depressive and even nihilistic.

The horrors one may find in these texts or in literature in general, however, are not merely purgative. It is true they allow to release one's own tensions, but they also allow to expand one's sense of things. Narrative literature ruptures our notions of normality; so that when one comes across all sorts of dreadful things, one also approaches issues that are part of life. Quentin's dilemmas over incest and suicide in the *Sound and the Fury* are thus not meant to provoke outrage, but to carry an associative logic that allows the readers to extend their own notions of dread and crisis. The existentialist adventure comes at play here: these horrors – one sees and experiences them, but does not commit them. It is a unique way to vicariously experience that which one does not wish to have in life. It is an imaginative way of experiencing *agons* that widen one's own record. It brings into the reader something of the blood of life into their own bloodstream.

## 2. The Ancient Greeks' Sense of *Agon*: The Apollonian and Dionysian

Nietzsche's study on the rise of Greek tragedy provides a challenging picture of humans as dynamic currents of form and energy. In his *Birth of Tragedy (1872)*, Nietzsche offers a depiction of the core of Greek tragedy that captures, he claims, the fundamental elements at the heart of our human existence. Nietzsche's account reveals his insights on what a true to life depiction of reality looks like in tragedy. Some of the most striking elements of pre-Socratic tragedy, which Nietzsche admires, are its unfettered use of violence, chaos and all things that are seemingly despicable. Greek tragedies such as *Oedipus* throw us in the midst of intricate situations which any given individual would not like to face. Murdering one's father, for instance, is an appalling thought to any human that makes use of their affective rationality. Yet, Nietzsche finds that life is most accurate in these unrestricted tragedies.

> The Greeks knew and felt the terrors and horrors of existence…. How else could that people have borne existence, given their extreme sensitivity, their stormy desires, their unique gift for suffering. (22).

Nietzsche's account on tragedy revolves around the human condition itself; that all individuals, at some point in their lives, will and must face dilemmas of varying degrees. In this light, the Greeks did not simply pen such humanely distasteful scenarios for the sake of purgative, dramatic prowess. In the Greeks, Nietzsche finds champions of creative affirmations and victors of shaping oneself. Clearly then, if one could create one great work of art, it would be oneself. Doing so, however, requires introspection. One must find a way to release internal energies and then shape them. The Greeks have thus released two currents or energies and have shaped them in a dramatic way. In turn, this leads Nietzsche to argue that "the greatest act of the creator is that he creates himself." (qtd in. Erickson 15). In light of this creative force, there is a sense in which Greek tragedy corresponds to the very nature of life. Certainly, most human dilemmas do not involve patricide; however, the principle is the following: all humans must face the ugliness they may come across in their lives, and should avoid rationalizing it away. The Greeks, Nietzsche claims, faced the more tumultuous side of life like no others. Facing life in its most elemental means for Nietzsche the fusion of two strands and forces of life: The Apollonian and the Dionysian. Nietzsche's understanding of these two deities plays an important role for this research's construction of human experience as found in Faulkner's work. Hence, Apollo, the deity from which Nietzsche extrapolates the Apollonian, is this work's first look.

> He [Apollo] is the shining one through and through: in his deepest roots sun and light god, who offers himself in

> brightness. Beauty is his element: eternal youth one of his attributes. But the beautiful illusion of the dream world is also his sphere: the higher truth, the perfection of this state in contrast to the incompletely intelligible everyday world raises him to the prophesying god, but just as certainly the artistic god. The god of beautiful illusion must be simultaneously the god of true insight. But that delicate boundary, which the dream image must not overstep, lest it have a pathological effect, where illusion not only deceives but betrays, must also not be missing in the being of Apollo: that moderate limitation, the freedom from wilder emotions, that wisdom of the sculptor god. (Nietzsche 1)

The Greek god Apollo stands for the shaping, clarifying, and individuating capacities that humans possess. Individuals, in other words, are not simply endowed with reason, but have the full ability to shape and form things. Furthermore, definite boundaries and orderly structure also characterize the Apollonian instinct. There is a stress on reason not simply as a human faculty to think and calculate, but reason as a tool to see through the world of being. This Apollonian vision helps the individual to transcend beyond the realm of ordinary experience. This vision, however, is not without its own pitfalls. For if not blinding, reason as a binding force may make one "fall out in love with one's world and one's life." (Solomon and Higgins 22).

Nietzsche understands the Apollonian instinct as a force that shows the world in a beautified form and one which idealizes the appearance of things. Apollonian perception tends, Nietzsche claims, to lend things an exaggerated beauty. The Apollonian emphasis on aesthetics calls to attention the way it tries to represent the world; a world with clear

boundaries, separate individuals and entities "that one can contemplatively appreciate." (Kaufmann 45). Certainly, Nietzsche sees the Apollonian, beautiful images in art as a bridge for humans to focus on something in their world and merely enjoy "contemplating" them. (45). To contemplate an image is a point that requires further clarification. Thus, Nietzsche's hassle with the Apollonian is that it is an external means for individuals to see beauty, "contemplating" and idealizing it. Ultimately, it is partaking in the pleasure of seeing something just for what it is. The Apollonian, then, teaches to look at something artful from a detached point of view, and not relate to it practically.

Beyond the Apollonian thirst for beautiful and clear patterns, this instinct deeply revels in reason and rationalism. Indeed, Apollo's place within Greek religion displays something about his association with order, reason and moderation. The sun god's association with the latter features spells that he knows and foreknows the world's order. Interestingly, however, the Ancient Greeks had no religious orthodoxy; nor did they have any doctrinal commandments. There were not, in other words, any precise or sacred rules to follow or obey. Apollo's place within Greek mythology is the closest thing to any form of orthodoxy, and it reveals quintessential features that Nietzsche uses in his dissection of Greek tragedy.

> Apollo is a god of light, clarity, youth, medicine, healing, reason, prophecy, and, in general, moderation and rationality. Two carved sayings on the temple at Delphi are crucial for understanding the underlying presumptions of the religion. These sayings are *gnothi sauton* and *meden agan*: "Know yourself" and "Nothing in excess." (Vandiver's italics, 41)

These two maxims serve as reminders for individuals to remember their lineage (as human beings,) and to remember one's limitations. Both maxims lead towards principles that vehemently run throughout Greek mythology. On the one hand, human beings are liable to breach the boundaries that separate them from the gods; which in turn would lead to suffering. On the other hand, Apollo's associations also tell something about the nature of excess; that is if one has an excess of anything in particular, then they become liable to be in danger for breaching the boundaries of the gods. Humans, in other words, must remember their own lineage and must not seek to exceed it. Examples of excess within Greek mythology or the ones that are under scrutiny in the four novels of this research work vary immensely. But for the sake of clarification and illustration, a basic example serves the purpose at hand. Hubris, the Greeks believed, ought to be avoided. The meaning of the word itself translates to "excessive pride or self-confidence," and may even refer to "insolence." (Cuddon 421). Hubris, in other words, is precisely the kind of excessiveness that leads one to claim more than one's due.

The Dionysian current that Nietzsche infers from Dionysus could not be more different from its Apollonian counterpart. It represents a primal kind of verve in which individuals abandon themselves to boundary-breaking and destructive energies that pulse through individuals more often than one may think. Crucial in his understanding of tragedy, Nietzsche views these pulses as things to be encouraged and celebrated. Such a view may be considered curious by many. After all, a reasoning that promotes the more violent side of our human experience raises some concerns. I would suggest that understanding Nietzsche's fascination with one of the most violent Greek deities needs to be paralleled with the Ancient Greeks' fascination towards their own gods. Indeed, instead of questioning the lure and attractiveness of the Dionysian, one should take a different

vantage point; that is, to ask: What is the necessity for a deity such as Dionysus? Polar opposite to Apollonian, the Dionysian current may rescind the clarifying and shaping nature of Apollo, but is an energy that is necessary to what human beings are. I believe this is precisely the crossroads where Nietzsche and the Greeks meet, that they both believe Dionysian energy is vital to human beings.

> One admires the idealistic power of Hellenism most highly, when one compares the spiritualisation of the Dionysus celebration… The Greek gods are in their perfection as they approach us in Homer. They are not to be understood as the children of need and necessity. Such beings certainly were not devised by the mind shaking with anxiety: the fantasy of a genius projected their images into the blue not in order to turn away from life. A religion of life speaks out of them, not one of duty or of asceticism or spirituality. All of these forms breathe the triumph of being, an abundant feeling for life accompanies their cult They do not demand: in them the present, whether good or evil, is deified. (6)

Nietzsche references Homer in his *Birth of Tragedy* on a number of occasions. Crucially linked to his conceptualization of the Dionystian, Homer stands for Nietzsche as a pre-Socratic reference on what true tragedy signifies. There is something about the Dionysian "barbarity" of characters such as Achilles and Agamemnon that Nietzsche thinks is vital to human perception. (Solomon and Higgins 33). There is a sense in which the unvirtuous turns virtuous, because the unfettered picture of tragedy found in Homer presents life in its fullest Apollonian and Dionysian reaches. This is what leads Nietzsche to assert that a "religion of life speaks out" of the Greeks (1). A religion of life infers a picture of human

life that is undiluted, uncensored, and utterly unapologetic in its rawness. Still, as mentioned earlier, most individuals will not face patricide or incest in their lives; but the principle behind such themes is that we must all face and slay our demons - which leads Nietzsche to conclude that "the Greeks knew the terror and the horror of existence." (22).

> Zeus had one more important son, Dionysos. He is a complex god whose domains include associated with drama, madness, frenzy, and irrationality. In this aspect, he is directly opposed to Apollo. This opposition is shown in myth by the fact that Apollo leaves Delphi during the winter months each year and Dionysos takes up residence there. Dionysos's connection with frenzy is represented in myth as his possession of his followers; under his influence, they do things completely at odds with their usual personalities. (Vandiver 47)

The "horror of existence" that is translated through the Dionysian is what lends tragedy its succinct dramaturgical reach, as Elizabeth Vandiver explains above. This cruder side of life should not be seen as nihilistic or self-destructive. Instead, the Dionysian is a complementary current that is part of the flow of life. There is a sense in which the chaotic energy that defines this current helps individuation – the process of building oneself - even further. "Gods justify the life of men by living it themselves." (Nietzsche 23). It is to be able to recognize the horror as something beautiful, relieving and mysterious. In other words, individuality "must be paid for by suffering," for "suffering is not bad thing; it is what confers dignity on human beings." (Ackermann 18). The amount of suffering that can be found in Greek tragedy is often left incomprehensible and unrationalizable. Indeed, Dionysian suffering within tragedy parallels one's own intricate agency towards life - that

there is sometimes an overwhelming sense in which life itself is a mystery with no lucid explanation. Facing these mysteries is what makes the Greeks agonistic. Their myths and tragedies support the idea that they see life as a struggle. This sense of *agon* which is imprinted all over Ancient Greek lifestyle is, Nietzsche claims, what makes their society's perception towards life unique. In turn, this insistent struggle would find an artistic form led by a creative interaction of the Apollonian and Dionysian. This interaction makes possible an enduring affirmation of life in which the Apollonian and Dionysian act a dynamic binarism. Indeed, the "early Greeks accepted both the world and life as they found them and celebrated even their most horrible aspects." (Nehamas 73).

Scott R. Dubree's *Dionysus Torn to Pieces: An Examination of The Sound and the Fury in Light of the Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche* (2014) provides an interesting study of Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* in light of this Apollonian and Dionysian interaction. Dubree makes it clear enough that his study of Faulkner's novel relies on many concepts and principles enunciated by Nietzsche over the course of many books; furthermore, his analysis is mostly "framed by Nietzsche's four theses on *Reason' in Philosophy*." Nevertheless, Dubree also relies on the Apollonian-Dionysian dynamic in his reading of *The Sound and the Fury*. The similitudes with this present research work are the following: firstly, Dubree sees Benjy and his own section as Dionysian; secondly, Faulkner's use of interior monologues correlates to "Nietzsche's commentary on Greek tragedy" and is a textual correspondence of "one's existence." (8) Thirdly, Quentin's suicide stems from intense Dionysian impulses that overtake his Apollonian ones; to deny the Dionysian is "to deny life's value." (60). The points of divergence are the following: firstly, the narrative process of the novel is entirely Dionysian; secondly, Benjy's storyline and its ending – which could be substituted by the book's ending- is nihilistic. Lastly, Jason's

section strictly showcases the nihilism in which he is drenched in. All three points are given an alternative reading in this research work.

### 3. Nietzsche's Plea for the Dionysian

While Nietzsche is initially careful to denote the importance of both Apollo's and Dionysus's currents in tragedy, he is not entirely neutral. He does, in fact, take a stand on which is more crucial. Indeed, there is a reason why Nietzsche often turns to pre-Socratic tragedies as his focal analyses. The reason, he claims, is that all tragedians that followed Socrates's lifetime had all succumbed to Socratic and Platonic reasoning, which he identifies as Apollonian. Euripides, a post-Socratic playwright, is described as a "a mask only" and "the deity that spoke out of him was not Dionysus… but . . . Socrates." (qtd in Kaufmann 393). Playwrights such as Euripedes, Nietzsche thinks, fail to show any Dionysian energy in which his predecessors had reveled.

> Nietzsche sees Euripides and Socrates as destroying a superior Greek culture and as opening the era of the human. From Nietzsche's point of view, Euripides and Socrates were not Hellenic figures. If tragedy somehow arises from an opposition between Apollonian and Dionysian elements in Greek artistic life, it degenerates when this opposition is papered over by monological Socratic and Euripidean rational explanations of human action. (Ackermann 14).

The abundance of rationalization becomes a "deflection toward nihilism and as a loss of awareness of Dionysian foundations." (Ackermann 18). This urge or encouragement from the tragedist to piece, rationalize everything together signals the death of the Dionysian.

Tragedy now stands for everything Nietzsche thinks it should not stand for: a play written in such a way that humans can always think their way through it. It is then not merely a need for balancing two currents, but to reduce the Apollonian to a lesser rank than its counterpart, because Dionysian agony "is needed in order to compel the individual to generate the releasing and redemptive vision and then, lost in contemplation of that vision, to sit calmly in his rocking boat in the midst of the sea." (Nietzsche 26). There is a sense in which one stops thinking in terms of life when favoring the rationalistic Apollonian. To think beyond tragedy and see life in purely rationalistic terms is to deny life itself and its Dionysian aspects.

> The Apolline Greek, too, felt the effect aroused by the Dionysiac to be 'titanic' and 'barbaric.' Indeed he was bound to feel more than his entire existence, with all its beauty and moderation, rested on a hidden ground of suffering and knowledge which was exposed to his gaze once more by the Dionysiac. And behold! Apollo could not live without Dionysos. (27)

To claim Apollo could not live without Dionysus raises some concerns. Passages such as this have led many to use ad hominem attacks against Nietzsche. In their *What Nietzsche Really Said (2000,)* Solomon and Higgins show how Nietzsche has often been likened to a "barbarian who admired barbarians." (26). While his controversial claim is disputable, I would like to open another parenthesis about his strong links towards Dionysus. Nietzsche does not "admire barbarians." I would argue that he rejects an absolutist view in which life is conducted by one affective logic. To drown in Apollonian reason, for Nietzsche, means to hate life. The opposite is not necessarily true. To emphasize the Dionysian does not

mean to *love* life, but to *affirm* it. As Bruce Ellice Benson writes in his *Pious Nietzsche: Decadence and Dionysian Faith* (2008,) "Nietzsche practices both a "yes-saying" and "no-saying" *askêsis* designed, on the one hand, to affirm life and, on the other hand, to overcome everything within him that fails to affirm life. (5). Indeed, it is to take life in its perspectival nature and accept it as it is: whole. Life is not simply about overcoming our sense of '*agon'* but to affirm it, accept it as it is. The weight of each moment, good or evil, must be appreciated.

The Dionysian current, in other words, is one of flux. There is a sense in which human experience is liable to constant change. Life is akin to a fire's flame, in the sense that it has never the same shape twice. Nietzsche's sense of agon, then, has something to do about this conflicting and ever changing substance of reality. If nature itself is subject to strife and change, then so are individuals. In this light, I would like to suggest that the Dionysian is a way of accepting life's fluctuations, to see it not as something static but as a process that vacillates in its ebb and flow. To see it otherwise shows a certain need for escape and an unwillingness to see the perspectival nature of life.

Connell Sullivant's *Exploring Faulkner: The Space Between Writer and Philosopher* (2007) is a great study of the Dionysian impulse in Faulkner's fiction. Sullivant's study centers around Faulkner's *Sanctuary* (1931) and *Absalom! Absalom!* (1936). Only Sanctuary receives an analysis in light of Nietzsche's philosophy, whereas the second part of his research provides a Hegelian analysis of *Absalom! Absalom!*. As its title suggests, this research attempts to show that Faulkner's prose goes beyond simple fiction. As it has been mentioned earlier, there is no evidence that suggests that Faulkner knew of Nietzsche. Sullivant, on the other hand, speculates that Faulkner was familiar with

both Nietzsche and Hegel; that his construction of tragedy bears too many similitudes and concepts from both German philosophers to be merely coincidental. Unfortunately, Sullivant's examination has an extremely narrow entry point in the sense that it only provides an analysis of exclusively one scene from Sanctuary. "I focus my essay on a single scene of the novel, the trial." (3). The trial scene, also discussed in this research work, makes sense as a pivotal moment in the book. Nonetheless, to focus on one scene only is to dismiss the whole trajectory of Temple Drake and what it sheds on the rest of other Apollonian-Dionysian dynamics present in the novel. In this light, this research work bridges Sullivant's and provides a more holistic analysis of *Sanctuary*. This present research work, however, is much indebted to Sullivant's work because he has laid the necessary foreground for a Nietzschean analysis of *Sanctuary*.

Other Scholars that do make a direct link with Faulkner's novels are very numbered. Although they remain mostly suggestive, the insight they have provided remains nonetheless precious and valuable. The most detailed of these works would be Donald Kartiganer's *The Fragile Thread: Meaning of Form in Faulkner's Novels* (1979). Kartiganer's is the only critical book that devotes an in depth analysis of Faulkner's work in light of Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*. Selecting mainly five of Faulkner's novels, Kartiganer gives *Light in August* and *Hamlet* a Nietzschean reading. In his analysis of the former, he reaches the conclusion that it comprises "both the Dionysian force and its verbalization by an Apollonian force, that difficult fusion that Nietzsche said was the focus of every Greek tragedy." (43). *Hamlet*, too, "solidifies the Apollonian and Dionysian sounds into visible image." (168) The other works that involve some degree of Nietzschean link or analysis of Faulkner include: Andrei Bleikasten's *The Ink of Melancholy:Faulkner's Novels from The Sound and the Fury to Light in August* (1990,)

Frederick Karl's *William Faulkner: American Writer* (1990,) and James Canfield's collection of essays in his *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of Sanctuary (1982).*

One has to bear in mind one last consideration when it comes to Nietzsche's dichotomy of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Indeed, one must understand this conceptualization in terms of emotions. These polar opposites crucially inform us about the importance of emotions in Nietzsche's philosophy. As American philosopher Robert C. Solomon explains, Nietzsche values emotions and passions over reason and rationality.

> If there is a meaning in life for Nietzsche it is not to be found in reason or in rationality, but rather in the passions. If one looks at the Western philosophical tradition, and this includes a great deal of the English speaking world, one comes to the realization that philosophy has been heavily dominated by the use of reason. Life's meaning, according the Western philosophical preset, can thus only be understood when accompanied by rationalism.

Evidently, Nietzsche is at antipods with the view that holds reason as one of the highest values. Instead, Nietzsche is much more focused on the intersection of human behaviorism and emotions. To this respect, this paper is thus also interested in the role emotions play in shaping worldviews and identities in Faulkner's work. Nietzsche, however, died before he could express detailed and thorough theories on the nature of emotions. While his Apollonian versus Dionysian distinction provides his overarching views on the issue, it remains nonetheless incomplete. To this regard, this paper draws from American philosopher, Robert C. Solomon. This latter philosopher is also an Existentialist thinker, and one who has admitted to be deeply influenced by Nietzsche himself. In turn, he would

pick up the German's ideas and posit similar theories on the nature of emotions. Consequently, this paper draws from Solomon's philosophy to continue bridging Faulkner's fiction with Nietzsche's philosophy. This work is hence interested in the involvement of emotions in people's day-to-day activities. To this respect, Solomon is adamant that emotions mold and shape identities. In the analysis devoted to Joe Christmas, in particular, it seen shown how emotions that may sometimes be considered as irrational can in fact be rationally grasped.

## 4. The Apollonian and Dionysian in Light of Nietzsche's Perspectivism

Nietzsche's dichotomy of the Apollonian and Dionysian is closely linked to perspectivism, the idea that one should always take different vantage points when looking at a particular thing. Simon Blackburn defines the concept as a "view that all truth is truth from or within a particular perspective." (Blackburn 344) In other words, the principles of relability and validity are called into question. In short, he presents counter-arguments to the traditional positivist method for analyzing the external world. The positivist method, by making clear that it wants a consistent and a truthful measure of a variable, it is also assuming that there is a single, right result that can be measured as long as it is captured. Nietzsche's perspectivism argues against this whole premise. It argues that there is no single, objective reality that can be observed. Therefore, perspectivism is less worried about testing theories. Instead, it is more focused on an inductive process of gathering data which then will be observed. Perspectivism, in other words, is akin to "explore, understand and then interpret." (Rosen 15).

Interpretation and its value reign supreme in Nietzsche's philosophy. Indeed, an objective truth can only emerge after taking in consideration multiple outlooks and

multiple perspectives. Nietzsche is thus essentially critiquing the idea that there can be an absolute way by looking at a particular event or its understanding. Indeed, perspectivism argues there is no such thing as an omniscient view. Instead, individuals have a number of perspectives that simplify their aim in understanding the world that surrounds them. Nietzsche argues that embracing a perspectival approach to life would make it possible for individuals to view and live it differently. Doing so, however, requires asking a willingness in asking questions that go beyond the precincts of convention. This very premise disengages truth as an absolute notion. Instead, the concept of truth, Nietzsche argues, has been conflated to the rank of a mighty power that cannot be dislodged. People have thus for centuries been obedient to this power in futile hopes that would save them. Acting accordance to this belief that there is an absolute truth out there, Nietzsche argues, is foolish. An absolute truth, in other words, only introduces doctrines that are completely fictive. In many ways, he is reprising similar ideas expressed by another German philosopher that had preceded him, Schopenhauer.

> 'THE world is my idea' is a truth valid for every living creature, though only man can consciously contemplate it. In doing so he attains philosophical wisdom. No truth is more absolutely certain than that all that exists for knowledge, and, therefore, this whole world, is only object in relation to subject, perception of a perceiver--in a word, idea. The world is idea. (Schopenhauer 1).

Nietzsche certainly did not coin the term nor was he the first thinker to delve into the possibilities of perspectivism. He is, however, the first modern philosopher to truly expand on perspectivism and adopt it as one of his key tenets of his philosophy. For Nietzsche, to

deny the perspectival essence of life means that one is negating the instinctual energy that resides in very one of us. Indeed, Nietzsche is extremely attuned to forces and perspectives that he believes have been repressed for the longest. Subsequently, he puts an extraordinary emphasis on cultivating instinctual energy, such as the Dionysian. To embrace such a perspective means that one has found a way to say yes to all the forces and energies that constitute life. Here, however, one should be careful not to categorize or stigmatize these energies such as one would either approve or disapprove of them. Instead, what one should do, is to accept all possible perspectives that pertain to life. This, for Nietzsche, is what will enable individuals to affirm life in its totality. What might be called as dangerous or evil are also part of this equation and without any qualification. When Quentin faces is incestuous feelings for his sister Caddy, and when Darl burns his own mother's corpse are, for example, Faulkner's narrative way to depict life in all of its weight. From Darl's perspective, he only burns his mother's coffin because he believes he sees what others do not. Burning her coffin puts an end to her misery. In other words, whatever one holds as indisputably true only holds true to themselves. What one considers as true lends itself to elements such as "the nature of our sensory apparatus, or it may be thought to be bound by culture, history, language, class, or gender." And since perspectives are diverse, they are also "different families of truths." (Blackburn 345).

Truth, as Nietzsche sees it, is a means rather than an end. The idea of truth lends itself to a sense of absolutism. If one gets some kind of truth, that is to say 'truth' as something immovable and indisputable, then in some ways it creates the sort of absolutism that perspectivism seeks to move away from. I should also clarify at this juncture the main difference between philosophical perspectivism and relativism. In essence, both concepts hold the view that all aspects in life have different vantage and entry points. Perspectivism,

unlike relativism, however, does not support the idea that one view is as good as any other view. In this light, Nietzsche is certainly not a relativist. What one has, however, is a sort of interpretive truth — a disputable one that stems from the process of interpretation. In other words, interpretations "actually leave open the question of whether there is or might be some "truth in itself." (Solomon 48) Nowhere is this truer than in reading texts, for every reading brings forth an interpretation along. If we close the door to the value of interpretation and perspectivalism, then one is doomed to live in the untrue and in a world that is life denying. If we close the door to the value of interpretation and perspectivalism, then one is doomed to live in the untrue and in a world that is life denying. To close the door for the plurality that life offers means for Nietzsche that you are stunting your own growth as a human person. Instead, one is leading oneself into a wasteland that has no inner life or substance. Consequently, one is headed towards perdition and towards nihilism. The logical endpoint of all of this is that a state of decadence and emptiness ensue. That being said, perspectivism runs in two main directions. The first of which can be described as follows.

> Many people assume that the claims of scientists are objective truths. But historians, sociologists, and philosophers of science have long argued that scientific claims reflect the particular historical, cultural, and social context in which those claims were made. The nature of scientific knowledge is not absolute because it is influenced by the practice and perspective of human agents. Scientific Perspectivism argues that the acts of observing and theorizing are both perspectival, and this nature makes scientific knowledge contingent (Ronald N. Giere 1)

Ronald N. Giere is here the “internal” current of perspectivism. The second one is known as “external perspectivism.” (Staloff 5). Internally, it takes its form in scientific realism, which is “the belief that science accurately depicts how the world is.” (Staloff, 5). Nietzsche, in high disapproval, believes that science only provides just another perspective. Certainly, it is one that anyone may adhere to, but it should not be done so because it “corresponds” (Staloff, 6) to the world, but because it provides an extremely useful “perspectival apparatus.” (Nietzsche 88). In other words, the scientific perspective helps understanding and controlling nature, as it were. For Nietzsche, it is important that such a perspective should not override the bigger factor at play: the “sentient” human being. (Nietzsche 97). Accordingly, humans have a sets of drives and instinct which make up for most of their decision making and behaviorisms in life. In this sense, science, reason and common sense “are just masks that we throw on reality so that we could manipulate it.” (Staloff 9)

Externally, perspectivism undermines the realism of not science but that of the self. If science is a “mask” then the external perspectivist current touches upon the masks that individuals wear in their daily lives. It may happen in a myriad of ways: faking a smile, a sentiment, a compliment; or taking a stern face against children who may have done something you forbade them from doing. Individuals adorn these masks for a few moments, and there is this common belief that if they ever take these masks off, they would have their true selves. In wearing these masks they consciously or unconsciously open up their record to more realities. In some sense, perspectives surrounding their own lives become perquisites and of paramount importance to avoid a stoic and stagnant lifestyle. Perspectives, in other words, provide humans with a flux — one that keeps their progression moving onward. (Barker 4). In short, a perspective can only be believable not

if it corresponds to reality, but rather "if it empowers us in our coping with it." (Staloff 10). In this sense, all of sorts of concepts represent perspectives which individuals impose on experience to create a more suitable world for themselves. In view of these considerations, Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy (1872,*) his earliest work, already advances a perspectivist view of tragedy and life itself in general. When the Greeks had merged the Apollonian and Dionysian, as Nietzsche claims they did, there came out of it a sense of merging two different ways of looking at the external world. Nietzsche is particularly fond the Greeks because he believes they had understood the essence of creation. One should then accept all the tools and all the worldviews at one's dispositions and make oneself the greatest project there is. One must never remain stagnant in one current or perspective of life. Instead, we should always use our creative and shaping capacities to be continually changing and self-reinventing. This, it could be argued, to be a fluid process of individuation. Joe Christmas, it shall be seen, is only able to transcend his "nigger" state by embracing his shaping abilities. He breaks the stereotypes that had besieged him and makes himself anew.

Some of the literature written on Faulkner contends quite the opposite of what perspectivism entails. To this regard, Marco Abel's *One Goal Is Still Lacking: The Influence of Friedrich Nietzsche's Philosophy on William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury*. (1995) provides a rather fatalistic and absolutist reading of Faulkner. Interestingly, Abel argues that Faulkner's novel, by support of Nietzschean philosophy, is an entirely nihilistic work of fiction. Citing two other major nihilist readings of the novel to back up his claim, Abel deconstructs *The Sound and the Fury* as a critique of Christianity in which Faulkner shows the meaninglessness of the Christian worldview. The first and leading argument he makes is a curious one. He takes Sheagog, the preacher we see deliver the

Easter sermon in the fourth section of the book, and makes a point on how Sheagog's attire supports the novel's nihilism. "The character of Shegog, however, is almost a grotesque personification of nihilism… the point is not whether Shegog's sermon can indeed move his audience, but that the reader's first impression of the potential alternative to nihilism is rid." (3). In other words, Abel disregards Sheagog's discourse that moves and unites all the members of the congregation to simply focus on the preacher's external aesthetics. While the present research work presents the Easter Sermon as a turning point in the novel, Abel completely dismisses its importance because "it is very difficult to disregard that 160 pages of essentially nihilistic actions stand against a rather short section of Christian community." (3). Indeed, Abel signals that nihilism is a constant measure in Faulkner's novel. Benjy, Quentin and Jason all provide, Abel argues, different views but ones that are all made of the same fabric: all three are devaluing, nihilistic perspectives, and "the novel has really to do with the discovery that life has no meaning." (3). The measure of order and harmony one finds at the end of the novel is misleading because "the regained order is empty and meaningless, except in the mind of a 33-year old retardate." (5). There is, except his study's title, very little that links Abel's study with this research work. Still, Abel relies on a completely different set of theories than the present research work does. Indeed, he is neither interested in Nietzsche's account on tragedy nor Faulkner's conception of tragedy. Moreover, his assessment and analysis is quite brutal because nihilism, by its own virtue, is as brutal. Abel barely sees any Apollonian currents, and when does point one out, he describes it as a "ridiculed" alternative to nihilism. His analysis of the novel is heavily contended in this work's chapter devoted to *The Sound and the Fury.*

## 5. Heir to Dionysus: Nietzsche's Life, Themes and Times

Following the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century and its subsequent legacy, the philosophical quest for a critical position of the nineteenth century intellectual sphere is a phenomenon that reached its peak in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, who lived from 1844 to 1900. Nietzsche's death in 1900 represents for the nineteenth-century intellectual evolution a symbolic and transitional endpoint. Indeed, his body of work would influence major twentieth-century intellectual concerns. These include "religious discourse, the meaning of ethics, the importance of language, nature of power, the relativism of truth and a critique of democracy" (Saccio 107). These are indeed all major issues that one finds in twentieth-century intellectual circles that Nietzsche had already begun discussing in the late nineteenth century.

Nietzsche's life reveals not only his long lasting influence, but also shows consistent elements of his thoughts and principles that he lived by. In clear terms, his ardent beliefs regarding some of the elements of Ancient Greek thought can be clearly noted in the way he lived and approached life. Fascinated and starstruck by Greek *agon*, this concept may as well perfectly describe his life and thought. In constant struggle with his contemporary intellectual sphere, and in constant strife with himself, Nietzsche felt and lived by his Dionysian principle. Nietzsche, often seen as anti-traditionalist, does not reject everything that is labelled as traditional. In fact, he is in many ways a "heir" of a tradition that he regarded as Apollonian.

> [Nietzsche] was very interested in the legacy of the 18th century, and the French Revolution. On the one hand, he accepted a number of Enlightenment assumptions about

> culture and society. For example, he believed that there were profound flaws in personal, religious beliefs in modern European culture, thus he shared much of the Enlightenment's religious skepticism. But he also shared their confidence in the great potential and power of human creativity. In those respects, we could see Nietzsche as an heir to the Enlightenment tradition. (Saccio 2)

As a disciple of the Dionysian, however, he rejects much of the Enlightenment's faith in reason. Indeed, Nietzsche is deeply skeptical about reason as a basis for truth. He dismisses "universal truth" (qtd in Kaufmann 34) and focuses on other sorts of cultural specificities. In the entirety of his life and career, he advocates for a "will to power" rather than reason to his friends (when he has any), his family, and intellectual circle. In this light, he is extremely critical against Enlightenment legacy.

Nietzsche's rejection of traditional ethics, religious values and morality was at radical odds with his own background. This is one of the great paradoxes of Nietzsche's life and thought. He was born into an extremely pious, Lutheran family. Indeed, both of his parents were ordained ministers. Nietzsche himself underwent a brief education to follow his parents' steps, but parted ways with their path soon after his father's death. Nietzsche went on to study philology and ancient languages. He was named professor at the remarkably young age of 24, an unprecedented feat in his day. (Astor 10). He eventually resigned his position at the equally young age of 34. These biographical notes shed some light on Nietzsche's philosophy that he would embrace for the years to come. Firstly, Nietzsche was deeply troubled and conflicted with his religious background. It is the first element that characterizes his own *agon*. He pondered a great deal on whether he

should continue following his father's steps or to break away. As one often finds with Nietzsche, there is a deep sense of crisis with a delayed reaction to it. It is very much so the case in regard to his abandonment of religion. Ultimately, he takes his Dionysian leap to become a "disciple of truth".

> Every true faith is infallible. It performs what the believing person hopes to find in it, but it does not provide any least support for the establishing of an objective truth. Here, the ways of men divide. If you want to achieve peace of mind and happiness, then have faith. If you want to be a disciple of truth, then search. (qtrd in Kaufmann 34)

Secondly, Nietzsche was himself attuned to "Dionysian inconformity." (Eriksen 102). The German did not sell well, and neither did he get along with his peers. Often seen as shockingly subversive and methodologically unreliable, his work and persona never truly impressed his intellectual circle. His first book, *Birth of Tragedy*, was ill regarded by his peers and was thought of as an insult to the study of philology. It is not surprising that in turn Nietzsche would resign from his position, and would often pejoratively call his counterparts "scholarly oxen." (qtd in Solomon and Higgins 5). Exercising his own Dionysian will to power, Nietzsche often regarded himself ahead of his time and cared very little about the opinions of his peers.

Nietzsche wandered for years in Southern Europe. His lifestyle can be described as solitary, consisting of writing and lonesome travelling. His lonesomeness and work make up the bulk that gives us a glimpse of his personality. Nietzsche would spend the last ten years of his life in madness. Some scholars have suggested that "the sheer intensity of his

philosophical struggle had pushed him over the psychological edge." (Saccio 100). Once again, one notes how this notion of struggle is present in his life as well as his work. Nietzsche's work would be devoted to a critique of European civilization which he describes as "exhausted" in his *Twilight of the Idol (1889)* for it had lost its intellectual and cultural vivacity. (44). In many ways, Nietzsche and his contemporary Soren Kierkgaard shared similar views on modern society. They both ascribed a state of hollowness and emptiness to modern European culture. Nietzsche categorically rejects Kiergaard's divine solution, however. Instead of looking at a higher being (God,) Nietzsche thinks one's salvation comes from oneself when making a heroic leap towards the will to power.

To reject God as Nietzsche does in *The Gay Science (1882)* and *Beyond Good and Evil (1886)* is one of the primordial steps towards the will to power. In this respect, Nietzsche follows the post-Darwinian tradition which sees human beings as biological entities that are not part of any divine order. Instead, Nietzsche "sees humans as rooted in their own bodies." (Kaufmann 33). The will of humans, stimulated by their drives and deep instincts, is the only real force in personal and cultural life. In this respect "only human life and drives could overcome the void of modern life since there is nowhere else to turn but towards the self." (Saccio 101). There is, in other words, no higher reality or world that gives meaning to life. It is the introspection within oneself that gives meaning to one's life.

Nietzsche's philosophical *agon* reflects in his aesthetics as well. He often uses the metaphor of a hammer. One must think with a hammer in order to "smash the reigning conventions of the day." (Saccio 101). The intellectual struggle he undergoes in his

philosophical project mainly stems from his desire to be different. He wants for instance to move away from the systematic philosophical form that he notes in his peers.

> Nietzsche relies on humor, sarcasm and aphorisms. He uses short paragraphs instead of long flowing arguments. He once claimed that he would rank philosophers not on their logical arguments, but on the basis of their laughter which he saw as part of the human condition. (Solomon 44).

Ranking philosophers not according to their rational arguments but based on their abilities to illicit laughter seems like a curious idea. Nietzsche often denotes a certain "playfulness" in regards to the Dionysian (Nietzsche 3) – a childlike quality he thinks is necessary to adulthood. Thus, it is not surprising he attempts to write with an edge that brings humor and irony into his philosophy.

Nietzsche's philosophy, prior his fall to insanity, consist of mainly vigorous attacks against the Judeo-Christian tradition of the Western world. The Greek ideal, for him, was the one which modern people should recover in some ways (Barker 9). An ideal made of independent, strong willed individuals which has been destroyed by Judeo-Christian morals. "Nietzsche argues that Christian values had impoverished life and dehumanized individuals by denying and repressing their will to power which represents their healthy, natural instincts." (Saccio 104). He tries to understand this cultural process of repression by analyzing Greek and Judeo-Christian thoughts. He would spend his entire career and life arguing that the Ancient Greek culture had been heroic in its affirmation of the human condition that is driven by instinctual drives. In so doing, the Greeks had accepted a part of life which is passionately Dionysian and one that is completely independent of reason.

European culture, on the other hand, had followed Platonic and Socratic ideals of "abstraction, metaphysics, and misled rationality." (qtd in Ackermann 44). Nietzsche's *agon* would persist until his very last breath. His struggle, this time around, would be physiological and neurological. He had contracted a syphilis which in turn had led to other neurological complications. Nietzsche would spend his last ten years in insanity. Only a couple of years before, he was already signing his letters as Dionysus. His death in 1900 is a symbolic date since he is a barometric and transitional figure for the dawn of the twentieth century.

Nietzsche thus provides new illuminating possibilities when it comes to reading Faulkner. Indeed, would not be an overstatement to point out that most Faulkner criticism that exists revolves around predictable issues. Racial tensions, Southern history and the voice of women have fascinated many scholars alike. No doubt, these issues will remain prevalent in Faulkner criticism. Psychoanalytical analysis of Faulkner has certainly had its playfield, as well. Freud, unlike Nietzsche, is directly mentioned by Faulkner as one of his influential readings. Sullivant's *Exploring Faulkner: The Space Between Writer and Philosopher (2007)* speculates that Faulkner had prior knowledge of Nietzsche's work precisely because of its proximity to Freud's. In this light, this research work bridges and solidifies this assumption by providing a more holistic analysis of Faulkner's work in light of Nietzsche's philosophy.

## 6. "The Heart in Conflict with Itself": Faulkner's Life and Work

A myth surrounding an American dream has always shaped the American literary canon. Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby (1925)* colors this myth best. Upward mobility, inventing and re-inventing one's life and reversing one's past: these are some of the beliefs that

ornate this American tradition to look forward as if to signal that the past has no hold on an individual. Faulkner, a Southerner born in the South in 1897, breaks this tradition. American optimism is thus largely absent from Faulkner's work. His work is, to a large extent, characterized by dark visions surrounding the burdens and failures of the past, which all seem to stem from one large debacle, namely the Civil War. (Melvin 12). Faulkner unpacks more and more of the rich historical legacy that underwrites the private traumas of his characters. It is also not accidental Faulkner breaks this tradition as a Southerner. He comes from a part of the country, Mississippi, that "never had the same beliefs in progress" (Bowers 44). Faulkner's South had known depression and poverty "harder than any other part of the country had known" (44). Subsequently, the mythos surrounding the American dream is foreign to his mind and he accordingly takes an outsider's view towards these American slogans. These slogans do not have much validity in Faulkner, and his breakaway is particularly salient in the selected novels of this research work. Indeed, there are patterns that emerge and a sort of figure in the carpet. Both Faulkner's life and his work have something to say about this quest for more than one has. The great American theme of freedom, nurtured from the very beginning by the likes of Benjamin Franklin, is one that leads individuals to believe that their lives are not already pre-determined by the conditions of their birth. Instead, people immigrate to the United States in hopes of transcending the prejudices of determinism. This myth of transcendence has been of the most potent American credos. There is an endless number of works in which we see the rudiments of self-making whereby men try achieving remarkable successes. Yet, Faulkner's take on the dream disturbs his readers. In his work, one sees how the saga of self-making is inseparable from deception, illusion, and even criminality as it shall be seen in *Light in August's* Joe Christmas. Faulkner goes to great lengths showing how the hunger and appetite for self affirmation can lead to a coercive denial of

humanity. Indeed, a number of his characters are rejected, silenced and simply denied. In this sense, the dream of self-making and self-fulfillment, with the ramifications of being free and unconstrained, of having a life governed only by one's energy and one's will, all of this becomes difficult to sustain.

Selecting Nietzsche's theory as stated in his *Birth of Tragedy* to tackle Faulkner's is also more than coincidental. Some elements of Faulkner's life reveal why such a study is particularly fitting and relevant. Firstly, Faulkner is as obsessed with the Greeks as Nietzsche is. Self-taught, Faulkner had spent a great deal reading Geek tragedies. The effect of this literary encounter reflects in the fiction he himself writes. The Greek conceptualization of *agon* - which Nietzsche would dissect in terms of Apollonian and Dionysian – is all too present in his writings. Like Greek tragedies, his fiction is haunted and influenced by themes and taboos such as patricide, incest, and self-identity to name a few. These, too, are all part of the tragic mechanism of Greek plays. Faulkner does not simply want to reflect and mimic the Greeks; he wants to exceed them. Indeed, he declares in an interview that "no matter how much" an author "admires the old writer, he wants to beat him." (qtd in Parini 42). In this sense, the tragic element one sees in Faulkner tries to reach and transcend the Greek literary pantheon.

Faulkner's relationship to the past goes beyond mere literary encounters. His own life and experience transcribe in the fiction he writes. His own family tree reflects the duality of past and present one finds in his books. "The Civil War is the founding trauma in Faulkner's mind that he thinks the nation has yet to come to terms with" (Backman 4). His work can thus be seen as a form of therapy, working its way through layers of pain and hurt to the original wound (Weinstein 36). Faulkner himself is a direct inheritor of the

Civil War. His own grandfather had been one of the lead commanders of the Confederate army. In turn, this will reflect itself in the stories he weaves. *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) is a prime example of how Faulkner revisits the past. He re-writes Quentin, whom he takes from *The Sound and the Fury*, and presents him as a series of ghost chambers in which the Southern past is playing out. The novel itself becomes historical, and it is Faulkner's way of textually transcribing his *agon.* Indeed, the great forces and crises of American history "begin to show up as bedrocks of American personality and American story." (Parini 45). He places the action in Quentin's Harvard dormitory. He places this episode before Quentin commits a suicide, essentially getting a second mileage from him. The way in which the story is being recast by the dormitory in Harvard becomes Faulkner's entry into the old, dark historical events. The past and its culture, in other words, begin to emerge as the ultimate constituents of how Americans live and die.

Faulkner's experience with the U.S. Army in the First World War (1914-1918) also shapes his theme of past as trauma. Like many others, he is one of the writers that have been affected by his experience on the battlefield. The war's disillusionment which led to a dislocation of culture and disaffection of people all find their remains in Faulkner's prose. The Great War presents itself in modernist authors as "a loss rather than a victory." (Parini 45). There is a deep and traumatizing pathos that emerges out of modernist fiction. Interior monologues, jumbled narratives, and lack of clarity are, in some sense, reflections of the troubled times of their authors.

In 1949, Faulkner would be awarded with the Nobel Prize in literature. In his acceptance speech, Faulkner states that the young writers of his time had suffered the tragedy "of forgetting the problem of the human heart in conflict with itself, "which would

be the only thing worth writing about." (qtd in Parini 66). The present study is deeply concerned with this conflict. It contends that Faulkner's prose is an *agon* that tries to open up new paths of access to consciousness. His characters are particularly acute and aware of their past shaping their own consciousness where most of the "conflict" of their "human heart" lies. (Parini 66). It is the breakthrough message of the mind: what lives inside one's consciousness, when given a sort of authority and intensity, may be one's "doom." (qtd in Polk 256). Consciousness, in Faulkner, is a "potent yet terrifying force" (qtd in Polk 256). that wrecks one's ability to manoeuver in their day-to-day lives.

Arnold Weinstein, one of the great Faulkner scholars, notes in his *Lives of Literature* (2021) how the Southerner has disappeared almost entirely from the American literary curriculum. This is, in fact, a worldwide phenomenon. Indeed, Faulkner is rarely being taught anymore, and neither is he being widely read. I believe the reason behind the public's modern distaste for Faulkner is twofold. Both issues are tackled in this research work, but a preliminary note is useful. First, should one assess the accessibility of Faulkner's work? The contemporary context must be taken into consideration. Indeed, the current age and its society is one of instantaneous gratification. Other mediums such as movies, video games and music all provide instantaneous pleasure and gratification to their audience. Faulkner's literature does not. It is arduous, cryptic, and even labeled "elitist" by some scholars. (Ambrosio 55). Consequently, modern mainstream readers are often repulsed by such narratives. Secondly, the academic distaste for Faulkner has more to do than just his stylistics. Modern literary research, following the spirit of the age –*the zeitgeist*- is often dominated by gender and racial criticism. Faulkner does not and will not come out on the right side of these issues. Faulkner, as noted earlier, was born and raised in a family that was involved in the Confederate army. He also grew up with the Southern

code of the early twentieth-century South. Feminism, needless to say, does not bode well in Faulkner. In light of this, certain views that Faulkner presents in his novels simply seem out of touch or "despicable." (Parini 3).

Still, one must remember that Faulkner was a writer of his own moment and his own region. He breathed the air of his culture as much as he critiqued it. Hence, one should not expect him or any other writer to simply fly over and transcend the all presumptions and perspectives of any given culture when they are often unstated and unarticulated. This would be tantamount to readers expecting their authors to pass ideological tests whose results would very likely prove to be disappointing, and out of line with their times. Nevertheless, Faulkner gradually moves towards black subjectivity knowing that it plays a crucial role in the psychological identity of Americans. He is not oblivious to the status and lives of blacks. This will be particularly salient in *Light in August*, which this research work deals with.

Passing away in 1962, Faulkner left behind him an impressive and intimidating body of work. Even though his recognition as one of the great American literary writers would come in late, he remains today "mysterious, profoundly complex kind of indomitable." (Weinstein 4). The complexity of his work is both troubling and illuminating. His interweaving of characters, voices and events without regards for the conventions of chronological progression, is an attempt to "create a complex master narrative whereby the goal is to demonstrate that no single coherent meaning can be discovered." (Ambrosio 46). Faulkner's complex narratives also bear witness the new, graceless South that he feels he is exiled in. Indeed, the issues of racism and consequences had become increasingly important. In short, Faulkner's fiction deals with all kinds of his historical and cultural

landscapes. These are the very same landscapes that he attempts to measure and gauge, thus establishing both his historical and writerly mission as an writer. It is also what establishes today his own place in the history of fiction.

It must be said that very few biographies make the link between Nietzsche and Faulkner. Biographies such as Philip Weinstein's *Becoming Faulkner* (2010), Carolyn Porter's *William Faulkner* (2007) and Jay Parini's *A Life of William Faulkner* (2005) note other influences in Faulkner's work. Indeed, most of these biographies tend to explore influences Faulkner himself has confessed in public interviews. Dostoevsky and James Joyce, in particular, have a prominent place in biographical studies of Faulkner. Weinstein and Parini, however, emphasize Faulkner's attunements to Greek tragedy in his novels. Parini describes *Santuary* as a "modernist Greek tragedy with a hint of Southern Gothicism," (100) while Weinstein notes the "suffering" Faulkner's characters are imbued with "that is reminiscent of the pleas of Ancient Greek tragic protagonists." (78).

## 7. Contextualizing Faulkner: Early Twentieth-Century Literature and the Recovery of Lost Time

The literature of the twentieth century informs its readers right from the beginning that it will deal head on with a story of crisis. It is a story of a time when, in William Butler Yeats' words, the "center cannot hold" anymore (1). There is an urgent sense in the new century's fiction that the rational and spiritual traditions that had followed Western civilization for a long while have become either "bankrupt, dead or were under fire." (Nugent 23). Franz Kafka, in some ways, is the bell toller who announces that the parade is over. Writing just after World War I, Kafka shows in his work that human doing and striving, present since the beginning in both sacred and secular texts, are systematically

"emptied of value and of transcendence" (Nugent 24). There is a sense in which individuals are seeking access to a court that would judge their innocence or their guilt, but never get to have their hearing. The same individuals try to move in into the "castle," but never make it that far. There is also an urgent yearning to move beyond the carnal and desires of the flesh into the spiritual, but everything falls short of happening.

> "A book must be the ax for the frozen sea within us," Kafka wrote. Kafka knew a great deal about frozen seas, and he located them where no geographer would have: within ourselves. Yes, the ice in the Arctic melts today, but the ice inside retains its thickness. (Each of us can gauge the truth of such an inconvenient claim, challenging all notions of charity and empathy.) In fact, Kafka's own greatest texts are testimony to coldness of heart; his characters talk and think and talk and think nonstop. afka limns the fundamental action proper to art: transformation. Figurative, vicarious, exitable transformation. Not for the doomed denizens of his stories, of course, but for his readers. (Weinstein 16)

Kafka thus presides over the unraveling and the one dimensionalizing of Western hope and belief. The great spiritual agenda of the past is reduced to an affair of men transformed into beetles, singing mice, and men dying like dogs. All of these critical distinctions are presided over by unfeeling, incompetent, but nonetheless operational individuals. Even at its bleakest, however, Kafka's work bears witness to human aspiration and human hunger - which are powerful motifs in his stories. This, of course, sheds light on the similitude between Kafka and Faulkner. Namely, there is a somewhat redeeming Apollonian hope in the darkest of their tales. In Kafka's work, the substance, the actuality, the experience of

happiness and of grace are absent and withheld from us in his work, but the forms of striving and seeking the rhythms of hope and of the desire for something finer, and the very dance of life itself remain front and center. With this, we realize that the projects towards meaning are immortal, even if meaning turns out to be in some cases illusory. The search for a meaningful truth, in other words, is unkillable and unerasable both in life and in art, as if it were encoded in our human genes.

Kafka, like so many modernist writers, is also responding to the horrors of history itself, and the most obvious example of a cultural collapse comes about in the Great War of 1914-1918. This conflict marked the imaginations and the lives of Europeans and Americans alike. It heralded the arrival of "chaos, butchery and brutality onto the world. "War," John M. Bowers writes in his *The Western Literary Canon in Context (2008,*) "as a coherent and orderly deployment of strategies and military wisdom, analogous days to a chess board… this was probably a myth all along." (4). Instead, the experience of the trenches, of nerve gas, of shell shock and of endless carnage without any meaningful result, even symbolically; all of this came with the Great War, and it changed Western literature. Consequently, the early writings of modernist authors such as Ernest Hemingway and T.S. Eliot are works about a world that is war torn. Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, and Eliot's *The Waste Land* are both remarkable literary productions that showcase the sterility, impotence and the loss of vision inherited from the war. Eliot himself returns to the medieval quests. He references the Arthurian legends, especially that of the holy grail, as a poetic model for what is lost and how it might be refound. Here, too, emerges a common thread with Faulkner. Both writers have a reverence for the past that is uncanny and whose power is hardly found in other texts. The past, for both Faulkner and Eliot, is "never dead, it is not even past." (Rollyson 1).

> Lives are lived in circles, not linearly, with past and present looping each other. This seems especially true of William Faulkner, who took his own family history as synecdochal, standing in for the history of the South, with the South standing in for the history of the nation as a whole. His sense of the present was profoundly shaped by his sense of the past, and the past brought a peculiar pressure to bear on the present in his life and work. "He was besotted with history, his own and those of people around him," said Robert Penn Warren. 5 "He lived within this history, and the history became him." (Parini 5).

The modernist query for the past is phenomena that goes beyond Faulkner and Eliot. It is no accident either that so many battered twentieth century writers have sought refuge in old myths and old stories. Giraudoux's *The Trojan War Will Not Take Place*, and Tenessee Williams's *Orpheus Descending* are indicative of a modernist nostalgia for a past, and a nostalgia for an earlier order vis à vis the messiness, chaos, brutality, coarseness and the formlessness of modern life. To this regard, Marcel Proust's *A la recherché du temps perdu* also displays a fascination with the culture of the past. Here too, I shall make a link with Faulkner. Both writers have fierce and profound views of human emotional life. This shows in their rendition of the workings of time and memory. Both Proust and Faulkner, as I suggest in my analysis, present a rationale where literature is brazenly celebrated as more real than life, as more true than experience. Though this kind of experience seems hyperbolic, both writers follow Nietzsche's scheme whereby tragedists transcend the real of mere art. Furthermore, Faulkner and Proust are undoubtedly similar in their views towards human feeling. At an ever larger scale, their view meets Freud's assertion that

human feelings are all attuned to libidinal forces govern human behavior. In this research work, this is particularly shown in the case of Quentin Compson, in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*.

The treatment of memory as a form of resurrection is part of the fabric of modernist literature. Marcel Proust's, James Joyce's, and Faulkner's treatments of the hold of memory are simply staggering. In her *Metaphorising memory: reconfiguration in modernist and postmodern writings* (2003,) Marta Dvorak sketches a brief treatment of memory in modernist texts.

> Interestingly, the disjunctive modernist and postmodern textual strategy of fragmentation, with its fractured time sequences, gaps and blanks, embedding and iteration, is often accompanied by a parallel unifying operation—the conjunctive tendency to perceive filiation and to integrate the multiple and the dispersed through a metaphorically combinative device revolving round memory. Among the illustrations that spring to mind is Virginia Woolf's selling/telling of the past on the instalment plan, as it were, in the heavily analeptic Mrs. Dalloway. (289)

These include the inability to distinguish between perception and reality, but all three writers also convey the richness and beauty of illusions. They all show how desires and dreams are, even though they may sometimes be routinely punctured or discredited, part of what it means to be human. The fiction of the twentieth century, in other words, takes up these themes and render them in an "extravagant" way.

> Modernist art improves scheme. We come to understand it as a home for these enormous issues. The literature it bestows is where the magic, or that every living human has within him or herself, happens. But the epic journey necessary to get there, to get from here to there, to retrieve this script, this or to translate this book of ourselves, is something that most of us put off all of our lives. We are so distracted by the buzz and static and conventional wisdom of so-called reality. But the cast and the characters are locked within, and the trip is just charged with danger and difficulty. (Weinstein 55)

"Danger and difficulty," is precisely the territory of literary modernism. The unconventional narrative methods used by writers of twentieth-century literature stamp most of modernist texts. As it shall be illustrated with Faulkner in the subsequent chapters, the difficulty to apprehend modernist texts is perhaps their most striking feature, because the difficulty of access cannot be missed. Truly anyone can pick up a novel by Charles Dickens and read it. The plot can be followed easily because it is linear, clear and is given much descriptions. Language behaves the way it is traditionally taught in elementary schools. When one picks up *Ulysses* or *The Sound and the Fury*, it turns into a different kettle of fish. The conventional formula, in other words, is dying in these modernist texts. And although one might mourn the dead, it is also good to ask why it is happening. In the analysis that pertains to Faulkner, this textual distortion shall be related to philosophical perspectivism. When we are pitched into the interior monologues of Darl in *As I Lay Dying* or in Quentin's philosophical thoughts in *The Sound and the Fury*, we are negotiating new textual techniques. Indeed, the reader shall face reconfigurations of a new kind that will

frame most often fractured stories of dysfunctional families. Faulkner, as a modernist, thrusts onto the page jumbled narratives that mirror the thoughts of his Southern characters. Benjy is given an almost unreadable language of mourning. Quentin is given an armada of philosophical meditations that express his suffering to the fullest degree. Darl will then pick up where Quentin has left things off and display a discourse that is entirely antithetical to his society. Finally, Joe Christmas showcases a language of someone entirely at odds with the values of his culture.

As a Southern writer, Faulkner breaks the mold with the American tradition. With *The Sound and the Fury*, for example, it shall be seen how the great forces and crises of American history start to show up as the bedrock of Faulknerian narrative. The past, the culture and history begin to emerge as the ultimate constituents of how Faulkner's characters live and die. In this sense, he is deeply untraditional, because the legacy left by writers such Emerson and Whitman expressed a tradition of looking forward and not backward. The past, in other words, could not possibly have a grasp or hold on them. Faulkner simply takes an outsider's view on much of the myths and concepts that color the American dream. These include social mobility, inventing and reinventing oneself, and starting anew. Instead, what one finds in his fiction is that individuals are the products of their past which not only guides them, but could also kill them. Furthermore, the past in Faulkner is not merely one's personal past; it is also one's regional and cultural past. All of these, in a sense, come with a genetic tracing of sorts. The past, in Faulkner's stories, shapes and plays with its people.

Tending to the matters that relate is thus an important process when examining Faulkner's narratives. To this regard, essentially all of his stories are stories of tragedy and loss. All of these losses bring with them an unheralded presentation of consciousness where

individuals live their lives. Indeed, Faulkner goes to great depths to illustrate how individuals are located at various places and periods at the same time. We are, in a sense, located in our yesterdays as much as we are located in our present and in what is coming ahead. Even more, people are also constantly daydreaming and imagining their future. Faulknerian prose, in other words, takes all shapes of linearity out of the equation for the simple reason that life is not felt in a neat and linear manner in the mind. Consequently, his characters have this acute awareness of their own past. In some cases, it is the precise reason that brings about their downfall When giving the mind such an writerity and intensity could simply kill you. Consciousness, in other words, can be a potent but terrifying force in the sense that may wreck one's day to day world.

As a Southern writer, Faulkner breaks the mold with the American tradition. With *The Sound and the Fury*, for example, it shall be seen how the great forces and crises of American history start to show up as the bedrock of Faulknerian narrative. The past, the culture and history begin to emerge as the ultimate constituents of how Faulkner's characters live and die. In this sense, he is deeply untraditional, because the legacy left by writers such Emerson and Whitman expressed a tradition of looking forward and not backward. The past, in other words, could not possibly have a grasp or hold on them. Faulkner simply takes an outsider's view on much of the myths and concepts that color the American dream. These include social mobility, inventing and reinventing oneself, and starting anew. Instead, what one finds in his fiction is that individuals are the products of their past which not only guides them, but could also kill them. Furthermore, the past in Faulkner is not merely one's personal past; it is also one's regional and cultural past. All of these, in a sense, come with a genetic tracing of sorts. The past, in Faulkner's stories, shapes and plays with its people.

In this regard, modernist writers certainly enjoy puncturing high flown rhetoric that in turn create memorable narrative creations. Faulkner's bag of tricks, however, goes beyond that. He is more than willing to fracture all existing narrative forms and units, and then to make up new ones within the same stories he is telling. This shall be seen how he moves from the interior monologue to a third-narrative perspective in *The Sound and the Fury*. His ambitions can almost be described as encyclopedic. His are texts that display a colossal effort at reclamation, recuperation and at resting what is either dark or dead into a language that is profoundly unique in Western literature. Once again, interior monologue brings into the light of day the hither two hidden and static sound fury of the human heart, and the human mind. Faulkner makes crystal clear how hectic and how lethal all of these can be. He goes to great lengths to find a language for the losses that his characters sustain. Benjoy, for example, loses his sister, his genitals, and his pasture. The language he finds for these losses symbolize the greater essence of his work which consists in adaptation and identity. Faulkner's stories are part of the modernist aim to get to know oneself by coming to terms with the social and psychic stresses that condition and inform their lives in the most torturous and wounding ways possible.

> We read books for these reasons: to capture the prey of a life, the shape of a life, the fullness of a life in time. It is what we do not have in our own experience. Modernist literature, more than most, is a form of archeology of restoring the past and entering the time machine that magically takes what was over and forgotten; what was felt and never said, and making it be born again with the kind of mastery that are not available in life. That's what makes these difficult forbidding modernist texts about. They are about all kinds of trauma,

> and as we see in Faulkner, it is about people locked into their private selves. Even in Virginia Wolf's and Hermann Hesse's works, one notices themes about the kind of strange noises that occupy and constitute the brain and joy, and all of these still make these texts wonderfully shimmering. (Weinstein 44)

Hermann Hesse is another twentieth century writer, but one that gets much less attention than other giant modernists such as Faulkner or Woolf. Yet, his work is no less fascinating and complex. A mention of the Swiss writer is even further relevant here because of the direct philosophical influences that had inspired him. He has spoken at length about his fascination for Buddhist spirituality and Nietzsche's philosophy. Both influences transcribe in his fiction. In terms of his admiration for Nietzsche, he takes on a number of themes that become prominent in his work. *Demian*, written in 1922, tells the story of a well-adjusted young man, so much so that he is independent in a way that teenagers are not supposed to be. In many ways, he represents the Nietzschean refusal to go along by conventions and traditions. More importantly, however, is the presence of the Apollonian and Dionysian dichotomy in his *Steppenwolf.* (1927) The novel depicts an old man that is described as half human and half wolf. Evidently, the novel showcases the human side as the one that is imbued with reason and rationalism; whereas the wolf side demonstrates beastly and aggressive impulses. Needless to say, this behavioral spectrum is akin to Nietzsche's dissection of Greek tragedy. One of the issues that Hesse wants to bring about is this split notion of the self. This bifurcated notion of the self whereby two distinctly different instincts are blended is reminiscent of Nietzsche's unification of the self by an embrace of all passions and all emotions (Barnes 10). The issue of the self is one that all

modernist writers are closely attuned to. The Great War had, among other things, called into question the issue of identity

Modernism's great themes are brought about in large part by the collapses and the crises of an earlier worldview. Indeed, modernism signals in a stark manner themes of an alienated consciousness, of subjective exile and themes that seek to discover the misfits and misalignments between self and society. In a cumulative way, readers see that this quest for freedom is only rarely as universal as it gives itself to be. Modernist writers remarkably show how many things in this world are invested in keeping individuals in their place and significantly limit maneuvering room. Most often, these limitations spell terror. Yet, as frightening and intimidating as high modernist literature may seem there is an exhilaration in reading it, studying it, and researching it. This exhilaration comes precisely from the scholarly pleasure in making sense of these advents by recouping the plenitude of the fictional lives; so that when we read Darl Bundren's subjective talk about the process of sleep or Quentin Thompson's fantasies of murder, the pattern and recovery we make up of these create a great boon of literature. It represents an act of resurrection and an erasure of what death, space and time entail. Narrative, modernist one in particular, is the "discourse of mortality." (Weinstein 45). Writers, in different terms, write in time and against time. They also write to capture time. Behind every story told and every story read lies behind an entire process of shaping, preserving and recapturing experientially has already been lost.

# Chapter II:

# The Inside Picture of Loss in

# Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*

This second chapter is solely focused on William Faulkner's first breakthrough novel, *The Sound and the Fury*. The analysis proceeds as follows. First, it deals with the structure of the novel. *The Sound and the Fury* marks the modernist explosion in Faulkner's work. It is particularly famous for its recurrent use of broken chronology and interior monologues. These features, it is argued in the present chapter, are part of Faulkner's perspectivist formula in which the aim is to give as many vantage points as possible to his readers. The chapter then proceeds to analyze the thematically dimensions of the novel. In so doing, it argues that the first three sections of the book, all devoted to Caddie's brothers, are Dionysian in essence. Then it makes the point that these perspectives are balanced out by the final section, also known as the Dilsey chapter. The latter is argued to be Apollonian because it brings a sense of harmony and closure to the story.

## 1. Narrative Perspectivism in *The Sound and the Fury*

Nietzsche presents the Apollonian and Dionysian in such a way that, broadly speaking, one finds that in life, or in fiction, two antagonistic thoughts going at it. These are two broad thoughts filled with sublayers. Often overlooked or unarticulated, the Dionysian spirit lives in all individuals. It opens up one's space, record and horizon. As enunciated by Nietzsche, the Dionysian unravels the second (if not most important) perspective about life. In other words, more than simple thematic notations, the Apollonian and Dionysian, are fundamentally perspectival in essence. This said perspectivism, is perhaps the first and most striking Dionysian element in any of Faulkner's works. *The Sound and the Fury*, published in 1929, is this work's first glance at Faulkner's perspectivist stroke. More than simple family drama story, *The Sound and the Fury* depicts in a brutal way the ideological conflicts of the South of the early twentieth century

*The Sound and the Fury* breaks all the conventions of traditional narrative that is all too present in the nineteenth century or prior. It has no omniscient voice, but simply voices in the plural, and all of these voices express the idea that there is no single right take on events. In a perspectival way, the novel plunges its reader into the interior where there is no objective, panoptic view of the world, as Nietzsche explains.

> Let us be on our guard against the dangerous old conceptual fiction that posits a 'pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject'; let us guard against the snares of such contradictory concepts as 'pure reason', 'absolute spirituality', 'knowledge in itself…There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing'; and the *more* emotions we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity' be." (119)

In affirming that there is "only perspective seeing" and "perspective knowing," individuals find themselves circling around things by having different takes and vantage points. It is something that is also true of life. Indeed, if one were to ask people about their take on a single event, different commentaries would be received. *The Sound and the Fury* has something of that perspectival variety. Faulkner drenches the reader into mainly four perspectives, all of which surround the Compson family, and each perspective is inherently hectic. The first is told by the Idiot, Benjy. Quentin, the troubled and bruised Compson, narrates his mind in the second section. Jason, the pragmatist Compson, is the mind we read in the third section. The fourth section, interestingly enough, does away with the interior monologue perspectives of the first three and switches to a third perspective person which provides a wider view. All perspectives come together to give the reader a past and

present that are jumbled on the pages just as things are jumbled in the human brain, because an individual's mind only rarely follows a linear sequence. And so, the plot never goes forward. Needless to say, such a discursive way of writing narrative fiction comes with its challenges. As early as first two pages, the reader already has a vivid idea of how elliptic this narrative is going to be. Here is, for an instance, the first occurrence where chronology gets chaotic.

> We went along the fence and came to the garden fence, where our shadows were. My shadow was higher than Luster's on the fence. We came to the broken place and went through it.
>
> "Wait a minute." Luster said. "You snagged on that nail again. Cant you never crawl through here without snagging on that nail."
>
> Caddy uncaught me and we crawled through. Uncle Maury said to not let anybody see us, so we better stoop over, Caddy said. Stoop over, Benjy. Like this, see. We stooped over and crossed the garden, where the flowers rasped and rattled against us. The ground was hard. We climbed the fence, where the pigs were grunting and snuffing. I expect they're sorry because one of them got killed today, Caddy said. The ground was hard, churned and knotted.
>
> Keep your hands in your pockets, Caddy said. Or they'll get froze. You dont want your hands froze on Christmas, do you. (2)

These are only the first two pages of the novel and there already is a deep sense of confusion. The book opens with a scene around a pasture with a fence, and the reader finds out about people "hitting," (1) and then the scene gets cut radically to a different setting in time. In one instant the reader follows Benjy and Luster, and gets swiftly transported to

the past only shortly after. And it is the first instance where "nothing is arrested or over, that there is only flux and motion, an endless shuttling fromone tenement to another" (Weinstein 148). This "flux" in which there is a restless back and forth may as well exhaust the reader's mind when first reading it. It is a flux full of confusion, disorder and unclarity. It is nearly impossible to make sense of what the eye reads at first glance, because there is no narration device of any sort to help decipher what is being thrown in the direction of the reader. There is no omniscient narrator, time or place indications, and no sense of linearity. Instead, readers find themselves from the very first page they read in a place that feels strange and quite impenetrable. An irresistible readerly impulse is to try and straighten out Faulkner's Dionysian narration, to take his jumbled chronology and 'fix' it. Instead of floundering and wandering around into unknown territories, one would take the time to look and make research over what the writer has done. In so doing, one gathers a number of impressions on the text being read and its larger structures. Subsequently, pre-reading allows readers to size up the work as a whole before scrutinizing its parts and pieces. To be sure, this approach has its own merits as it increases the reader's chances of recognizing the writer's achievements. However, there is a sense in which it defies the modernist value of confusion. While being acquainted and familiar to the style of an writer is not a bad thing in itself, it certainly reduces some of the text's power on the reader. Indeed, reading Faulkner by taking the confusion aspect out of it and 'show' the story in a more linear sequence is, as Arnold Weinstein argues, "like taking the whole eggs out of the omelet." (Weinstein 54). In other words, it defeats the whole purpose of Faulknerian prose. The key to read *The Sound and the Fury* is to roll with the Dionysian punches, to take his jumbled prose as it is: whole — see it for what it is and then process it. If not, then one falls to the pitfall of 'straightening out' Faulkner, and that would be a highly reductive

approach as Donlad M. Kartiganer points out in his "*Now I Can Write: Faulkner's Invention of the Novel*." (1993)

> The process of familiarization discloses a structure of oppression. The strategies prepare a system of signs, a critical language, through which the text assumes meaning. This meaning, however, has been largely predetermined by the strategies. Reading thus necessarily projects a text known primarily through what is already known, preventing it from expanding beyond the boundaries of the approach adopted at the outset. (81).

Faulkner understands narration as Nietzsche understands storytelling, that sensory experience needs to be deeply touched and challenged. It is undeniable there does exist an impulse in trying to locate a basic outline in order to un-complicate the novel. Such a method, however, eliminates the labor and pleasure that is associated to modernist literature. It is indeed important to recognize that readers may be intimidated by such labor, but embracing the experience that comes with bafflement and uncertainty is a necessity to fully grasp the ramifications of modernist fiction. There is a sense in which one must get lost in the welter of information that seems structurally incoherent. In short, Faulkner's structural challenge raises the question of how far an writer could go with the form of a novel. The expressive and rhetoric possibilities that emerge out of such a form symbolize a *nec plus ultra*, extreme point beyond which it is hard to imagine fiction could go. "Such prose, oddly blinkered, is trouble for most readers." (Weinstein 65) Often seen as a master of high modernism, Faulkner actually cares very little about 'techniques.' Instead, just like Nietzsche, he writes about the human psyche. Faulkner sees not a 'stream of

consciousness,' but a mind of consciousness. And the mind must be extended to Dionysian narrative prowess. By presenting things to his readers without the labels they are ordinarily are accustomed to, Faulkner shows a Dionysian picture of a fractured mind and fractured world. Equally true, the same world proves to be shockingly confusing, unlabeled, sensorial — one that is prior to anyone's narrow tags.

> Its [The Sound and the Fury] principal object is that it should not be read, in the sense that it seeks to withstand from beginning to end every critical strategy. To put this in a more positive way, The Sound and the Fury fiercely celebrates invention, the freedom of a prose that communicates yet will not be controlled into what normally passes fora stable set of meanings. (Kartiganer 72)

Faulkner's confusion drives its readers to think deeper about the utility of a material that is out of the scope of common experience and a material that one cannot possibly comprehend rationally. It presses the readers hard yet still expects them to respond to it in some fashion. One may not comprehend the Dionysian confusion at first glance, but one does feel its cogency because one ingests it. Is there a need to understand the affective logic behind the confusion? Not necessarily. But the reader is meant to respond to the power and coherence behind it even though he or she may not know the reasons behind it. Dionysus enlightens that not every motion of life is inherently coherent, that sometimes one has to dive "into the wreck" to find light. (Nietzsche 80). Confusion and doubt, in other words, are perspectivist perquisites to truly live life. And this is precisely the Faulknerian formula: to give its readers the effects of a life, immerse them with and in it, and then later provide the Apollonian causes that produce it. And it is often how the lives of individuals work, too, that one finds out causes afterwards when doing their

backtracking. Only then will they reach a conclusion, but one usually starts with Dionysian emotions and feelings — just the way Faulkner starts.

> There is a kind of astounding primitive purity in Faulkner's work, a grasp of life that is most elemental of what experience might feel like before the codes, labels of culture and thinking come to us. This, too, might be an illusion of life prior to culture, to the grids and frames by which we organize things. A capacity to see and believe what was not yet patterned, organized and codified the way adult life is. Faulkner, then, makes demands on us, he obliges us to take a look at perception in a way we are rarely able to do for ourselves. (Weinstein 64).

"The primitive purity" is the Dionysian outburst that finds itself in Faulkner's form. One that delves into fractured consciousness, interior monologues, in recording the feelings of characters in crisis who are out of sync with their environment, with themselves, alienated out of their own minds and bodies. There is a deep sense of trauma in Faulkner, in the sense that the individual is traumatized by the very experience of being alive; that life and air assault them, and that they are not equipped to make their way through life. There is a profound sense of the damaged and incapacitated psyche in Faulkner and it finds way in the way things are presented to us. As Kartiganer further explains, the language given to this incapacitated psyche is one of "despair," which is part of the reading process of *The Sound and the Fury.*

> The effect is that of an equivalence always awry, like a slant rhyme grinding with tension, or a fugue in which an identical

> melody is being played in major and minor keys. Freedom and entrapment, obsessive reminiscence and defiance of all norms, despair and exhilaration, employ the same words to totally different ends. The novel reads as a narrative always beginning, opening to new configurations of meaning, and a narrative turning perpetually backward, looking to the past to conclude the process of meaning. (73)

What may seem oxymoronic is in fact a despair that could still be "exhilarating". It is true, what we are reading at first glance is not rationalistic. For a lack of better term, it simply does not make sense to the reader. But this sense of confusion, doubt, and despair is all so necessary to the "process of meaning." Nietzsche argues that human beings, as well as readers, have been all too accustomed to this rationalistic (Apollonian) instinct which seeks to pattern and clarify everything dealt with, but one must come to terms with the fact that not everything is neat or endowed with crystal clear clarity. The human mind is "tumultuous, frail, and can be deeply archaic." (Nietzsche 75). One of Faulkner's aims, then, is to paint that "archaic" mind through a convulsive but perspectivist type of narrative.

## 2. "Trying to Say": Benjy and the Language of Moaning

The decline of family, *The Sound and the Fury's* overarching theme, is a motif that is already present in nineteenth century fiction. Faulkner, however, writes the theme in a shockingly modernist fashion. Not only he flicks between past and present, but also he also flips between thinking, feeling, desiring and what is actually happening. A critical impulse is to ascribe this approach to literary technique or prowess. Instead, Faulkner fragments his writing because it is his deep conviction that this is the way the mind works.

It is the Dionysian essence that the mind has "an inherent nature in lapsing between what was, what is; what ought to be and what it is not." (Nietzsche 75) We are nevertheless confronted to different minds in Faulkner's novel. But all figures, sane or insane, have the same sort of rollercoaster rides where they fall into the lapse of their past where their mind is full of "sound and fury."

Besides *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner's early work, such *As I Lay Dying* and *Light in August*, are full of people that are utterly done in, damaged, incapacitated and mean. This is why Benjy, the character that narrates the first section, is an appropriate, barometric figure. He is so done in that he seems witless, has no thinking capacities and is not capable of any rationalization. He is unable to discern the difference between present and past, and does not know how to label cognitively anything that he sees. Benjy and Quentin, in other words, become "repositories" of narrative ways. (Vischer Bruns 25). Indeed, they "give us something of the plenitude of a life even though the lives being narrated here are tragic lives." (Weinstein 32). The "tragic" element is the Dionysian grasp of life that is most elemental about what experience might feel like before the labels of culture, maturity and thinking come to us. Offering an unpatterned and epileptic look at the human mind, Faulkner perpetuates the Dionysian principle in which reality stands as "a tumultuous flux in which individuality is overwhelmed by the dynamics of a living whole." (Magnus and Higgins 22). Benjy, the barometric figure of the book, remains the most radical challenge of the novel: how do we read an idiot? The hectic opening book gives something of the vision of the idiot, and of that Dionysian "tumultuous flux."

April Seventh, 1928.

> Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I could see them hitting. They were coming toward where the flag was and I went along the fence. Luster was hunting in the grass by the flower tree. They took the flag out, and they were hitting. Then they put the flag back and they went to the table, and he hit and the other hit. Then they went on, and I went along the fence. Luster came away from the flower tree and we went along the fence and they stopped and we stopped and I looked through the fence while Luster was hunting in the grass.
>
> "Here, caddie." He hit. They went away across the pasture. I held to the fence and watched them going away.
>
> It was red, flapping on the pasture. Then there was a bird slanting and tilting on it. Luster threw. The flag flapped on the bright grass and the trees. I held to the fence. (1).

At first glance, it is extremely delicate to discern what is exactly happening. The reader is given descriptions of people "hitting" and "red flags." Not knowing what all this is about, the reader realizes soon enough that the setting is some sort of golf course —an information that is never clarified. A critical deduction is realizing that this is a golf course, but the word itself never appears in this passage nor in the entirety of the book; which means this figure the reader is following does not know it is one. These are the indications of his idiocy. Benjy cannot make that cognitive translation and finds himself in those "tumultuous" thoughts. Instead, he mistakens (or remembers) that it is a pasture, and it is the reader's turn to be incapable of knowing that. This is one of the elements that makes Benjy the first archetypal Dionysian character in Faulkner's novel; in the way he perpetuates one's sense of the "frenzy." (Magnus and Higgins 22). The large purview of

vulnerability one gets from this is that it is not repressed. Had it been, it would have been "psychologically disastrous" (qtd in Higgins 54), as Nietzsche contends in his dissection of tragedy. In this light, this section is a "frenzy" tradeoff between what Benjy does not know and what the reader knows, and what the reader does not know and what Benjy knows.

> What we do know is that Benjy never grows past his almost animal need for her [Caddy]: at every point in his trajectory, she is the compass, the source of love, the horizon of living. We the adult readers see all too clearly the sweeping curve of time that bathes Compson lives… Time heals nothing for him. Benjy is frozen in time, and in that regard he is deprived of the essential learning process that life confers on the living. (Weinstein 66).

It is useful to reflect on what Benjy does not know. One never thinks about the golf course in terms that Faulkner presents it with. When writing 'golf course', what does one see? Is it "hitting" as put forward by Faulkner in the passage? What has Faulkner been attempting to show by discarding the cognitive labels that individuals ordinarily have their experience?

> A really alert reader might, even this early, suspect that the course was once a pasture, and so be able to negotiate an uneasy narrative collaboration with the opening paragraph; but these two "spoken" words, which both are and are not what they seem to be, throw us back into uncertainty. (Polk 139)

The “uncertainty” that Polks observes refers to the guesswork and reconstruction that characterize fact-finding and the inescapable human bias that attends human vision and perception. It is gradually learned that Benjy is there by the golf course’s fence waiting for his sister, Caddy, to return. In this light, his line on the opening page of the book “here, caddie” is filled with hidden power and resonance that the reader cannot distinguish until finishing the book and processing it multiple times. The significance of this two-word expression is that it acts as a catalyst that transforms the golf course into a pasture. It is understood when reading this passage that Benjy does not have a cognitive sense of his world. Falling short of explicitly showing us that he is next to a golf course, he instead tells about the “hitting” which occurs six times in the same passage. When ones supply terms like golf course, the readers demonstrate their own superiority over Benjy because they, as readers, critically deduce what he is not able to.

> Our narrator, to the contrary, does not read the words but hears the sounds that stand for the words, and what he - or she: we don't yet know the gender - hears is "Caddy" or, more precisely, some form of the sounds a phoneticist would trandcribe as [kzdi] or, probably closer to Faulkner's pronunciation, [kzdl]. These sounds have a single referent for the narrator, a referent quite different from the golfer's and, at this point in the novel, quite different from the reader's. (Polk 140)

“Caddy” thus acts as a polysemous word. Cognitively, one is able to detach two functions or meanings of a plysemous word. Benjy, on the other hand, cannot. A ‘caddie’, as Noel Polk points out, refers to the person that carries the bag of golfers, but it also refers to the

name of his sister, Caddy. In turn, this word triggers everything for Benjy. “Here, caddie” becomes the succinct title that the book does not hold, because Benjy’s tragedy is that Caddy is not there for him. He hears those words and starts moaning due his inability to understand space and time. All of this tumultuous confusion has been packed in two words without Faulkner letting on anything since the text does not tell why. It is also understood that Benjy cannot tell us that he is crying. It is Luster, a black servant for the Compsons, who notates the “moaning” so the reader could understand. Benjy, then, is not even able to report on his own sense of grief.

In another passage of the Benjy section one sees Caddy mothering him because his actual mother is entirely dysfunctional. She holds and embraces him, and it is the same pathos one finds in the first page where he moans. His story reaches its crescendo when one day, at that same fence, he gets out and meets school girls walking by. He rushes to them, and as he reaches them, Benjy shares:

> I was trying to say, and I caught her, trying to say, and she screamed and I was trying to say and trying arid the bright shapes began to stop and I tried to get out. I tried to get it off of my face, but the bright shapes were going again. (44)

“Trying to say” is the great theme of this book. One realizes that his gestures with these girls are efforts to express love for the missing sister. Benjy’s desire “lacks an available language, but which is neither unreal nor insignificant. Its quest is the speech that says what is as yet not only unsaid but unsayable.” (Kartiganer 73). The readers see it but no one else does in the text, and it is in some sense the critical reader’s great burden in this book — that one has a purview and perspective which makes them witnesses to the inside

picture of loss. In this sense, this text becomes a violent manifesto of other ways to tell a story.

Sartre, in one of his essays on *The Sound and the Fury;* namely *Time in in the Work of Faulkner (1962)* , compares the Faulknarian perspective to "a standing man in a convertible" (87), but instead of looking forward, he is "looking backwards." (87). All that can be seen is an ever growing past. The future, in Faulkner, becomes "decapitated." (Sartre 87). The Compsons clearly reflect the mindset of the south which does not seem to have a sense of the future, either. Characters like Benjy, endowed with a deep sense of loss, narrate the story about the decline of a dysfunctional culture and family. Faulkner's first perspective in the novel is all attuned to these dysfunctionalities. Faulkner's query is one that tries to understand his South. More particularly, Faulkner's South is one that is characterized by a sense of disease and decay. The South, in Faulkner, is the one part in America where American innocence and dream do not seem to be possible. His native land is perpetually marked by violence and defeat. It is a South whose world and values are falling apart, which leads Southern people to accommodate themselves in horrible conditions, the way the Compsons do. In other words, they are learning the bitter lessons of submissions and reconstruction.

### 3. Quentin's Internal Suffering

The second section is devoted to the son, Quentin, who goes to Harvard where he does not make it past his first year. This section is as notoriously difficult to read as the Idiot's section. Burrowing many of the first chapter's elements this section is just as drenched in a fragmented, Dionysian narrative that is mostly constructed through interior monologues.

Once again, to read and comprehend this section it is necessary to roll with the punches, attend to the mix, and process it in its initial jumbled fashion. Preserving the integral sense of confusion is a point that needs to be stressed and clarified. The structure as such is Dionysian in essence with its chaotic and volatile layers. However, and just as equally important, it does not mean that the chronology will not be temporarily sorted out later on because it also sheds light on other kinds of logic, of Apollonian nature, that this material has.

The endless back and forth between past and present makes the Benjy section a monosyllabic, limpid, yet elemental chapter. Quention's section, on the other hand, offers us a perspective on a character whose moans are of internal suffering. Quentin, unlike his idiot brother Benjy, strikes the reader an intellectual sort of figure. Deeply attuned to his thoughts, Quentin knows about causality and the trouble surrounding him. Being the one settled with the greater responsibilities, he represents the family's crown prince. As the great hope of the family, he finds himself in constant need to measure up to the community and family standards set upon him. While it is shown to the reader that his early success was his Harvard acceptance, this section also takes a greater measurement and reveals his failures as well.

Quentin is the inheritor of a whole tradition of chivalric Southern code of honor and gallantry, one which he cannot maintain. This code, for example, stipulates that "young girls are to remain virginal until they are married." (Kerr 2) It also stipulates that young boys are supposed to "preserve the virginity" (Kerr 2) of their young sisters. This code is Apollonian in essence because it accentuates the necessity for "order and clear

boundaries." (Magnus and Higgins 22). Quentin's suicide that was motivated by the pressure he had felt vis à vis the Compsons' honor and because of his incestuous feelings for his sister can thus also be regarded as a cultural dilemma. Consequently, his personal failure, in some ways, might be underwritten by a larger historical impasse. In this light, Quentin needs to actuate the precepts the code is held upon. Quentin's arc thus informs us about the American ethos not to be controlled or imprisoned by the various social constraints at large. As such, Americans have a culture that is focused on the future. American society, in some sense, is obsessed with the future. It is as if Americans themselves live in the future. Faulkner, however, allows his readers to rethink some of that. Faulkner never shuns or downplays the significance of the past. He always brings to light the conditioning and the shaping values of the past. Indeed, Quentin's first failure of importance will be related to Caddy, the promiscuous and free spirited sister who is always "hungry for experience." (Storhoff 115).

Quentin, in some sense, is fated to fail. Indeed, it is seen from the early scenes involving Caddy that she would spell trouble for Quentin. It is seen in one passage undressing herself and jumping for a swim while being forbidden to from Quentin. As a headstrong and willful type of figure, she transgresses his orders and goes on with it nonetheless. Quentin, who is supposed to govern and monitor her into behaving the 'right' way fails short of doing that. Scenes like this one foreshadow how Quentin will not be able to preserve the honor of the Compson family. He constantly finds himself conflicted between two currents of thoughts that both prove to be strenuous. The first current is the Apollonian one: the need to comply and abide by the community's social and ethical standards. The second current is to be seen as the Dionysian one: the abrasive need to

break free of said ethics and pursue his burning desire for his sister, Caddy. Either of these paths are torturous and unsatisfactory for him. If he chooses the Apollonian act of letting go, he knows he will be living with deeply repressed feelings; entirely embracing the Dionysian in him and pursuing an incestuous relationship with Caddy would have him living under the whim and judgmental dictates of his society. Either of which sound like the coming about of doom in his mind.

> Quentin realizes what cannot be brooked: that he will heal, that he will get over Caddy, that he will go on to live… it is a radical choice: he refuses change, refuses the forking path that marks all unfurling lives, and instead fastens onto his past as the self that cannot be let go. It is, in its way, a permanent endorsement of childhood—no matter that that childhood contained so much suffering—for that is where he found himself in his entirety, and he will not debase it/himself by moving into a future where he will be different over time. (Agnieszka 169)

Not to able to stop Caddy's promiscuousness and sexual maturation stands as Quentin's first failure. His own inflicted sexual feelings towards her stands as his second failure. Indeed, there is a clear theme of incestuous desire that Quentin is both troubled by, but also fearful of. If Caddy is to remain untouched and chaste, one expects Quentin to be more promiscuous. As a way of reversing codes, Faulkner writes the fate of Quentin to remain a virgin while making Caddy the experienced one. It then becomes a story of failed rites of passages of a young man coming of age, but going amuck.

> I [Quentin] had felt suffered taking visible form antic and perverse mocking without relevance inherent themselves with the denial of the significance they should have affirmed thinking I was I was not who was not was not who. (132).

In many ways Quentin's suffering reflects how the conflicting roles in the culture at large can get burdening. Nietzsche argues that "the unchangeable character is influenced in its expressions by its environment and education, not in its essence." (Portable Nietzsche 31). These influences are the same ones each individual is supposed to assume, but they are all becoming eroded, mixing into each other and leaving an utterly fluid situation for this young man in which there is nothing firm for him to step into. Instead, he is left with the mushy, conflicting sensation of "was not was not who." (132).

Quentin's relationship to his family is what is killing him and Faulkner finds many ways to present it. The dialogues are filled with descriptions, and oftentimes the reader faces a sudden jump from these dialogues into the thinking processes of Quentin. In one particular scene between Quentin's mother and Herbert Head, the man who is brought along to marry Carry, the reader gets a vivid sense of what this process is like.

> We have sold Benjy's  He lay on the ground under the window, bellowing. We have sold Benjy's pasture so that Quentin may go to Harvard  a brother to you. Your little brother.
>
> Why shouldn't you I want my boys to be more than friends yes Candace and Quentin more than friends  Father I have committed. (74)

We find once again the associative logic that is part of Faulkner's economy. While Mrs. Compson speaks her words, the text shows that Quentin is processing them and reflecting on them. He is the one who remembers Benjy "bellowing under the window." Furthermore, just when Mrs. Compson makes her teasing comments on how her "boys" should be "more than friends," the language suddenly turns italic "*Father I have committed.*" (76). Readers can supply the missing term here which would be 'incest.' Yet, there is this strong feeling that even if Quentin had included the word it would not have guaranteed that it had happened, imagined or said. As Arnold Weinstein's reading of the passage demonstrates, Benjy's "I have committed" essentially "replaces actually committing incest: better still, it actually repurifies Caddy herself." (326). The incest, in is in some subliminal fashion going to be carried out. Consequently, the fluidity of Quentin's libidinal currents is going to be spread in all direction and will wrap the people surrounding him in various directions. All of these critical distinctions, like so often in *The Sound and the Fury*, are still left open. Indeed, the line between what happened and what did not happen is very thin. Quentin's chapter is essentially about the richness of things that did not pass. His acts and fate symbolize the individuating power of desire, the things he had wanted, had felt, but never were actualized. It is a section that rich of sub-layered events that are made evident by his subliminal thoughts.

"*Father I have committed*" throws Quentin into deep waters. It is an obsession about incest linked to Quentin's terrible jealousy, not so much for Herbert Head, but for the lover who impregnated Caddy, Dalton Aimes. The latter haunts him as a masculine and virile figure whom caddy is passionately in love with. Quentin even imagines sequences where he is able to stop Dalton not only from fornicating with his sister, but from him being born

at all. In a staggeringly violent imaginative thought of his, Quentin fantasizes going back in time to stop the conception of Dalton and describes how his mother's (Dalton's) body is "open and lifted," and he, Quentin, would "hold his father's hand" and "watch him die" before him. (65). Quentin's fantasy informs about two critical distinctions. First, it deals with the corrosiveness of memory. It has been stressed earlier how the recovery of lost time is an issue that is displayed time and again in modernist literature. Yet, it is not hard to see how Quentin's quest is elusory and even toxic. Indeed, Quentin is not recovering his past, but he is inventing it. He showcases profound difficulties in coping with the past and in coming to terms that whatever was from the past is perhaps forever dead, irretrievable, and unknowable. Memory thus becomes Quentin's own construct. He turns his thoughts not into retrieval, but into invention. His memories have thus no discernible connection to a real lived past. This informs us about the second critical distinction. Namely, this is an utterly Dionysian rite of passage - one of blood and bones. Quentin, as a tragic character, seems to be boundless in his thoughts. Instead of repressing his horrid thoughts deep, he instead entertains them. Yet, there is something about Quentin's leap for blood that tells us something about the plenitude of human thought. Such unfiltered thoughts are Faulkner's way to pen Nietzsche's conception of the tragedian who "is no pessimist: he is precisely the one who says Yes to everything questionable, even to the terrible—he is *Dionysian*." (Portable Nietzsche 484).

Quentin's chapter is thus Faulkner's performative act that goes against much of the mythical staples that are found in American thinking. The notion of an imperial self full of plenitude is brutally challenged. In Quentin, one comes to understand and see the hollowness and the radical about the existence of such a self. Instead, Quentin epitomizes

a vacant self that is dwelling in an existentialist disaster. Consequently, Quentin is constantly feeling unreal, out of touch and alienated with the values that characterize his society. Quentin is thus a marginal figure that is always on the fringes.

## 4. Quentin's Telescopic Mind

Should one become their past so they could understand it? This is the central issue that characterizes Quentin's incessant queries into his past. *The Sound and the Fury's* presents its readers with two periods of time. First, there is the narrative present that attempts to tell the Compson story. Secondly, there is the past of the Compsons which is also an integral part of the story. These elements are conflated and jointed together in the actual reading of the novel. Part of the intellectual demands that are stimulated by Faulkner's novel is to begin unravelling and disentangling these different timeframes and recognize both their separateness and their tie together. This issue of time weighs heavy in Faulkner's world. In this novel, particularly, his characters seem to be incessantly fighting against the remnants of the past. Quentin, especially, never seems to rest in his fight. Ultimately, this yields him a number of torments that he has to deal with. His is a story of a ghost that seems stuck in a haunted place and one that suffers from some trauma. Quentin's past becomes nothing short of a living burden, one that keeps rattling and wandering around. This centrality of the past as something dark, and unfathomable is all too present in the pages of *The Sound and the Fury*. It is a past that refuses to be past, pressing urgently into the present and the now. Faulkner thus depicts the past as an ominous shadow that keeps taunting the world of the living. It results in a narration made up from incessant temporal shifts and cuts that are palpable and threatening.

As it has been noted earlier when reading these sudden cuts in thoughts, one should take the text as it is and process it only later. However, the text is also meant to be read against the grain by sorting out, as much as possible, where passages are coming from and whose mind the readers are located in. This process is akin to educating oneself, and it becomes easier once the patterns are figured out. While it begins as extraordinarily fractured, these blinkered and delayed pieces will eventually lead to a pattern that actualizes itself. This perspectival fashion is not meant to simply deconstruct narrative ways and leave the plot all over the place. Instead, Faulkner's use of perspectivism is meant to get the reader tuned in to various possibilities and have these gradually coalesce throughout the book's progression. Nevertheless, Faulkner's narrative timeshifts leave the reader with some critical questions. How could one return in time and how should one understand one's past? What kind of access does an individual have to what is essentially a lost period? After all, our only access to the past is through recorded documents, words, testimonies and letters from others. How do we move from these words to the reality that is behind them? And how do we bring the ghosts of the past to bay? Quentin delivers us a version of the past in which he attempts to open new doors in his life, and everything that he is not. His section is essentially a gateway to the possibilities that come with reconstructing one's past. To leave the present and venture in the far-gone period of his life seems to fuel Quentin's aspirations. It shall be seen, however, that this subliminal overpass of the present has a high price tag. Namely, one could lose their identity and their own personal markings. Indeed, Quentin's fate raises the possibility that the ghosts of the past may not come to bay, and may not be dealt with.

Quentin's chapter is layered in different arenas and places. One of them is the present. It is what he does here and now and this consists of meeting with his friends, attending his classes at Harvard, taking walks in the city. All of this is his here and now present life which all individuals have, and there is a certain measure of freedom in that. All of this on the other hand coexists with what is in his head, his thoughts and memories. It is the dual existence that most individuals lead all the time. Every individual has their own way of visiting different places, be it by recollecting their past, thoughts or childhood traumas. In this sense, Quentin's narrative is framed in such a telescopic fashion that there are many passages whereby Quentin falls out of the present. Oftentimes, these memories revolve around Quentin's sexuality. Some of these are conscious and willed, in which he is trying to remember something; most of them, however, are nonvolitional and unbidden. Likewise, Faulkner presents a number of stories about Quentin's past that come through. One of them is symbolically significant. It is a memory in which Quentin remembers a story he had been told by Versh, one of the black servants of the family. It involves someone who had mutilated himself.

> Versh told me about a man who mutilated himself. He went into the woods and did it with a razor, sitting in a ditch. A broken razor flinging them backward over his shoulder the same motion complete the jerked skein of blood backward not looping. But that's not it. It's not not having them. It's never to have had them then I could say O That That's Chinese I dont know Chinese. (88)

This passage takes the measure of Quentin's quandary about sexuality. "It's never to have had them." (88). He would like to never have had genitals at all and prefers not to ever have been sexually equipped, for he would have been untroubled about what is taking him apart. "We perceive here something of the infatuation with innocence that seems to lurk in the Faulknerian male psyche." (Kazin 87). Indeed, this is the Apollonian yearning for innocence, purity and for virginity that characterizes Quentin "male psyche", and of course, this is all exacerbated by the fact that Caddy is hurtling into sexual experience.

Throughout the rest of the second section, Quentin's telescopic mind remains restlessly drenched in other voices and memories. Quentin experiences the facticity of all things, and these include the patterns that have shaped his life, his love arrangements, and most disturbingly, his own memories. Memory, of course, is the privileged realm of modernist literature. It is the realm where we can repossess what we have lost. Memory is thus an individual's truest estate, because it is unarguably and undeniably ours. Faulkner is thus raising an interesting question, namely what would happen if that estate is gone out of business or, even worse, falsified? Some in particular that have a lot to do with his father. This is one graphic way used by Faulkner to show the terrible presence of others in us, that it is indeed possible for other people to live in an individual's head, thoughts and actions. At it its worst, Faulkner seems to suggest the possibility that they are you by taking you over. 'Father' seems to poison Quentin with his philosophy. In one passage for instance, he shares with his son his views on women and instructs him about menstruations.

> Because women so delicate so mysterious Father said. Delicate equilibrium of periodical filth between two moons balanced. Moons he said full and yellow as harvest moons her hips thighs. Outside outside of them always but. Yellow. Feet soles with walking like. Then know that some man that all those mysterious and impervious concealed. With all that inside of them shapes an outward suavity waiting for a touch to. Liquid putrefaction like drowned things floating like pale rubber flabbily filled getting the odor of honeysuckle all mixed up. (100).

In more ways than one, this is clearly a disturbing recollection for Quentin whereby he is told about women's periods and blood. There is a palpable amount of malaise, anguish and precarious feeling for Quentin. "Honeysuckle" runs throughout this chapter as a "metaphor for being sexually stifled" (Weinstein 76) and for being suffocated and "nauseated." (Godden 127). For Quentin, it is linked to a sense of anxiety about female sexuality, and this imagery made up of fluids represents for him the female realm in which the male could drown. "Quentin associates honeysuckle," André Bleikasten argues, to the "memory of Caddy." (53) Conversely, Quentin's fate leads him to commit suicide as he throws himself off a bridge into the waters; as if he were going to enter the female elements altogether.

These little driblets, usually in italics, continue telling more about the cogency of this story. In these vignettes made up of thoughts, Quentin is learning something about Caddy's pregnancy. Repeatedly, he asks her how many intimate partners had there been in her life. The way in which this text is releasing these pieces of information to the reader evolves. As noted earlier, it first comes to us in tiny little fragments in italics; so much so

that the reader is again confused as to the significance of these cryptic fragments. In turn, these fragments get larger as the past resurfaces in a textual fashion that is more accessible if not clearer to read. “Faulkner starts out dark, ends up luminous. His would be a body of work that initially approximates the inchoateness of reality, but gradually delivers its patterns.” (Weinstein 313). These “patterns” are threaded by the Apollonian, associative logic whereby this chapter gets easier to read because the story’s need for order is taking over.

Faulkner wants us his readers to see the present day life of Quentin contrasted with these layers of the past, or the inside world versus the outside public one. This is a central feature of Benjy’s narrative as well, that the reader alone is initiated to the inside picture. Likewise, in Quentin’s section, one realizes that there is an interplay between what happens out there in the external world, and what happens inside within the mind. In framing this dichotomy, Faulkner seems to assert that all individuals have these thoughts and places where they live. Most individuals, however, are able to keep them separate. After all, the outside world in which one exists does not know anything about one’s private fantasies, things we repress, and memories of our past. In Quentin, Faulkner shows how these two realms have “become inseparable and naturally merged” (Trouard 25). Quentin’s torturing process is yet again a reminder of the Apollonian and Dionysian tug of war that plays out within all individuals.

One significant instance whereby Quentin is unable to disassociate the nature of his thoughts is when he walks into a bakery outside of Cambridge. There, he sees this foreign little girl that he cannot reach by his own language. In her, we see the predictable alterity

and otherness that Quentin attributes to women. “Hello, sister” he tells her. (98) With this remark, large amounts of the past are coming back into play. Indeed, this is a replay of his own private background and experience with Caddy, and he seems utterly incapacitated in disassociating his imaginary process from the real world. As Quentin walks and befriends this little girl, one must bear in mind all his extremely conflicted relationship to Caddy. It is conflicting Quentin because his societal mission to protect her chastity, his own sexual interest in her and both of these are going to be tripled by his own anxiety. All of this, then, is mirrored in this apparently innocent walk with this girl. “Quentin instinctively calls this little girl ‘sister’… born of his desire for Caddy… it eventually gives over the demands of the flesh, represented by the baking bread…[that] gets harder on the outside.” (Anderson 180). The language of this scene is thus “drenched in troubling sexual connotations.” (Weinstein 54). As John P. Anderson has pointed out, she buys a “loaf of bread” that seems very phallic. (100) Its nose keeps “popping out of the wrapping,” (100), and they walk past places where underwear is hung on washing lines. (101). One gets the sense that this whole episode is “drenched” in sexuality; although technically, he has no sexual interest in this little girl. When Quentin is later on accused of molesting this little girl, he laughs like “a madman.” (105). He is innocent of the crime inflicted upon him, but in some important symbolic and textual level, this whole sequence reflects his troubled, sexual feelings for his sister.

Even larger and larger installments of his past start to resurface as Quentin walks with this little girl. Notably, there are episodes where Quentin is learning something about sexuality in which he is “dancing sitting down” with a girl named Natalie. (106) Quentin acts this way to get Caddy’s attention by making her jealous. Quentin’s drive leads to yet

again larger segments of the past that strike the reader as a sort of textual hemorrhage in which more and more material of his memories starts to come out and begin to take over the chapter as well as his life, which is rendered by Arnold Weinstein as "the language of suicide." (86) After all, how does an writer show that one is going under? Once one's past starts to script and usurp everything is, I believe, when one goes under. Quentin has thus killed himself not only out of pressure, but because he, himself, is a product of the Old South's mission and legacy. To this regard, he sees himself as nothing short of a ghost chamber in which all the ghosts of the past are living through him.

While Nietzsche holds the Dionysian principle of life to be superior, it remains nonetheless an imperative to balance it out with the Apollonian one. Quentin, seems to be utterly helpless in balancing the two which in turn leads him to his fatal fate. Quentin's incessant struggle with his own shadow has created for him nothing short of a dark double. Indeed, his incestuous feelings have taken different overtones so that incest and misogynation become the twin specters of an impossible, but also irresistible merging and blending of what culture insists to keep apart. Too busy entertaining his Dionysian fantasies, namely his lustful love and desires for Caddy, he coalesces and merges with his past - leaving him with no space that is not coerced by the latter. Falling prey to any extreme end of Nietzsche's tragic spectrum is when one's "freedom and maneuvering room in an objective, outside world starts to disappear." (Nietzsche 8). One sees Quentin's "maneuvering room" disappearing in the following passage as he attempts a delusional explanation of Caddy's pregnancy.

> we did how can you not know it if youll just wait Ill tell you how it was it was a crime we did a terrible crime it cannot be hid you think it can but wait Poor Quentin youve never done that have you and Ill tell you how it was Ill tell Father then itll have to be because you love Father then well have to go away amid the pointing and the horror the clean flame Ill make you know we did you thought it was them but it was me listen I fooled you all the time it was me. (116)

His confrontation with Caddy about her pregnancy is part of these larger segments of his past. One sees how Caddy is not savable by Quentin, yet desperately tries to do so by painting in his mind this delusional and surreal idea that he is the one to have impregnated his sister. Completely driven by his Dionysian state to which he is now utterly oblivious, he insists that he wants to take her away an otherworld of sorts; a place "amid the pointing and the horror the clean flame." (116)

The pathos in his words is striking. This is the story of his life which is stained by a tragic, sexual dilemma. The story closes by Quentin committing suicide which the reader does not see. Readers find references to heavy iron that is going to take him down the water, but they do not see it. What is seen in this chapter, however, is the implacable logic of failure and also of loss that drives Quentin to suicide. His suicide happens as if to signal his last Dionysian act, whereby it symbolizes his desire for some other space outside of the realm of experience where the two of them, Quentin and Caddy, could live together. Quentin's travels into the past, as suggest earlier, have been achieved at the cost of his own private markings, personal identity and life; it is a severe vision of what this kind of Dionysian passion and understanding entail.

## 5. Jason as the "Only Sane Compson": Apollonian Syntax and Dionysian Ethics

The Jason section is another interior monologue performance from Faulkner, but it is one that is much easier to read. Jason's opening line, "once a bitch always a bitch, what I say," (180) immediately gives the reader a hint of what his persona is like. It may not be pretty, but it is cogent its own ways. The reader has no trouble making it out since Jason is a character who does map things out in a way that is much more conceptually clear.

> Jason, who has regarded both his brothers, Benjy and Quentin, as loony tunes, may well have a point. His narrative is at least outfitted with the signs and syntax of clarity. (For this,much thanks, many many readers have doubtless felt.) (Weinstein 338)

To be sure, his dicta and mottos may be ugly and distasteful; but one has no trouble figuring out what Jason is up to, and what he makes of the world. Not nearly as cryptic as the previous two sections, Jason provides the book with Apollonian clarity instead of Dionysian opaqueness and mystery. The character itself styles himself as "the first sane Compson" (262), and there is some formal truth to it since his chapter is readable in ways the previous two are not. Indeed, Jason's account is filled with statements and pronouncements of equal clarity and conviction as his opening line. While his sanity is syntactical and conceptual, his ethics and morals, on the other hand, are anything but. Indeed, he is perhaps the best candidate for the utmost Dionysian character in the book.

> If you stir all this up properly, then you are in a position to begin to gauge the amount of bile and hatred and rage that are cooking inside Jason. Admittedly not the smartest of

> Faulkner's schemers—Jason strikes us as one of Faulkner's supreme creations, a vitally, often hysterically character… who cavorts throughout this novel, giving it a mix of evil, vendetta, humor (and overdue reality check) that are unforgettable. (Slatoff 6).

While Jason's section increases the readability of the book, it is nonetheless in continuity with Faulkner's perspectivist prose which gives us different vantage points around the theme of loss. Whereas Benjy and Quentin have lost love, Jason's losses are more shallow. He has lost a job, we learn, that Caddy's fiancé had promised him. Caddy's fate would decide otherwise, and Jason himself becomes very bitter since he thinks it is his future that has been tampered with. Since Jason is quintessentially the character that represents best the book's title, it is important to sketch out Jason's various aspects of his frenzy.

Jason is an orderly person in the way he conducts himself and business. He has, for instance, arrangements with a prostitute from Memphis that are completely contractual. It is nothing more or less than a set of "conventions that both entirely understand." (Kazin 44). He chases his niece, Quentin, all over town and restlessly talks about her body and the way she dresses. He is on a constant chase to catching her with other men that he thinks she is sleeping with in the streets. He also loses money in the stock market on many occasions, and drives a car that gives him vicious headaches. Near the end of the novel, he has a comeuppance of sorts. Indeed, he goes on frantically chasing Quentin with the man she ran away with. Ultimately, he goes to a circus place where he thinks they were hiding and nearly meets his death there.

He also provides this novel with a kind of humor. Jason is ego maniacal so the humor often works out against him in the sense that one laugh at him rather than with him. After his syntactic clarity, Jason's humor is the second Apollonian element of his section. In a book that is as "ambiguous" (Kartiganer 72) and where the tragic happens in an unprecedented way in which the reader is partied to savor, witness and negotiate the losses and pains of the first two brothers, Jason releases these tensions by providing some humor. Jason, as an angry and bitter man, trots out every prejudice one could imagine. Who would the culprits be? These would be the usual suspects: Jews, blacks and women. These are the people Jason is investing his spleen on with these utterly stereotypical views. In so doing, one begins to hear the other voices of the culture at large whereby one discovers the ideological views of the novel. In the following passage, for instance, Jason explains how the farmers' decline has something to do with the Jews.

> Do you think the farmer gets anything out of it except a red neck and a hump in his back? You think the man that sweats to put it into the ground gets a red cent more than a bare living," I says. "Let him make a big crop and it wont be worth picking; let him make a small crop and he wont have enough to gin. And what for? so a bunch of dam eastern jews I'm not talking about men of the Jewish religion," I says. "I've known some jews that were fine citizens. You might be one yourself," I says. (148)

Jason's *mundus operandi,* as repugnant and offensive as it seems, acts as a "check and balance" on "what has come before." (Sartre 54). The Dionysian characterization of Benjy and Quentin have already been noted, but theirs is fundamentally different from Jason's.

Their Dionysian outburst was that of internal suffering and meditation around feelings and desires that have been tormenting them since childhood. Facing those desires and letting them free in their external reality has been their Dionysian apotheosis. Jason's Dionysian overflow is somewhat different in character - it is a vindictive one. As Nietzsche asserts, the Dionysian artist "says yes to everything questionable," even "the terrible." (Portable Nietzsche 484) In this light, Jason "shows us a side of ourselves we rarely see or acknowledge: the vicious side, the pissed-offside, the avenging side." (Abel 341). Indeed, this man is furious at the world, furious because of what it has done to him, and most furious at those responsible for it. A minefield of resentment concerning the exploitation of his region, Jason acts as the barometric, Dionysian figure full of spite and "fury."

> His dormant xenopho-bia, his more active anti-Semitism, his hatred of the North, his wily littleperformance with the drummer, whereby he feels his way into just how farhe can go, all this lives and breathes on the page. (Weinstein 340).

Jason's voice is a necessary part of Faulkner's tragic palette. It tells everything despicable there is about the culture at large - it tells, to emphasize it once more, *everything*. To reduce his characterization to an ideological vantage point is to lose the gist of it, because his character brings the Dionysian wit in his discourse, albeit an awful one. In this sense, his outlining of the Compson history is a valuable take on the all dramatic and tragic materials of the first two sections, because his take "undercuts its pretensions, exaggerates its posturings, makes the whole consort more dimensional." (Guillain 15).

Jason's story comes to a bad end whereby he encounters some poetic justice. Quentin, his niece, steals all of the money he himself had been stealing and hoarding for

more than fifteen years. Quentin's mother, Caddy, had been sending money to her which ultimately would be detained and stolen by Jason. Quentin would break his safe and take all of it. In some ways, the reader sees this as a poetic justice that orders the story as a whole, and Jason's comeuppance gives Faulkner's narrative a focus. More than mere poetic justice, however, Jason leaves the reader with the frightening picture of what it looks like to remain alive in Faulkner's world. Benjy is a simple minded person while Quentin goes on to commit suicide. Jason's fate is the kind which awaits the ones who were lucky enough to live, which is not a very promising picture. In this sense Jason as the only "functioning adult," (Guillain 18) paints a fairly well picture of the novel's pathos, that in Faulkner, it is as frightening to live and survive as it is to go under, to die.

## 6. Apollonian Clarity in the Dilsey Section

The last section of the book revolves around the black maid of the Compson family, Dilsey. Dilsey's family generosity, as black retainers, is what is keeping the Compson family alive. They prepare food on the table, start the fire, and clean up the messes left behind by the Compsons. While the latter are headed towards perdition which nothing could salvage, Faulkner gives an affectionate and Apollonian portrayal of Dilsey's black family. A reminder of some of the traits given to the Greek deity is in order so as to clarify the parallels with the Dilsey section. Robert C. Solomon, in his *What Nietzsche Really Said (2000),* sums it up as follows

> Apollo, as the sun god who mythically gave light to the world, was the patron of order and illuminating clarity. Nietzsche described artistic images that contain beautiful form and clear structure, accordingly, as Apollonian. (66)

"Order" and "illuminating clarity" are indeed present within this fourth section of the novel. The third person, Apollonian in nature, makes other things happen. While the first three confining sections failed to give descriptions, Dilsey's chapter allows enough space to finally revolve around the story. Jason, for instance, is described as a person who just came out "of a barbershop quartet." (112). Benjy, on the other hand, is described as someone who drools "like a bear in the circus." (193). These are, I believe, the Apollonian elements piece the novel's insofar fragmented pieces together. The reader has been plunged into the interior for three sections, and it is useful in this fourth chapter to get some air which a third perspective narrative could give to move on the outside, to take a look at the characters of the book in different ways, and see what the surface looks like.

The Apollonian clarity one finds on the surface is further extended by a look at Dilsey's family which is narrated in a "pastoralized" way that makes them all the more serene and stable. (Weinstein 41). Unlike the Compsons, they do not seem to retain any Dionysian fury in them. As mentioned earlier, Faulkner gives Dilsey's section the only omniscient, third person voice of the entire novel. Dilsey, however, is described in such a way "that we can scarcely call objective." (Abel 79). Indeed, it would be misleading to persuasively call the linearity of this chapter objective or realist. Instead, there is a sense in which Dilsey's description constantly edges towards Apollonian symbolism.

One particular symbolism that one must bear in mind is that *The Sound and the Fury* is structured around an Easter weekend, in 1928. In this light, Dilsey is described in such a way that one reads how her "skeleton rose" on the Easter morning. (203). Faulkner

writes how her “indomitable skeleton” is rising like a “landmark above the somnolent and impervious guts.” (203). Such descriptions notate strong religious undercurrents.

> The story of the Crucifix-ion is still playing in Mississippi, The description of Dilsey, third-person though it is, is saturated with spiritual data, as if the material world might actually be a luminous screen for something beyond matter altogether. (Weinstein 347)

Dilsey’s “spiritual data” is such that one can lend it a sense of rising that has some echoes of ascension. Indeed, there is a strong feeling that there is something that is now going to ascend and transcend the “flesh” and “guts” (Faulkner 203); that the spirit is going to be triumphant. In this sense, it is appropriate to see Delsey as the precise, Apollonian counterpoint to Mrs. Compson. The latter is the consummate and dysfunctional Dionysian mother in this text. So much so that her own son, Quentin, shares how he wishes if he “could just say Mother. Mother.” (76). More disturbing, Quentin goes on to describe her as a “dungeon.” (134). Mrs Compson is the figure who, in all four chapters, keeps telling that she is not “going to last any longer.” (66). She keeps telling the same story all over the novel about how bad off she is.

The irony, of course, is that readers see Mrs. Compson around chapter after chapter while the rest of her family are not faring well. Her husband and Quentin find their own death, while Caddy clears out of the Compson household. Mrs. Compson essentially becomes one of the victims of this novel. One must keep in mind what sort of models of motherhood have been presented to her. If one sees the cultural givens and conventions at play in this story, then there is a disturbing conclusion that these lead to a frightening life

- such as hers- in which one sees her lack of maneuvering room. This bridge is when one sees Apollonian characters such as Dilsey stepping in, essentially fulfilling Mrs. Compson's mothering duties, as shown in one of her earliest scenes.

> Dilsey prepared to make biscuit. As she ground the sifter steadily above the bread board, she sang, to herself at first, something without particular tune or words, repetitive, mournful and plaintive, austere, as she ground a faint, steady snowing of flour onto the bread board. The stove had begun to heat the room and to fill it with murmurous minors of the fire, and presently she was singing louder, as if her voice too had been thawed out by the growing warmth, and then Mrs Compson called her name again from within the house. Dilsey raised her face as if her eyes could and did penetrate the walls and ceiling and saw the old woman in her quilted dressing gown at the head of the stairs, calling her name with machinelike regularity. (206).

Dilsey making biscuits for the family has some strong religious undercurrents. It acts as a sacramental scene similar to the blood and body of Christ[2]. In this case, one notes how Dilsey making biscuits while singing become conjoined to the smell of the "flour" on the "bread board," which is related to the stove that is beginning to "heat the room." (206) What is seemingly a mundane act of a simple maid tending to her expected duties is in fact the Apollonian, corrective thread of this dysfunctional family. In this very room, there is a sense in which this dysfunctional family is given some life every single morning by the

[2] An event narrated in ***The New Testament*** that tells the story of Jesus's last ever meal with his disciples. In it, he offers them some bread and calls it his "body," and wine he calls his "blood." (Matthew 26).

labor, order and generosity of this black woman. Indeed, she brings warmth into this cold family with her spiritual reach which allows her to see beyond the material surface, becoming the Compsons' counterpoint: Apollonian versus Dionysian, warmth versus emotionlessness, labor versus "machinelike regularity," (206) and spirit versus flesh.

## 7. Beyond Words: Apollonian Apotheosis

Faulkner is brutally modernist in his assessment that language itself is a transformation, a foreign code and even sort of substitution for life. It is true that language his its own materiality, that is one sees words and shapes; yet language, in Faulkner's work, is a mirage in which characters want to transcend and move beyond its simple words. This is particularly poignant in *The Sound and the Fury* and its sibling text, *As I Lay Dying*. Both novels raises important issues around language. What is behind words? What is the actual experience that words instigate? What is the trace behind them? Faulkner begins to provide tentative answers to these questions with Dilsey's section.

The centerpiece of the Dilsey chapter comes in the Easter sermon in which Faulkner takes his readers to a little black church. What follows is a performance in which each member of the congregation "finds his or her humanity." (Vickery 1037). This "humanity" finds itself in the language of the black priest leading the sermon of this Easter. In this particular day, Jefferson town sees a visitor preacher leading the sermon rather than their usual priest. Reverend Sheagog, from St. Louis, is shown to the reader after a series of reveals. Faulkner compares his approach to a "tight rope", which has "virtuosity," and how Sheagog "swoops" what Faulkner calls the "cold inflectionless of his voice." (204). Sheagog's sermon provides the novel a vision that has been cruelly lacking: a vision of

the collective. In his speech, the members find "knowledge that they are all equal and brothers in their suffering." (Vickery 1037). It is interesting note however that beyond the words he utters, it is Shegog's voice that unites the members of the church. The congregation, as Philip Weinstein observes in his *Trying Not to Say: A Primer on the Language of The Sound and the Fury (2018,*) loses itself in a moment of blissful unity.

> It is Shegog's purpose to invest this life with meaning, to make it signify something instead of nothing in the midst of all the sound and fury. He locates this meaning in the life and death of Jesus Christ, and his sermon is a ritualistic incantation of that meaning for the assembled congregation, a meaning in which the congregation participates, though not in words… They are rapt; they lose themselves and become a collective not in or because of his words, but because of his voice. (172).

It is worth pondering further Shegog's "ritualistic" incantation. Such characterization of Sheagog's oratory, rhetoric and eloquence is akin to a description in terms of circus and acrobatic language. Shegog's voice, in other words, turns into a technical performance which deeply moves the congregation and makes it sigh "as if it waked from a collective dream." (224). What meaning do these terms "congregation" and "collective dream" supply the text with? These help understand that Faulkner has now redirected his attention to the community, collective and family in a general sense; which is a way of saying that he has moved away from the individual's interior monologues. "Rev. Shegog's Easter resurrection sermon has given… a vision of a beginning and an ending [that] suggests how out of the conclusion of one story new ones may emerge." (Matthews 115). In other

words, the novel is at the antipodes of the first three chapters which lock their readers into the private perspectives, needs, wants and feelings of the three Compson brothers. Shegog's sermon does away with the Dionysian frenzy that has consumed the Compson family. Instead, his message instills Apollonian harmony, unity and stillness. Indeed, the focus is now heading straight towards a collectivist vision as shown with this black community in this church on a very special day of Easter.

Sheagog's voice starts to change as it speaks. It becomes more and more powerful as it talks about "the recollection of the blood of the lamb." (294) In turn, this voice takes the audience far aback, and once notices how the "hearts" of the congregation start moving into a kind of unison. Indeed, Faulkner writes that their "hearts were speaking to one another in chanting measures beyond the need for words." (225). This is an interesting notation in the sense that tells how their hearts are speaking, but the act itself is unlike any kind of linguistic, verbal performances one is accustomed to. Instead, they are speaking to one another in "chanting measures" that transcend any perquisite for "words." Benjy's moaning and the Church's chanting thus become Faulkner's very language of connection. It is the language of collectivity. Collectivism, as a social concept, spells out that we are brothers and sisters; that we may think by the claims of social or economic rank, or by the apparent biological illusion of our specificity, that we are only ourselves. However, this separation is put to an end by Faulkner's collectivist language that announces new linkages and new connections. Sheagog's speech thus asserts that individuals are bound to one another, not merely because they see or live next to each other, but because their Apollonian human duty is to relieve the suffering of brothers and sisters.

> The language of the preacher unites this congregation so profoundly that words themselves are no longer necessary, since the desired great aim of utterance—to speak from one heart to another—has been achieved. Faulkner is defining the ultimate credo of his entire work: to write in such a way as to go directly to the human heart. (Polk 120).

"Beyond the need for words" (225) defines the Apollonian goal of Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. Faulkner essentially wants to craft a new language which would be akin to a discourse of the "heart" that would go beyond the linguistic conventions of what we think of as language. A language that would be empathic for an affective community where communication and touching the others happens "beyond the needs for words." The chanting somehow restores the plentitude, the feel and the complexity of human emotions that being lost to traditional language. In some sense, this is what Reverend Sheagog is producing here. Indeed, Faulkner registers the Apollonian impact of "these tidings, an impact of immeasurable importance, focusing even further on human connection." (Weinstein 784). Such is arguably the tacit aim of all writers: to move their audience (congregation) — so completely — that one's heart speaks "in chanting measures." (225). Is language systematic? Is it a sign system irreparably separated "from the things it is trying to denote"? (Nietzsche 44). Faulkner's Shegog seems to show how individuals can be locked within a prison of words. Most individuals seek to move hearts, but all they have are systematic words. Reverend Shegog's collectivist vision, on the other hand, is Faulkner's Apollonian attempt at creating a language "new beginnings." (Matthews 106). It is the, in other words, all the fruitless that needed to be overpassed. This Apollonian

"chanting measure" is both Faulkner's humanistic credo and writerly formula to find new terrains of communication.

Faulkner then writes that Shegog's voice changes: "brethren and sisteren… I got the recollection and the blood of the Lamb."(224) This reference to "brothers and sisters" is an appropriate and predictable locution in the black church that shows how the congregation is referred to. However, one must keep in mind the backdrop of this story. Indeed, this whole novel has been about brothers and sisters, and it is Faulkner's way of piecing his material together. In this light, the reference to brothers and sisters are also to make us realize that what is happening in this church and its congregation has also something to do about Benjy, Quentin, Jason and Caddy. It is about the Compson brothers and their sister whose story is going to be retold and illuminated by what is happening in this sermon. Could the Dionysian torments experienced by each of these characters have any redemptive value? "The Apollonian, as John Ackermann explains, "is a mode of representation of the Dionysian that allows human beings to have grasp of the Dionysian in a bearable or intelligible form." (Ackermann 15). The ultimate resolution of the Dionysian is to find a salvaging line in the Apollonian, because the latter is "always produced ultimately by Dionysus." (Ackermann 16). In other words, the torment and chaotic energy produced by the latter deity must find redemptive values. Sheagog's words, then, enfold not only his congregation but the pieced apart Compsons, as well as the readers' own private stories, into his vision.

> "Brethren and sisteren," it said again. "Breddren! Look at dem little chillen settin dar. Jesus wus like dat once. He

> mammy suffered de glory en de pangs. Sometime maybe she helt him at de nightfall, whilst de angels singin him to sleep; maybe she look out de do en see de Roman po-lice passin." "Listen, breddren! I sees de day. Ma'y settin in de wid Jesus on her lap, de little Jesus. Like dem chillen dar, de little Jesus. I hears de angels singin de peaceful songs en de glory; I sees de closin eyes; sees Mary jump up, sees de sojer face: We gwine to kill! We gwine to kill! We gwine to kill." (224).

There is this insistent reference in Sheagog's speech on vision, as if he is trying to carry his audience all the way back some two thousand years ago. It is a capacious vision that involves going back to a past story of anguish and sacrifice. In turn, the congregation does not respond in long sentences or words, but with "mmmm!". (225). The novel itself begins in similar terms with with Benjy's moaning, and his language finds its way back as the sound of the congregation. One of the voices of the congregation is particularly important in revealing the Apollonian heart of the book. Indeed, one of the voices shouts that they see "blindin sight" and "Calvary." (226).

This sequence of the Easter sermon, marked by the epiphany of "Calvary," is the moment when Faulkner essentially puts his book together by weaving it around Jesus's story as told in *The New Testament*. The story of Mary protecting her infant, and later on Jesus's crucifixion, is a story of love that is different from the love the Compsons have for each other. Quentin and Benjy have loved Candy, but it was a frenzied, destructive Dionysian love. What one notes in the crucifixion story is a love of Apollonian generosity; a love of giving rather than taking, one that is redemptive and saving rather than

murderous. This love's nature is of Apollonian light rather than egocentricity and selfishness. It makes life instead of taking it, and Faulkner is using Jesus's narrative to fuel his language.

> For every first-time reader, that notation has to have been "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." But now we are poised to see that moaning has a significance, that it can be collective, that it can be "hearts speaking to one another in chanting measures beyond the need for words." Such connection —and only such connection—produces vision , produces the visionary grasp of the old fable behind everything here. (Weinstein 353).

Dilsey understands Shegog's vision and says that she sees "de beginnin, en now I sees de endin." (226). In other words, she understands how everything is coming into focus thanks to the Calvary epiphany. Sheagog's sermon acts for this congregation as a radiant moment of insight emphasized on vision. It is an Apollonian celebration of community and collectivity as forms of love that salvages the blindness of the Compsons. Indeed, the notion of seeing is akin to saving love, and thereby it illuminates the hungry, ravenous, murderous Compsons. Dilsey's chapter provides the novel with the precise Apollonian counterpoint to the private and brutal desires of first three sections. It shows what a collective vision could entail. The sermon provides the readers with a scheme opposite to the private visions of the first three sections as it delves into an outward vision. While those have shown Dionysian dynamics of inwardness and self-centrism, Dilsey's outer-vision has shown the Apollonian dynamics of light, community and generosity. The Dilsey

section is part of the Faulknerian formula of endowing fiction with a new set of abstractions and measurements. These include the pith of human love, sanctities and compassions. He shows his readers how the autonomous self, with its great free agents and quest for free enterprise, is only but a myth. In Faulkner's world, individuals are connected to family, to others, and to the past. In this sense, his search for a new language gives us some of the most memorable moments about this sense of connectedness.

> You get born and you try this and you don't know why only you keep on trying it and you are born at the same time with a lot of other people, all mixed up with them, like trying to, having to, move your arms and legs with strings only the same strings are hitched to all the other arms and legs and the others all trying and they don't know why either except that the strings are all in one another's way like five or six people all trying to make a rug on the same loom only each one wants to weave his own pattern into the rug; and it can't matter, you know that, or the Ones that set up the loom would have arranged things a little better, and yet it must matter because you keep on trying or having to keep on trying and then all of a sudden it's all over. (Faulkner 127)

This discovery of linkage is extremely potent. There is a constant stretching and a constant reaching. Faulkner essentially shows his readers how individuals are always enmeshed in the lives of others. In some sense, this is an aggrandizing aim because it shows how one's situation is larger than initially expected.

There is nothing generous or graceful in the way all three Compson brothers have desired Caddy. They all have tried to take and possess her while she has played the role of her dysfunctional mother. Benjy, Quentin and Jason, in their own ways, have all tried to prevent Caddy from seeking hedonistic experience and her own womanhood. Studded with alternative visions, possessing Caddy is only one among these that the novel presents to its reader thematically and structurally. These are all palpable, demonstrable icons of what is seemingly a failed vision, one that looks the wrong way and that cannot be seen from the other side.

> Is this not what Faulkner has wrought? The first three chapters… are self-enclosed, penitential, carceral. They are about the awful wants of the self. And what do these three brothers want? Caddy. Each of them wants, in some dreadful way, to stop her growth, to freeze her and keep her for himself. To be sure, the tonalities differ: Benjy seeks a creature who will smell like trees, Quentin's desire is mixed up with honeysuckle, Jason's is twisted into re-venge for a lost job. But we cannot fail to see that this beautiful, feisty, lov-ing young girl, "my heart's darling," as Faulkner called her, leaves the family in order not to be suffocated, leaves in order to live. (Fennell 12).

In contrast to the three brothers' relentless, Dionysian needs and desires, Faulkner juxtaposes the story of Jesus – a story whose kind of love consists of "charity, not eros, that sees outward not inward." (Fennell 13). The first line of the novel itself foreshadows this, for it has to do with learning how to see. Indeed, Faulkner begins *The Sounad and*

*the Fury* with "through the fence," (1) which is spells the Compson story. Each member of this family is tortured and locked into their private, tunneled vision. They are all inside of their own "fence." Faulkner weaves his story in such a way that we are constantly moving into their tormented minds, feelings and hearts. This first person perspective becomes a literal enclosure. It is a fence and a prison of selfishness. It is what prevents the Compson family from "loving each other because there is a kind of hungry only for themselves." (Weinstein 44). The "fence" is the narrative mechanic of this novel. Unable to control and balance their Dionysian overflow, their own feelings and desires become dooming.

Not only the Compsons are conscious of their doom, but "their consciousness *is* the doom." (qtd in Weinstein 335). Indeed, the readers always note a sense of insubstantiality in the Compsons, and a sense in which characters like Quentin and Benjy are entirely on the fringes. As Robert Warren Penn signals it, the notion of consciousness acting as doom reveals how being locked into one's private mind can create a state of paralysis. Faulkner takes its measure in the first three chapters and releases its tension in the fourth one, by describing an Apollonian community founded on giving rather than taking. Nevertheless, one must come back to the doom of the Compsons. Their predicament, as it has been made evident by now, is largely provoked by their past. Faulkner has an undeniable obsession with the past. Even if this said past is chuck full of horrors, there is still something miraculously enriching in its recovery. This is why I have been stressing and will continue to do so throughout this work the issue of recovery of lost time, because it speaks directly to our investment in literature, in our reasons for reading it and studying it. Faulkner and Nietzsche both seek to recapture something of the past. Indeed, Faulkner's books always

remind their readers that there is always a working past behind one's life. In other words, individuals are shaped and formed by various experiences that took place before their present moment. Quentin and Benjy's minds are thus modes of access to vicarious experiences of the past. One can conclude then that perhaps the very notion of recapturing the past has a seductive appeal for readers and writers alike, for it gives various readers a range of opportunities that simply would not exist if it weren't for the written word. The past, as found in fiction, enlarges our sense of things. Likewise, there is something alluring for Nietzsche in studying tragedies from ancient lenses, just like there is something appealing for Faulkner in shaping the psyches of his characters with pulses of the ever before. This, it must be said, is undeniable. It is indeed here that literature is at its most narcotic. After all, what does it mean to curl up with a 'good' book if not to travel into other realms, other minds, and add to our own limited data. We leave ourselves if only briefly, but vicariously, and become others. This, it can be argued, is one of the deepest values that literature has. As terrible as they may be, the torments and sorrows of the Compson family provide readers with unique perspectives. In this sense, one sees how the

Dionysian is deeply enmeshed with the Apollonian. One must experience both in order to have a fuller and greater picture of what life entails.

# CHAPTER III:

## Restless Flux in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*

This third chapter turns its attention to the second major work of William Faulkner, titled *As I Lay Dying*. The chapter follows the same methodology as in the previous one. In other words, it first analyzes the structure of the novel and then moves on to discuss its thematic underpinnings. Titled Restless Flux in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, the chapter aims to show how nothing is ever rested in Faulkner's novel. It is restless in the sense that it keeps shifting from one interior monologue to another. Thus, the first crucial section of this chapter tries to map out all these different streams of consciousness. Once again, this flow of perspectives is argued to be Dionysian because it is cryptic and chaotic. The analysis then moves on the detect the thematic Apollonian and Dionysian features of the novel. It shall be seen how Darl Bundren is an archetype for the Dionysian that is battling against the Apollonian nature of his society.

## 1. Mapping Out *As I Lay Dying:* Back and Forth Narrative Perspectives

In *Homer's Contest,* Nietzsche goes to great depths assessing what lives and what dies in Greek tragedy. Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, whose title is burrowed from Homer's *Odyssey (725—675 BCE)*, voices nearly everything about Nietzsche's venture. Its elements of the grotesque, metaphysical, and humor also speak volumes about what Faulkner is getting at in modernist thinking and modern life. The "I" in the title, as this chapter contends, is not a personal pronoun but an entire distinct notion in Faulkner that lives and dies. The "I", in other words, has its own *agon*. As Timothy Spurgin points it out, "multiple possibilities" reign supreme in Faulkner's prose.

> Who is the "I" in *As I Lay Dying*? Will this be a first person narrative? Will one of the characters actually be preparing for death, and if so will that character spend most of the novel looking back on his or her life? The title already gets

> the reader's mind warmed up by generating multiple possibilities at an early stage. (40).

It can take readers, for example, a long time to nail out who the characters are and what their relationships means to one another. In the opening section of *As I Lay Dying*, for example, a character named Darl informs the readers that he has come from the field with a person named Jewel; but who is Jewel, and more importantly, who is he to Darl? It turns out that they are brothers, but this fact takes a long while to become clear. These delayed facts are part of Faulkner's misleading and concealing technique. The purpose here is to give as little information as possible so that the reader is engaged with the text in new ways. To piece these relationships and facts together require an intense active reading from readers. This, of course, is part of Faulkner's perspectivist method whereby even the reader plays a role in the story. This is also one of the ways that Faulkner takes upon his sleeves to signal that he does not abide by traditional storytelling. Like its sibling text *The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying* is drenched in a narration made of stream of consciousness and various interior monologues. Unlike the former novel, however, *As I Lay dying* is composed entirely in perspectivist, first person vignettes. It has a seemingly simple overarching theme and plotline: getting the coffin of the dead Addie Bundren from the family's farm to the cemetery in Jefferson. This venture is motivated by Anse's pledge to his wife, Addie, that he would bury her in Jefferson. "Them of her blood waiting for her in Jefferson," he keeps telling throughout the novel. (Faulkner 7). As Arnold Weinstein suggests, one may "glimpse at something eerily literal in the phrase, an embodied community of spirits that cannot be gainsaid, bloodfigures waiting for Addie to join them." (154). Indeed, "them of her blood" refers not to her relatives but to the other persons that have passed away. One has a sense that these buried people still live and have their own

reach at the external world. Indeed, these are not merely corpses in a grave yard, but actual people "waiting" for Addie to join them. (Faulkner 7). Getting the coffin to Jefferson acts a plot device that generates a remarkable set of responses, not only from the Bundren family that reflects on the difficulties of burying their dead mother, but also from the community at large as the coffin makes its way across the land in the heat of Southern summer. This results in a novel that can be described as circular, whereby the logic is to explore as many ventures and as many perspectives as possible. Consequently, every point of view that could be related to this burial is given a voice.

The Bundrens' journey to take Addie's coffin to Jefferson is reminiscent of a plot enabling dilemmas that are found in Ancient Greek plays. André Bleikasten's *Faulkner's As I Lay Dying* and Arnold Weinstein's *Nobody's Home* both contrast Faulkner's novel with Sophocles's *Antigone*. Indeed, readers of Antigone find themselves facing similar questions when reading Faulkner's novel. The play revolves around the burial of two brothers that have been killed. "Antigone's *agon* emerges in the following questions she faces: What ought to be done with their bodies? Which body is to be buried with customary rites and which one will lie unsanctified on the ground?" (Weinstein 343). Evidently, the whole process of burial depends on how humans conceive human flesh. In this aspect, all cultures are cogent. Flowers and wreaths often surround the body, but as will be seen in *As I Lay Dying*, one also wants to get it into the ground as soon as possible. The issue surrounding Addie's burial also "reminds readers of Dostoevsky's *odor of corruption*, the notion that the elder's body starts to stink too soon." (Weinstein 343). The *agon* that is wrought by death is an issue that resonates in literature, but it seems to form a thread in Faulkner's work. In *The Sound and the Fur*y, it resonates in Quentin's agony. In *As I Lay*

*Dying*, it is the mother's death and her progeny's *agon* that inform us about the affective logic that Faulkner gives to death. As often in Faulkner, the reader ascends to this logic through the multiplicity of perceptions given to his characters. In similar fashion to *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner taps once more into the minds of his characters to transmit something of his logic. In turn, the reader is given a panoply of thoughts and perceptions on a range wide of topics. These include death, language and the meaning of meaninglessness of life in general.

The activity of the mind is a theme that preoccupies modernist fiction in general. It is the noise that exists in an individual's brain. Faulkner's project of rendering that noise into text had already begun with Benjy, Quentin and Jason, but seems to reach its zenith in *As I Lay Dying*. One particular way in which Faulkner's novel departs from its sibling text, however, is that it extends the tumult of the brain to the tumult of the natural world. The chaotic and convulsive Dionysian current present in *The Sound and the Fury's* characters finds itself in *As I Lay Dying's* elements of earth itself. So one gets a different sense of that Dionysian fury by means of hurricanes, tsunamis and wildfires in Faulkner's novel. In her *William Faulkner's As I Lay Dying: What the Grotesque is Trying to Say At (2021,)* Marie Liénard-Yeterian gives a salient portrait of the "nonhuman grotesque". (105). In her dissection of the natural world in Faulkner, she notes how the natural elements wreak havoc. The "bestiary river," for instance, "is presented as a monster" (105). Indeed, Faulkner does full justice to the temporality and writerity of the human's natural world. The bestiality and ferocity that Liénard-Yterian notes in the book's natural elements enable *As I Lay Dying* to do two things at the same time: tapping into the Dionysian through tumult and noise of the brain, as well as giving a terrifying sense of the

physical world that humans inhabit. Both of which will challenge the Apollonian need for an orderly and customary burial. Material elements such as wind, water, earth and sun are the ones that ones that dwarf the individuals in *As I Lay Dying*. The Dionysian, in other words, sees an increase in its dimensionality, for these natural elements are just as real and as challenging as the noise in an individual's mind. Nevertheless, the reader sees these natural elements unfold through a multiplicity of eyes. Perspectivism, once more, fuels Faulkner's narrative method.

*As I Lay Dying* is renowned for being exclusively narrated in first person perspectives. Therefore, it is a series of vignettes that re-assert the modernist principle that there are many ways to narrate human life and story. The novel is comprised of a staggering number of fifteen points of view. Each of this story's narrators seems to have a style of his or her own. Darl, for instance, is generally straightforward. Jewel, Darl's brother, is violent and profane. Cash, the third brother, is robot-like and extremely economical in his narration. These differences are seen immediately when the reader first plunges into the first sections of the novel. Split into "small pieces" these perspectives show us a purchase of what Faulkner can and cannot get at.

> Narration in As I Lay Dying is divided into small pieces. The first chapter is not even two pages long. The second is one page long, and the third chapter runs for only four pages. What are we to make of such micronarration? (Spurgin 40).

Faulkner's narrative perspectivism reminds us once more of Nietzsche's assertion that the external world must be looked at differently. One cannot just merely react to it from a

neutral place or look at it from the spectacle of convention. Instead, one must look at it with a multiplicity of eyes and visions. Faulkner thus relies on chaotic Dionysian narrative devices rather than opting for orderly, Apollonian ones. One senses at an early stage of reading that the novel's world is a shattered and fragmented one. The first few pages "seem like gibberish…Faulkner dispenses with traditional approaches to characterization and plotting. It is hard to tell who is who and what is going on. Does it even have a plot?" (Spurgin 40). The first chapter, for instance, is "not even two pages long. and even stranger, one middle chapter runs not for one page but for one line only." (40). This seemingly plotless novel in fact delivers a world in which people see, approach things in fundamentally different ways and whereby worldviews can be said to be incommensurate with each other. Multiplicity is the bedrock of perspectivism and Faulkner relies on it once more to impregnate his second major work with numerous vantage points. Clearly then, the beginning of this novel signals that it is about to deal with a world that is fragmented and shattered, a world in which various viewpoints will clash with one another. Reconciling and piecing together these various perspectives, if possible at all, may require the reader a lot of time and effort.

Because of concerns of space and time, it is nearly impossible to list all fifteen perspectives. It would in many ways be unproductive. Nonetheless, to map out the most relevant ones is a necessary process in seeing how Faulkner increases the depth of his Dionysian perspectivism. The following perspectives do not only piece together a "plotless" novel, but also provide the preliminary grounds for the Dionysian and Apollonian themes that are looked at in the subsequent sections of this chapter. The idea of having fifteen perspectives all narrated through interior monologues that are scattered

around in fifty-nine chapters is a daunting prospect for most readers. Nonetheless, once the leap is made one comes across perspectives that are reserved to people who respond to the death of Addie, the Bundren mother.

Anse, the seemingly shiftless husband of the deceased Addie, is the character whom everyone in the novel has contempt for. Prime manipulator, the other characters marvel at his genius for using other people. Interestingly enough, however, Anse has similar aptitude for philosophical thinking one finds in Mr. Compson - the deceased father in *The Sound and the Fury*. Like Faulkner, he is lost "in a space between country wisdom and philosophy." (Weinstein 100) He thinks, for instance, that his luck had changed when "the road came" to his "house." (15). He observes that "roads and wagons are for moving, and God made men and trees up and down for staying put." (14) Anse's meditation on the movability of earthly elements and objects is an interesting meditation that is reminiscent of Nietzsche's idea of flux. In his *Le kaléidoscope de Faulkner (2021,)* Claude romano notes how the "road stretches and is opposed to progress… with a succession of obstacles." (*Translation mine,* 63). As it shall be seen further, nothing in this text stays or is able to stay put. In this sense, *As I Lay Dying* becomes a pungent metaphor against the fictiveness of stability and the fantasy of stoic, immovable truth. Death, in this sense, is one of the elements that do change and metamorphose. Death in *As I Lay Dying*, as Romano has suggested in regards to the road, stretches all the same.

Jewel, the favorite son of Addie's, is also her illegitimate son. This is an information that not everyone in the text is aware of. Only his mother and one of his suspicious brothers know. Jewel is the "rigid" character whose language, Françoise Clary suggests in her *Le*

*fait social dans As I Lay Dying, roman de violence (2021,)* is both "rough and obscene." (*translation mine,* 120). Indeed, Darl strikes the reader as an impassioned figure yet his feelings for his mother are intense and almost unavowable. Addie never acknowledges that she loves him more than the others because he is the illegitimate son. Jewel is thus the character that "seethes in anger." (Hagood 25). He wants Mother entirely to himself, as he imagines "It would just be me and her on a high hill and me rolling the rocks down the hill at their faces." (7). One of those would be Cash's face, one of Jewel's brothers. Cash is the carpenter of the novel and strikes the reader as a pragmatic figure. He insists on the "well-balance" of everything surrounding him. (Buisson 25). The stark economy of his language, reminiscent of Faulkner's near frugal language in *The Sound and the Fury*, plays a paramount role in this novel.

The most memorable and significant Bundren son, however, is Darl. The philosopher of the novel, he is the son that Addie has denied her love to. Consequently, he becomes unanchored and unmoored. In Faulkner's world, there is a measure of liberation and freedom if one is unanchored. Darl is the figure whose thoughts and vision are simply streamed into the world. Darl is given an unflinching and powerful gaze which penetrates other people. So much so that he can see what is otherwise hidden. He gives the readers an account of his mother's death while he was not even there. He is the one that suspects Jewel's illegitimacy, and he is the one who suspects his sister's pregnancy. In an interesting way, his ungroundedness gives him ascending, omniscient abilities. Darl also has the great "poetic and metaphysical flights" of the book. (Weinstein 102). Indeed, there is a certain Apollonian lyricism that is featured in his scenes. His Dionysian ethics, morals and aptitude to dare unconventional things make him the anchor of the novel. There is

undoubtedly an authenticity in the storytelling that surrounds Darl. All of his excesses, as black as they were, become an index of the novel's most genuine character.

Dewey Dell is the unwed and pregnant Bundren daughter. Therefore, her response to her mother's death is going to be different from the others, because it always involves her own anxiety and astonishment at carrying a fetus inside of her and not knowing what to do with it. Faulkner writes her pregnant character as an individual who is having a remarkable number of bodily, somatic sensations. In one scene in which she goes to the family's barn hearing the cow moan, Faulkner writes how the "dead air that lies flat and warm on her touching her naked through her clothes," and how she felt "like a wet seed wild in the hot blind earth." (28). Like Caddy in *The Sound and the Fury*, her characters tells us a great deal about the ideological voices at large. The judgmental views that befall her and the Apollonian requirement to follow an orderly way of life are all juxtaposed against her Dionysian urge to break free.

The youngest son, Vardaman, is the most unhinged figure of the novel. His trauma is translated through Faulkner's metaphors. While his mother is on her deathbed, he brings to dinner a bleeding fish that is still flapping around. The imagery of the fish brings about his young mind's sense of trauma and crisis in seeing his mother lying on her deathbed. There is a "disassociation and reassociation" because he confuses the two at some primitive level in his own mind. (Weinstein 41). To be in denial is his defense mechanism to cope with his mother's agony. For Vardaman, "mother cannot be dead." She was "still alive when the fish was still flapping and therefore she must still be alive." He thus makes the conclusion that "the person in the coffin is not his mother." (41). Indeed, he calls the

person inside the coffin "the other one." (Faulkner 32). He then cannot bear the sight of the coffin being nailed, which in turn leads him to drill holes in it so his mother could breathe. Though his efforts and logic seem grotesque, his attitude towards the coffin remains nonetheless particularly poignant. As a young boy, he is trying his utmost to keep his mother alive because "mother cannot be dead." In one of his chapters, the only line attributed to him is "mother is a fish." (36). It is Faulkner's way to show how scrambled it gets for the young Bundren. Fusing and juxtaposing these different moments is Vardaman's way of both denying and expressing the reality of his mother's death.

As the Bundrens go on with their journey to take this coffin to its final resting place, the reader receives the responses of other people in the book. One of these responses come to us through Dr. Peabody, the physician of the Bundrens. He tends to Addie's ills and pains while she still lives. In one of his early scenes, he reflects on the meaning of death.

> I can remember how when I was young I believed death to be a phenomenon of the body; now I know it to be merely a function of the mind—and that of the minds of the ones who suffer the bereavement. The nihilists say it is the end; the fundamentalists, the beginning; when in reality it is no more than a single tenant or family moving out of a tenement or a town. (18).

Death, as noted earlier, is a key theme in Faulkner's work. Faulkner, André Bleikasten observes "seldom allows to forget that death is a phenomenon of the body." (174). But *As I Lay Dying*, he continues, is "most concerned with what is going on in the mind." (174). In this light, it important to reflect on the "tenements" Peabody associates to death: are bodies and minds tenements? As Arnold Weinstein argues "the core imagery of the novel

is contained in its language: a tenement is a container." (10). A tenement as container begs the question: what kind of container is this book interested in? It is not merely just one container, but many. One of them is the coffin. To this regard Weinstein ponders on what the coffin itself contains.

> What is in that coffin? is it Mother? Just a body? Is it rotting flesh? Or maybe it holds just a body. What is a body? A tentative answer one character provides in the book to the last question is that a body is a "tub full of guts." But this begs even more questions over tenements. What is the self and what does it contain? A soul perhaps? We have the body with a single identity – an 'I' – and finally, we have language itself, what does it contain? (50).

Weinstein's quest in discovering what is in the coffin is not his alone. Readers and characters alike what is that this "tenement" contains. The stench coming out of the container becomes increasingly unbearable and hard to ignore. One passenger notes that "a woman that's been dead in a box four days, the best way to respect her is to get her into the ground as quick as you can." (49). Following the same disdain for this whole affair, another denounces that "it's an outrage they should be law'd." (49). Black folks who see this white family dragging a wagon full of stench scream "great God… what they got in that wagon?" (103). All these responses from the Bundrens and the critical observations from the community at large constantly push the question Weinstein has asked: is it still Mother in the coffin? These critical distinctions are remarkably implicit in each perspective that one reads through the novel. One is constantly driven to perceive the

coffin from a different eye. As if death itself could metamorphose the corpse of the deceased, we see Addie shift from a simple dead mother to a fish.

The readers can critically sense and deduce the *agon* the coffin generates only thanks to the multiplicity of these responses. *As I Lay Dying*, then, takes the same perspectivist guise its sibling text *The Sound and the Fury* wears to narrate a story. The stark difference between the two novels is that the former leaves no room whatsoever for an objective, external view. All fifteen perspectives are from within, making the novel a perspectival manifesto of internal views. Faulkner, in other words, frames his story around an abundance of thoughts and feelings. In this light, *As I Lay Dying* solidifies Nietzsche's assertion that "the more emotions we allow to speak about one thing, the more eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing." (119). Faulkner's use of perspectivism "indicates that each of [The Bundrens] has a unique sense of the mother's burial and each sense materializes under the influence of a peculiar force." (Zhang 1)

The use of perspectivism, as noted earlier, provides no apparent Apollonian clarity to the story. Just like in the first three sections of *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner frames *As I Lay Dying* with an exclusively Dionysian frenzy. The chapters are eclectic, shattered, and confusing. Here is one explicit illustration of Faulkner's blinkered narrative method:

CASH

> IT WASN'T ON a balance. I told them I told them that if they wanted it to tote and ride on a balance, they would have to (73)

This seemingly small passage is an entire chapter of its own. It has no relation to the one that precedes it as it revolves around something else. The sentences that are presented are not part of any dialogue. One reads, in fact, the mind of Cash. Notice how this thought itself is interrupted and seems to head nowhere since the second sentence has no period which would indicate the end of his thought. It is the same affective logic one finds in *The Sound and the Fury*: the mind is constantly on the move. As Arnold Weinstein points notes, there is nothing static and unchanging in *As I Lay Dying*.

> What is most arresting about this novel, however, is that it is an endless shuttling from one tenement to another. In this new dispensation the old pacts and dichotomies are dissolved, and all those founding distinctions of sanity and order —presence versus absence, now versus then, animate versus inanimate—are scandalously blurred, are ultimately washed away. (161)

Interrupted thoughts such as Cash's are recurrent in the novel and act as a mirroring act of the deep unrest that can take place in one's mind. The "founding distinctions" of "order" are put aside, if not entirely eroded. The mind, in Faulkner's work, becomes a precipice. It is an edge full of thoughts that are never halted because "everything is joined and fused." In this sense, Weinstein's inference that the novel moves from "one tenement to another" is critical, because the novel's stream of consciousness, which itself is inferred from the mind, is always active. The book's title is itself very evocative in this aspect. "*As I Lay Dying*" suggests "an ongoing activity" which seemingly has no end in sight. It is a fluctuating process of "moving out and moving in." (Weinstein 161).

The restless flux Faulkner imbues his novel with, it can now be deduced, is part of his perspectivist project. The disconcerting number of chapters, perspectives, the ins and outs within interior monologues, and the transitional confusion between chapters all unite his perspectival narrative mode. The restlessness and confusion the reader is plunged into when reading the minds laid out in the fifty-nine chapters all solidify *As I Lay Dying's* narrative method as Dionysian. These devices only pertain to the book's technical *mondus operandi,* but the novel also holds similar thematic undercurrents that are analyzed in the subsequent sections. Faulkner's and Nietzsche's perspectivisms, however, must be differentiated from the concept of relativism. Indeed, neither believe that one view is as good as another view. While perspectivism promotes pluralism, it does not hold that all interpretations are valid. In this light, Faulkner's perspectivism does not entirely discard truth as relative. Instead, mapping out so many points of view suggests that truths emerge from different perspectives. One can then argue if one hypothesis is more plausible than another. In other words, it is not as if perspectivism discards argumentation and debate. Instead, it tries contextualize every single possibility. In this sense, the reader may reach his or her own conclusion when it comes to the events that surround the Bundrens. By painting every single perspective possible around the death of Addie, Faulkner leaves it to the reader to make sense of the chaos that is emerging. *As I Lay Dying* thus provides different truths and different suggestions. At a basic level, Faulkner keeps the story's positions shifting. As Nietzsche's philosophy suggests, it is important to keep shifting perspectives and views so that one would have a greater appreciation of how various elements and lenses work together. In other words, *As I Lay Dying* puts on displays the different ways of looking at one thing. Faulkner's literary perspectivism hence cultivates this ability to hold different viewpoints at the same time.

## 2. Darls Bundren's Unraveling Persona

Darl's vision is akin to a "water hose." (Bleikasten 20). Acting as a surrogate figure of the novelist, his gaze, which invades and penetrates other characters, allows the reader to see what is otherwise hidden. He narrates, for instance, his mother's death while he was miles away when it had happened. Darl is thus the character "that makes the invisible visible." (Warwick 62). Abilities such as this make him the closest thing to an omniscient figure in the book. His exclusive knowledge of his sister's pregnancy, his brother's illegitimacy and him taunting them with these secrets all contribute to his unraveling throughout the novel. Indeed, being omniscient does not make him grounded. He is, in fact, entirely unmoored. Darl thus has a "substantial sense of himself," and it is his heavy price to pay as the character for whom there can be no secrets. (Parini 145). It is in this that he is profoundly different from the other members of the family, because he can find no tie whatsoever, not even an egoistic one, between his vision and the long journey to Jefferson. Instead, Darl is presented as a largely Dionysian figure that wreaks havoc and unrest on his siblings. Darl is also an existential figure an everlasting quest: *who* is he and *what* is he?

Darl's ungroundedness stems from that which he lacks: the love of his own mother. Having been denied Addie's affection towards him, Darl is an entirely unanchored figure which is constantly trying to figure out the meaning of his own existence. Darl's *agon* is to find meaning in the love he has been denied. In so doing, the Dionysian chaos and unrestraint that emerges from the inexistent love he seeks reflects on the impact of his behavior towards the people he surrounds. Akin to Nietzssche's notion of becoming oneself, Darl is on a journey not to *be*, but to *become* himself. In one of his earliest scenes, Darl meditates that "you must empty yourself for sleep and before you are emptied for

sleep, what are you. And when you are emptied for sleep, you are not." (35). Darl here brooms and muses of the facts of sleep, touching upon consciousness in a body, and how different these two notions are. The way to fall asleep, he says, is to gradually drug consciousness out of play so that the body could turn off. "And when you are emptied for sleep, you are not." (35). In other words, consciousness is disposed away when one is just sleeping. Figuratively, one dies according to Darl. The "I" which represents the human self in this novel can dissolve and disappear. Sleep is the first act where the "I" is no longer present. This internal struggle does not stop here. "And when you are filled with sleep, you never were. I dont know what I am. I dont know if I am or not." (35). This tortured language pertains to the exercises that Darl goes through before falling asleep. "If I am or not" refers to a fitful yet torturing coexistence in Faulkner of body and consciousness. The passage closes with how often he has "lain beneath rain on a strange roof, thinking of home." (35). One realizes how distant home is for this character, how desperately homeless he is and how his own mind has exiled him from any sense of Apollonian groundedness at all. Darl's characterization makes him the quintessential Nietzschean, tragic figure of *As I Lay Dying*. Indeed, Darl's presence "shifts the novel to the potential tragedy of forces deadlocked in opposition." (Slaughter 8). The struggle of opposition one finds in Darl is similar to the one Nietzsche says fiercely characterizes Greek tragedy. Indeed, Faulkner imbues Darl more than any other character in this novel with a restless state of mental strife. In Darl, Faulkner deconstructs how the Apollonian paradigms of harmony and control are being imploded as well as exploded by dent of modernist writing. Darl shows how it is not easy to manage this double dispossession of not being entirely oneself and being uprooted from one's home.

"Like a Nietzschean Dionysos" Darl signals "the madness of a vision that rejects image, that cannot (or refuses to) convert feeling into object, motive into action." (Kartiganer 26). Darl's mad vision is made visible through his internal struggle, and what he makes of the human self. In his vision, the self is something that could die and unravel in time. The "I" in this novel does unravel. His Dionysian characterization is the extreme advent of this view. Near the end of the novel, Darl seems to lose all his senses, and it is as if he literally dissolves. It first starts when Jewel and Dewey dell, who both cannot bear being invaded by someone who knows their secrets, beat him up as hard as they could. Darl will finally be taken away because he has set his mother's own coffin and someone else's barn on fire. This would be the last Dionysian act of Darl that goes against customary rites. It would also be his act that signals his extreme detachment from that which surrounds him. Indeed, Darl is at the antipodes of the Compsons' narrative line. Detached from his family and society, he is the voice of Dionysian inconformity which rejects the forms that sanity and reason require; unlike the straightened arrow of Faulkner's South. Darl is also "the man who rejects the physical, rejects form, pursues a self already committed to absence." (Slaughter 7). In this sense, it is not surprising that his last words spoken signal the apotheosis of his detachment: "Yes yes yes yes yes yes yes yes." (119). As if becoming a conjurer of noises, Darl finally unravels and dissolves out of time.

One must ponder, however, over the reasons that have led Darl set his mother's coffin on fire. Is detachment enough to commit this seemingly repulsive act to one kinfolk, to one's life bearer? Darl's arson act is in fact, as Donald M. Kartiganer argues, "his single attempt to convert his unimaged consciousness into deed." (66). It would not be just about any deed, but a "negative deed" because "he cannot build, only burns down." (66). It is as if his purpose here is not simply the Apollonian aim to put an end to the humiliation that

both the corpse and the Compsons are going through. Darl's arson is thus simultaneously an act of creation and destruction. Darl's description of the event itself, of Jewel's rescue of the animals and the coffin, help support this point because of his salient detachment from it all. He presents the fire as a piece of art which reminds the reader once more that "Darl's alienation from the other members of the family is the price of his remarkable vision of Dionysian insanity." (Kartiganer 68). It is in Darl's alienation amplifies the novel's "anguish" which "issues from the fact that he cannot propose a way of seeing or a way of acting that approaches the richest possibilities of order." (68). Almost as a mere spectator, Darl narrates the fire as follows.

> For an instant longer he runs silver in the moonlight, then [Jewel] springs out like a flat figure cut leanly from tin against an abrupt and soundless explosion… The front, the conical façade with the square orifice of doorway broken only by the square squat shape of the coffin on the sawhorses like a cubistic bug, conies into relief. They are like two figures in a Greek frieze, isolated out of all reality by the red glare… This time Jewel is riding upon it, clinging to it… the widening crimson-edged holes that bloom like flowers in his undershirt. (98).

One can once more notice how Darl's spacious vision, which transcends the limits of space, is the difference between himself and the others. Despite all the clarity of Darl's spectating vision, the uncanny and almost mythical report of a "Greek frieze", it yet again reveals a total lack of involvement in the event. "Darl's descriptions of the Bundrens are full of metaphor. He desires a oneness… which chooses to liberate itself from things, to move from the image to the imageless." (Kartiganer 70). In this sense, Darl never flinches upon

doing what Nietzsche presses tragedians to do: to say yes to absolutely everything. Indeed, Darl illustrates the intrusive and "unbearable character of the imagination." (Weinstein 66). He "speaks what others hides" and he makes "all people uneasy and enraged." (66). Darl's inherent Dionysian elements are necessary counterbalances present in the novel. His restless and daring persona to unapologetically speak the unsayable, do the undoable, are in striking contrast with the other affective logics found in his siblings. Dewey Dell, too, has Dionysian currents in her. She tries, after all, to defy her family's and society's code of conduct. The difference, however, is that she does it in shame and silence. Darl's Dionysus is all too loud. He hides nor shuns no deeds or misdeeds. Darl is widely "loose, flowing, spreading, and available" (Parini 170). and in turn these features make him the novel's "swollen waters" (170). Darl's characterization is thus remarkable in the ethos it carries. In Darl, Faulkner provides a profound insight on human psychology whereby he shows his readers how in the matter of a moment one individual's mind can go from memory to rationalization, and ultimately to fantasy. Further still, Darl's characterization drives the readers to ponder deeply over the passage of time. Through Darl *As I Lay Dying* shows how many individuals attempt getting back in touch with both the spatial and temporal realities that surround them. Indeed, how does one retrieve a sense of belonging when everything seems to point out that they are perhaps doomed to remain ungrounded for the rest of their lives? Ultimately, Darl accepts his Dionysian fate to simply break and abandon this sense of belonging and to follow instead his own path.

### 3. The Voice from the Coffin: Faulkner's Indictment on Language

In his account of early Greek rhetoric, Nietzsche asserts that there is no "naturalness of language to which one could appeal." (106). Furthermore, language "does not desire to

instruct, but to convey to others a subjective impulse and its acceptance." (107). For Nietzsche, it is clear and unequivocal, language cannot transmit meaning or knowledge. It is a purveyor of opinion and subjective truths or impulses. Indeed, language "is rhetoric because it desires to convery only a doxa, not an episteme." (107). It has already been argued that Faulkner has already started his indictment on language in *The Sound and the Fury* in which it is presented as something approximate that ought to be transcended altogether. Following Nietzsche's critique, *As I Lay Dying* presents us with Faulkner's most explicit indictment on language. In line with Nietzsche's view, and through the testimony of Addie Bundren, Faulkner relegates language to words that provide nothing more than doxas: words that could not possibly reveal truth, meaning or the essence of things.

Addie's only chapter thus becomes one of the most striking of the novel. Her voice is that of a dead mother speaking out of a coffin, and she speaks with a vengeance. Addie, next to Darl, is the second great theorist of the novel. In her, one finds evaluations on the disillusion of the self and language. Words "are no good; that words dont ever fit even what they are trying to say at." (76). It is the function word "at" that is interesting here. It is as if words are always approximate and probing. For Addie, the best words can do is trying to get close to something, but they can never get it entirely or "fit" it. She thus disdains words because "they frustrate the "I" by falsifying, the ineffable distinctiveness, and concreteness of individual experience." (Warwick 52). More than that, words are specious and evasive; they are ways of escaping reality. Words become the escape of real experience. "I knew that fear was invented by someone that had never had the fear; pride, who never had the pride!" (76). Addie's assumption presumes that one either has meaning or the words, but if you have one of which you cannot have the other - because words can

only “accomplish at best a superficial contact between people.” (Warwick 52). This is the crisis at hand, that words cover for experience but some things will forever remain unspeakable. “The meaning of [*As I Lay Dying’s*] form, of its internal relations, suggests, like *The Sound and the Fury*, the failure of coherence.” (Kartiganer 77). Language, in other words, has no ways for making those things understood or felt by others. Addie’s indictment goes even further.

> I would think how words go straight up in a thin, line, quick and harmless, and how terribly doing goes along the earth, clinging to it, so that after a while the two lines are too far apart for the same person to straddle from one to the other. (77).

Here is the crisis surrounding language expressed in even greater terms. Words go “in a thin line”, but “doing” is “terrible.” It is as if individuals have two axes they live on: the axis of language and the axis of doing. In Addie’s mind, they become increasingly divided. Just as Nietzsche asserts, language in some “systemic” way is incommensurate with meaning and not connected to it. It is as if the “real thing” and words were polar opposites. To link one with the other would be, for Nietzsche just like for Addie, sacrilegious.

> The linguist tells us that words are systemic and differential, but the novelist puts some bile into it, produces a motive for the gap between sign and referent: deceit, abuse, invention. Faulkner is positing here an ethics of language and silence whereby those who do do not speak, while those who speak are choosing the verbal substitute, have no interest in the real thing. Language becomes the plaything of cowards and

> dodgers, a rival never-never land of pure conventions, a specious tenement that contains nothing. (Weinstein 10)

Indeed, language as something burdening rather than rewarding or helpful is a recurrent theme in Faulkner. Nearly relegated to a hurtful tool, according to Addie, language is a deceitful and lacks pith that actual deeds could have. In another passage where she is thinking about her love life, Addie lets out another glimpse of how words are disingenuous. The scene involves Anse, a figure of empty words, and Whitfield, the priest whom she had Jewel with. She is reminiscing about her love affair to Anse, who is oblivious of her side love story. In the passage, Addie narrates how Anse has died not literally but in terms of being meaningful and authentic. "Laying with him in the dark," she tells us how "he did not know that he was dead." (77). Then she moves on to speak about "God's love and His beauty." (77). It is at this precise juncture that the reader realizes she has switched the narrative to her lover, Whitfield. She talks about "the sin" he represents, and how "the dark voicelessness in which the words are the deeds, and the other words that are not deeds." (78). Once more, here is Addie's great issue expressed. It is her great gambit, to make words become deeds, because to her mind some words are true and some are empty. She goes on how she is getting these "gaps" are getting clearer and clearer like "the wild darkness in the old terrible nights" whereby one would "fumble at the deeds." (78). Here lies the ultimate realization: that all things are coming unglued and unhinged, and that words do not connect to real meaning. All of this is highlighted even further by contextualizing the background of this scene. In reminiscing about having a "sinful" intercourse with her lover, one sees how the words they both speak do not connect to the act itself. Instead, Addie sees that what they are actually doing is the only true measure of what they are feeling. Ultimately, "fumbling at the deeds" signals how

tenuous the relationship between language and meaning can be, and in this case, between the gestures of love and love itself, and what individuals say to one another instead of what they really feel. Addie, it can now be deduced, indicts language as erroneous and deceitful.

## 4. Nature's Dionysian Flux in *As I Lay Dying*

The world of *As I Lay Dying* is one that moves and metamorphoses. It is a world of coercing elements, and it is one of the novel's responses to the issues of language and of the self. Faulkner's aim is to capture the precise physical movement surrounding this coffin that is travelling across the Mississippi land. It is a world where human life takes place in a playfield, whereby human beings are identical to filings caught in a magnetic field. As if relying on a pre-Socratic view of the world, the characters in the novel are subjected to forces such as wind, fire, and water. Nietzsche, in dissecting Greek tragedy, notes how the needed Dionysian, chaotic balance does not always emerge from an individual's mind or desires. Indeed, "The Dionysian doesn't categorize and tends to blur the boundaries between the self and nature." (Hendricks 1). The external world and its natural and physical attributes are all too important in shaping one's destiny. In his view, the Greeks excelled in using natural forces in their tragedies. The use of elements such as air, water and fire are prevalent in the tragedies. Plagues, thunders, and fires often ornate Greek stories. Likewise, Faulkner seems to create a world which natural elements may trump over psychological ones. It is a "primitive, elemental logic" of Faulkner's storytelling whereby one can assert "my mother is a fish," (Ross 8 and Faulkner 6). because it is a world of elements that precedes cognitive assumptions. Addiem when invoking the failure of language, refers to the "cries of the geese." (78). Motifs such as this

one make *As I Lay Dying's* world one in which animals and humans can and will blend. It is all part of a "metaphor network" that Faulkner employs.

> From the perspective that the novel's metaphor network is revelatory of a structured world of significances tending toward some final end representing a sign of linkage and connection, a metaphor of the act of metaphor as it joins and binds. (Bleikasten 20)

Therefore, the characters are described terms that are almost surreal at times. Vardaman's description of his mother as a fish is a good example. Jewel's displacement of his unspoken special bond to this mother on his special horse is another good illustration of how humans and animals blend in this novel. Jewel's relationship to his horse is extraordinary due to how violent and passionate it gets. Jewels likes to call his horse "sir." (5). In the same scene at the barn, Faulkner writes about "moving that quick his coat, bunching, tongues swirling like so many flames." (5). It must be said that it is not so easy to deduce that this is a horse being spoken of, but this is one of Faulkner's attempts to "capture the flux" of this animal. (Hayes 5). Jewel is then said to be "enclosed by a glittering maze of hooves as if by an illusion of wings, among them, beneath the upreared chest, he moves with the flashing limberness of a snake." (5). One gets the sense that Jewel is described in almost deity-like features. Reminiscent to Ancient Egyptian gods or Greek fabled creatures like the minotaur[3], Faulkner takes these imaginative descriptions and fuses them together. Another late scene at a late moment in the novel reveals once more the surreal attributes Faulkner gives to Jewel and his horse. It is when Addie's coffin, which by now is drenched

[3] Half man and half beast, the minotaur is a figure present in Early Greek mythology.

in an unbearable stench, is being placed in a barn that belongs to a family the Bundrens are visiting. Its stench is so great that one learns it is Darl who purposely sets fire on the barn, because for him this can no longer be his mother. It is simply a carrion that reeks and the only thing left to do is to end it all, so the coffin itself is subjected to fire. Jewel, as the literalist of the novel, cares little about the increasing absurdity of this journey. No matter what it smells like, for him the coffin is still mother for it cannot be anything but that. Therefore, he rushes in when the barn is set on fire. Faulkner writes its so that we see him up in the coffin and he "slides it single handedly and the fire reigns on Jewel, sparks on the coffin and scattering burts." (100). The coffin then topples forward and the "sparks" rain on Jewel which "engender gusts". (100). It is as if Jewel is catching on fire himself. Becoming one with fire, he is trying to move this coffin. At last, he appears "enclosed in a thin nimbus of fire." (100). He has now metamorphosed into a fire god. Jewel riding that coffin is his expression of love that he experiences for his mother that he has never been able to speak, to put into words. Riding the coffin out of the burning barn, it is as if his truth is finally made visible and "turned the flames into an act of myth." (White 10).

## 5. The Bundrens Facing Nature's Dionysian Flux

Faulkner does more than describe deity-like features of his characters. He also imbues his natural elements with a life of its own. Indeed, air, water and fire have their own pulses in *As I Lay Dying.* All of these are going to culminate so to give the Bundrens an absolutely grotesque and miserable journey to Jefferson. Faulkner himself has admitted that he "took this family and subjected them to the greatest catastrophes man can suffer." (qtd in Parini 143). In this sense, the neighbor Vernon Tull reflects in the book how sorrow is like "lightening," and it could "strike anywhere." (30). Peabody, the doctor, remarks that in

Mississippi everything hangs on too long: “like our rivers, our land: opaque, slow, violent, shaping and creating the life of man in its implacable and brooding image.” (18). Here again Faulkner signals the correlation of one’s own thoughts and feelings with the larger scheme and stage they inhabit. Even more, Peabody’s reflection foreshadows the journey the Bundrens go through. Theirs will be a journey similar to the attributes Peabody gives to Mississippi’s rivers: slow and violent. In throwing everything at them everything he could Faulkner creates an almost pantheistic narrative. First, he “biblically subjects them to flood.” (Leinard-Yeterian 80). Indeed, the river they are supposed to cross has flooded because of the heavy rain. Getting the wagon containing the coffin seems at first like a daunting task, and Faulkner explicitly writes the stakes at play. Everybody looks at the river, and through the various perspectives given to us, it is understood that something is strange and eerie. Tull describes the water as “thick” and “slush ice.” (59). And “it kind of lived.” (59). This notation cannot be overestimated. One has the crucial sense that this water is animated and demonized.

> Water is sometimes aligned with life, but when Tull says that the water “lived,” it seems menacing. Sometimes death is referred to as a crossing over, and in the Greek myths the body must travel over water after death. (Bloom 122)

Faulkner writes the water as a godlike figure of its own that is full of wrath to leash on this family. These “menacing” and raging waters, as Bloom states, spell mean trouble for the characters. Darl himself looks at the river says, “it talks up to us in a murmur become ceaseless and myriad.” (61). It is understood that there is clearly something alive coming into this water and is emerging to the surface. “It clucks and murmurs among the spokes.” (61). Yet again, Faulkner writes the natural elements as if they could speak, hence the

pantheistic-like narrative. As Bleikasten remarks, water "is the element of metamorphose par excellence," and it "springs to life". (105). This animism that constitutes Dionysian flux is projected time and again throughout the novel. Darl senses this flux's "disturbing presence" which Bleikasten compares to a "slumbering Leviathan" that may "awake at any moment." (105).

With all the trouble of the world, the family finally reaches other end of the river. They "reached the place where the motion of the wasted world accelerates just before the final precipice." (64). It is as if they had reached the end of the earth. Darl then looks at the mules that are supposed to take this wagon across. The mules are breathing with a "deep groaning groaning sound…their gaze sweeps across us with in their eyes a wild, sad, profound and despairing quality as though they had already seen in the thick water the shape of the disaster which they could not speak and we could not see." (64). In seeing what others cannot, that is to say the "shape of the disaster", these mules become Greek oracles of their own. The mules are acknowledged and they communicate. Once more reversing the roles, Faulkner through Darl's observation, lends animals wisdom and clarity, and starkly hints at the benignness of human beings. Giving the mules prophetical abilities, Faulkner reinforces his view of unpredictability. This time, it occurs in the unpredictable exchange between humans and animals. The mules see the danger at hand clearly while humans ironically lack the cognitive awareness to achieve such clarity.

> *As I Lay Dying* sucks us into a protean whirlpool whose only law seems to be change and which achieves unity through the countless analogies and these exchanges tirelessly weave between one realm and another. From metaphor one moves to metamorphosis and from metamorphosis back to

> metaphor, everything becomes profoundly significant; not only are things something other than themselves, but they say something else as well. (Bleikasten 106).

The flooded river is only but one of the elements that metamorphose to mean something larger in the scheme of things. The road the Bundrens face in their long road to Jefferson stands as another one of those tenements that, as Bleikasten points out, mean and "say something else." This road, it is understood, is itself a metaphor. It, too, receives Faulkner's special formula. Like the mind, the road is full of deep precipices. The Bundrens are liable to fall to its elements and lose your sanity. Faulkner frames the Bundrens' encounter with the road as a form of baptism; not only of water and fire, but also a baptism of probation. This probation can best be seen in the face-off between Darl and Cash when trying to get the wagon across.

> He and I look at one another with long probing looks, looks that plunge unimpeded through one another's eyes and into the ultimate secret place where for an instant Cash and Darl crouch flagrant and unabashed in all the old terror and the old foreboding, alert and secret and without shame. (61).

These "long probing" looks through each other's piercing eyes make it seem as if both had been completely denuded and taken back to "the old terror and the old foreboding." Both characters wearing their cavemen guise, they see each other "naked and raw." (Lienard-Yeterian 44). This is the ultimate collision between two kinds of human subjectivities that express different outlooks on the coffin they are transporting. What happens next is Faulkner's indication of what is awaiting individuals when entering the elements. The

wagon is catastrophically overturned by the rushing waters and the coffin simply flows out of the carrion.

Once more, Faulkner is reversing the codes of things. The road, as it has been suggested earlier, stands for the Bundrens as a baptism. In Christianity, baptism is the ritual where one receives their name. In Faulkner, the immersion in these rushing waters acts as a reverse baptism, for the Bundrens are coming apart and are becoming undone. To this matter, Darl gives his most salient take on how things are becoming unglued in this river.

> 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. It looks peaceful, like machinery does after you have watched it and listened to it for a long time. As though the clotting which is you had dissolved into the myriad original motion. (73)

This is Darl's most explicit observation on the fictiveness of identity. The "clotting," which stands for the pronoun 'I', is "dissolving." All the notions that one may take for granted, such as the cogency, unity and value of a self —all of these can come undone. It "dissolves" and unravels out in time even though one does not choose to.

## 6. The Apollonian in the Bleakness of *As I Lay Dying*

Coming apart appears to be part of Faulkner's dark mantra as the self seemingly does not hold if subjected to sufficient pressure. Language, too, is severed from deed and meaning. So it must be asked: are there any forces at all that could offset and counter act these primordial forces like the swollen river and the flowing blood? It must be said that there are very few readings, if any at all, that find glimmers of hope or light in *As I Lay Dying*. *The Sound and the Fury*, too, is on the surface a bleak and disturbing tale of human consciousness. But it has been shown how Faulkner provides an alternative made up of a new language of communal empathy. *As I Lay Dying*, despite being splintered with what may be described as grotesque nihilism[4], provides alternatives to its deceitful bleakness.

The Apollonian, in Faulkner, runs in two lines that I will be describing as horizontal and vertical. Horizontally, it is the smaller thematic and structural details the reader meets in the novel. These are finer points of the storyline that involve a character's struggle or particular desires. Vertically, the Apollonian is the subtler line that needs to be induced because, unlike the former line, it is not spread throughout the text. The vertical, Apollonian line is in fact sporadic. In the case of *As I Lay Dying*, it consists of only one scene. This tendency of Faulkner's to hint at things has been shown to be one of his key tenets. Though his texts are by and large erratic and fueled by the Dionysian spirit, Faulkner instills his stories with the Apollonian spirit that is no less crucial in ramification.

[4] A good example would be Anse's last deed that the reader witnesses in the novel. The very afternoon he buries his wife, Anse shows up to his family with a new set of teeth and a new wife.

The first Apollonian tenement to be looked at is Darl's. This may seem strange or oxymoronic, because it has been shown time and again that Darl's frenzy is inherently Dionysian. One must remember that Nietzsche never rejects a co-existence of both currents in a character or an individual. It is true, Nietzsche widely views the Dionysian as more important and at times disregards the Apollonian as the lesser important current. One then must remember his affirmation that "Apollo could not live without Dionysos." (27). Though this is true, his affirmation must be extended to include reciprocity. In this case, it would be Dionysos could not live without Apollo. In this case, Darl is the perfect prototype for a widely Dionysian character that is not denuded of Apollonian features.

Darl, from this particular frame, must be seen as a "madman who sees truly" as Jay Parini observes. (158). For all the trouble and frenzy he provides in the book, it is undeniable that Darl, ironically, is the only character that seems capable of rational thinking. His thoughts are largely erratic and fragmented; his behaviorism unethical, loose and ungrounded. Yet, out of all the Bundrens, he is the only one who understands that the coffin's grotesque and absurd peril needs to come to an end. In so believing, he sets the barn that contains his mother's coffin on fire. It will gain him the animosity of the entire family who conspires against him to take him away. Seen as mad and insane, Darl does end up being taken away. It can be argued that what Darl has done is highly unmoral. Yet, this scene of his burning own mother's coffin represents Apollonian law and order. As Parini explains, he is the madman with "sane" aspirations.

> He alone realizes that the entire project of conducting the coffin to Jefferson by wagon is absurd, and he tries to stop

> it. His supposedly warped vision of reality is, in the inverse logic of the novel, "sane." And he must pay for his sanity by being sent to a mental asylum. (149)

A second Apollonian inference can be lent to Darl. It has already established that Nietzsche associates beauty and orderly structure to the Apollonian. Though literary and textual beauty depends on which strand of stylistics one chooses to rely upon, there is one striking and undeniable fact about Darl's characterization. His speech is at times poetic, lyrical and extremely meditative. No other character has been imbued with such abilities. Darl, sometimes almost verbose, even drives the reader the question his verbal abilitie; for Darl is, one must not forget, an uneducated Mississippi layman. With other characters, to the sole exception of Addie, one finds fragmented dialects. Theirs is a speech that would be akin to a collection of short staccatos. There is nothing surprising about Anse's "we done bought the cement now," (94). or Cash's "it aint but one more day." (94). But it does strike a surprising note when the reader comes across Darl's porous style. It is porous for it seems to absorb all the qualities one could find in an erudite, omniscient narrator. Darl's descriptions and imageries are almost awe inducing for a Mississippi farmer. In an early passage, Darl narrates how he "stirs" the stars" awake."

> And at night it is better still. I used to lie on the pallet in the hall, waiting until I could hear them all asleep, so I could get up and go back to the bucket. It would be black, the shelf black, the still surface of the water a round orifice in nothingness, where before I stirred it awake with the dipper I could see maybe a star or two in the bucket, and maybe in the dipper a star or two before I drank. Then I would wait until they all went to sleep so I could lie with my shirt-tail

> up, hearing them asleep, feeling myself without touching myself, feeling the cool silence blowing upon my parts. (4)

There is a "throwaway lyricism" and a "primeval sense of magic and deity" in this passage. (Weinstein 164). Darl's taunting personality is given a drastically different outlook here. His is a personality that can be as still as the taste of water in a "cedar bucket." (Faulkner 4). There is something deeply poetic about the possibility of having the dipper in one's hands and the stars in one's drink. It has an underlying "poetic fullness." (Hemenway 14). It is more than a drink of water one is having. It is drinking "of the something out there or in there that we may be stirring awake." (Weinstein 164). Darl's meditations such as this one signal even more his difference from his siblings. Though he provides an unapologetic restlessness for the other characters surrounding him, Darl also brings a stillness that is hardly found elsewhere in the novel. Cash's description of his brother near the end of the novel sums up Darl's unique characterization best: "this world is not his world; this life his life." (119).

The third and last Apollonian current that runs in the horizontal line is the society's dogma as presented in *As I Lay Dying*. In particular, the various responses outside of the Bundren circle to the journey Addie's coffin, and Dewey Dell's stigma that haunts her over her unwed pregnancy. Though the distance from The Bundren household to Jefferson is never explicitly mentioned, Faulkner does precise that it took the family ten days to reach their final destination. A ten-day journey on land is a lot for a decomposing corpse that is only covered by planks of wood. This pilgrimage of sorts, to be certain, literally and figuratively reeks. The only supposed reason for such a long-distance burial is given in the

pledge Anse gives Addie that he would bury her in Jefferson come what may. In truth, one comes to realize that Anse is a man whose interests are purely self-centric. If he is so insisting that he takes his wife to Jefferson rather than burying her and putting an end to the grotesque journey, it is because he wants to acquire new dentition he can only acquire from Jefferson. He also brings a new wife to his family the very same day he buries his late wife. The stench coming out of the coffin -coupled with Anse's motives- generate an Apollonian set of responses from the community at large. These responses reveal Faulkner's own disdain towards the whole affair. To delay the burial of this coffin and to subject it to so many calamities is disorderly and goes against morals, societal and religious ones. In turn, the Apollonian community that witnesses the debacle of the Bundrens shows its scorn and disapproval of the whole thing. These includes a passerby that shrieks "great God, what they got in that wagon?"; and "it's a outrage," that Anse should be "law'd" for "treating her so." Another passenger remarks that a woman who lies dead in her coffin is a woman that is being disrespected, and the only remaining thing to do is "to get her into the ground as quick as you can." These Apollonian reactions to the increasing stench coming from the coffin and to the uncanny situation in general show the social disruption that this the Bundrens provoke. The coffin's journey unsettles and scandalizes. It provokes and challenges its society's customs and need for order. The outrage, as Jay Watson points out, signals "the loss of self-composure, and the unmaking of the human interior." (70).

Dewey Dell, the Bundren daughter, sees her interior being unmade perhaps the fiercest. Her struggle goes against the codes of honor of Southern society. In a similar fashion to Caddie in *The Sound and the Fury*, Dewey Dell transgresses the Apollonian code of honor. Not quite attainting the same transcending Dionysian as Caddie, Dewel

Dell is nevertheless at odds with her society. Her body is described as a "tub of guts," (Faulkner 35) that is "contained within cultural diktats and imperatives." (Yeterian 101). Being an unwed pregnant woman, she obliterates the dictates of ladyhood and her society's code of honor. Unlike Caddie, who presents an unapologetic image of her promiscuity and rebelliousness, there is a deep anxiety and malaise that follows Dewey Dell. *In As I Lay Dying*, her body is rendered by anguish and disease. Indeed, "Dewey Dell's upcoming physical distortion as a result of pregnancy becomes an incongruity because of the out-of-wedlock context." It has been shown already, however, that virginity seems to be an impossible prospect in Faulkner, because in his work "touching and penetration and fusing are conditions of life, preceding and mocking all acts of violation and moral codes, no more to be accepted or refused than air is accepted or refused." (Weinstein 151). Dewey Dell's *agon* cannot be reconciliated. Constantly anxious over her predicament, it is a fate of a "fallen woman" that awaits her. "I feel my body, my bones and flesh beginning to part and open upon the alone, and the process of coming unalone is terrible." (59). Faulkner shows what happens when one transgresses the Apollonian structure of their society. In Dewey Dell, it is nothing short than frightening. First, she is constantly taunted by Darl over her unruly situation, and secondly, in vain attempt to seek abortion, a manipulative drug seller promises her efficient medication if she has intercourse with him. In so doing, Dewey Dell has been "undone." (Sundquist 157).

Faulkner, as pointed out earlier, does provide an alternative to the fictiveness of unity. It has been seen how the scene of the coffin in the flowing water is akin to a baptism where the "I" is being unmade. What happens after that scene, however, constructs the novel's vertical, Apollonian line. Indeed, when the Bundrens go into the water again to

the rescue the coffin, one seen a collective as a human chain holding hands together defying these rushing waters. They jump into the raging river to retrieve Cash's tools which have been lost. This detail has its own minefield of importance. These tools, it must be understood, are tools of measure and the whole act signifies retrieving tools of human measure from the Dionysian elements. Darl narrates it as follows.

> We submerge in turn, holding to the rope, being clutched by one another while the cold wall of water sucks the slanting mud backward and upstream from beneath our feet and we are suspended so, groping along the cold bottom. Even the mud there is not still. It has a chill, scouring quality, as though the earth under us were in motion too. We touch and fumble at one another's extended arms, letting ourselves go cautiously against the rope; or, erect in turn, watch the water suck and boil where one of the other two gropes beneath the surface. (70)

Francoise Buisson, in her article "*Slippage in As I Lay Dying*," (2021) sums this passage's symbolism well. The "chalk line," she says, "is thus a major tool, for it enables human beings to give a frame or at least a shape to spatial reality and objects." (3). It is more than the importance of one simple tool over another, however. It is the Apollonian significance of all these tools together that is crucial, for they are "agents of salvation, a lifeline, and enable the characters to keep their balance and to remain safely steady while facing violence." (Buisson 8). Indeed, the Bundrens immerse themselves in the avid flow and bring up to the light Cash's rule, chalkline and saw. It is a small but quite telling saga of

human civilization against the huge odds that beset it. In retrieving these tools of measures, Faulkner frames it in such a way that it becomes about Apollo's individuating principle: making life again. By facing terrible and threatening odds, this is where these characters become visible as carpenters and makers of things. And to answer a question that has been raised earlier, this is where Faulkner starts showing what might offset the anarchic forces of decomposition and deterioration. The sheer consistency and will to retrieve the tools and the coffin from the flood symbolize Faulkner's own "artisanal pride." (Weinstein 120). This "artisanal pride" resides in the fact that he bestows his characters with Apollonian abilities to create and re-order things in the hope that it would somehow resist the odds it besets. (Weinstein 120).

Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* is undeniably a perspectival *tour de force*. As such, the novel informs its readers from start to finish that there is no central truth to be found in its pages. The Apollonian and Dionysian currents are scattered all over the fifty-nine chapters of the novel and end up providing a pluralist story that centers around death. Faulkner, following Nietzsche's principles, is not so much interested in finding universal truths. Instead, he is much more fascinated with the outrageous which itself takes form a play of opposites. Faulkner's work thus desires to go beyond the dark side and see what are the associative logics that lie behind it, and perhaps even find hints of brightness in the abyss. Truth, then, is not an end in itself. Faulkner makes it very clear in the novel that truth as Darl understands it is entirely different from the truth of his deceased mother or his sister Dewey Dell. Faulkner's thematic and formal usage of perspectivism thus sheds light on how he seeks to defy absolutism. Truth, in his work, is neither immovable nor deified. Instead, truth always lead to something else – a different perspective that awaits to be

discovered. Nevertheless, it must be stressed once again that one should not confuse Faulkner's perspectival style for absolute relativism. Indeed, not all views are equal in *As I Lay Dying.* Faulkner's perspectivism, unlike Camus's absurdism, is not so much interested in relativizing meanings. Indeed, Faulkner does attempt imbuing his characters and stories with purpose. In this light, Darl's view does not necessarily equal Dewey Dell's, Cash's or any other perspective that is found in the novel. All of these perspectives are suggestive and carry their own significance. Do they all equal each other? Certainly not. Instead, they all convey what they believe to be their truth. These involve their vision of both their family and society. Ultimately, it is up to the reader to reach a form of objective conclusion. In weaving so many voices and so many perspectives, Faulkner perpetuates Nietzsche's assertion that "there is no truth, only interpretations" (267). In throwing his readers in so many hectic streams of consciousness, Faulkner suggests that there is no absolute way in getting to the bottom of things. To truly understand the mother's death, then, is to interpret it. The various perspectives that interwove in this novel can hence be said to be a series of interpretations. Indeed, what begins as a seemingly simple plot turns out to be more complicated and more nuanced. The transportation of this coffin eventually becomes a plot enabling device that lets loose a plethora of perspectives that are going to grapple with one common dilemma. Consequently, and as Nietzsche suggests, an event can only be understood in terms of various interpretations and experiences.

# CHAPTER IV:

# Determinism and Redemption

# in Faulkner's *Light in August*

This fourth chapter is devoted to William Faulkner's *Light in August.* Following the same methodological precepts that have been laid out so far, the chapter first looks at the formal peculiarities of Light in August. In so doing, it argues that the relative linearity and smoothness of Lea Grove's chapters are Apollonian in nature. On the other hand, the jumbled chronology that characterizes Joe Christmas's chapters are believed to be Dionysian, because they create a hectic narrative that makes it difficult to follow at times. Likewise, the chapter situates Lena Grove's soft and feminine qualities in an Apollonian context of beauty and harmony. Joe Christmas's violence and restlessness, however, are argued to be the release of Dionysian energies. Ultimately, the chapter concludes that both of these arcs are necessary to the novel as Faulkner fuses both the Apollonian and Dionysian to create a balanced narrative.

## 1. *Light in August's* Narrative Structure: Lena Grove's Apollonian Clarity and Joe Christmas's Dionysian Fragmentariness

*Light in August* has some similarities to share with the first two works discussed, but also departs from them in a number of ways. Narratively speaking, Faulkner still relies on perspectivism to tell the story, but provides his narrative mode some structural changes. Unlike *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*, *Light in August* departs from a first perspective narration. Instead, Faulkner introduces an omniscient narrator that relieves the book from the opaqueness of its predecessors. Similar to his two first major books, however, the chronology is as jumbled and as confusing. The reader finds some of the same structural elements that make Faulkner's prose very hard to decipher. Nonetheless, the story can be said to be told by two axes: Lena Grove's and Joe Christmas's.

These two characters form the very bulk of the novel, but their linkage actually ends here. Indeed, these two characters never meet throughout the course of the novel, and even more detrimental, they are presented in an utterly antipodal way. As it shall be seen,

Lena Grove is an unequivocally Apollonian character with not an ounce of Dionysian frenzy in her. Drastically different, Christmas is equally striking in his Dionysian energy. The difference of their characters, attitudes towards life, language and overall energy they introduce to this novel make this relationship's duality one among a myriad present in *Light in August*. Likewise, it is important to note that the arc belonging to Lena is told in an entirely linear, Apollonian structure. Hers is an axis that is not difficult to follow or decipher because it is presented chronologically. "This is the simple narrative thread that gives a recurrent sense of forward motion." (Kazin 33). Christmas's arc, however, is once more entirely different. His plotline is characterized by various narrative splits. Like B.R. McElderry signals in his *Narrative Structure of Light in August*, Christmas's axis is set up in "a violently nonchronological order." (201).

Christmas's story is indeed composed of many layers. These include: his partnership with Lucas Burch, his relationship to Joanna Burden, as well as his relationship to his Hineses grandparents, and his short stay with the town's Preacher, Hightower. Faulkner uses three levels of time to narrate each of these substories. There is the present which describes Joanna's murder and the ongoing hunt for her murderer, then there is the remote past which describes Christmas's backstory, and finally there is the immediate past in which the reader is privy to Joanna's murder and Christmas's relationship with Burch. Faulkner's narrative mode in *Light in August* can then be said to be once more perspectival.

> Deprived of the vitalizing force of description and dialogue, such a structural synopsis seems more confusing than the novel itself, but the elements of the structure are at least underlined: the contrast of major and minor action; the intertwining of present, immediate past, and remote past.

> How are these elements combined and made to function? What advantages accrue from this structure to set over against the loss in clarity involved in departure from a straight chronological sequence? (201).

McElderry raises some valid questions. A tentative answer would be that these various turns and twists of time help reinforce the panoptic feeling one has when reading the story. Indeed, Christmas's past serves more than mere recollections, for it also helps understand the troubling nature of his character and the motives he has for murdering Joanna. It is clear at this point that Faulkner, as a modernist, is very skeptical of traditional narrative modes. He seems to both understand and assert that there are many factors at play in one's story that simply cannot be seen linearly. It takes time to see time, and even then, the past must be re-accessed to make sense of things. Had Faulkner written the story in a chronological sequence, the reader would simply have faced a whodunit kind of story. It would have killed the psychological and philosophical undercurrents that the reader only decodes thanks to Christmas's backdrop. In this sense, the chief function of this jumbled narrative is to enlarge the reader's scope of understanding and feeling. To open up Christmas's past in this way is to feel his tragic *agon* and understand his drives, something that could not have been made possible had we been left oblivious to his formative traumas.

Joe Christmas's and Lena Paul's structural duality is only one among the multiplicity of binarisms and oppositions present in the novel. Lena's linearity and Joe's fragmentariness is the first of these to play out. The other dualities Faulkner structures his story around include: black versus white, love versus hate, freedom versus determinism,

the individual versus the community, and stoicism versus ascension. These themes have evidently strong existentialist undercurrents. Indeed, it can be said that Faulkner's prime interest with *Light in August* is the impermeability of life and its sometimes contradictory nature. These are concerns that have already been partly noted in the two previous works discussed but acquire a greater importance in Faulkner's midpoint career. Nonetheless, the overarching issues remain the same for Faulkner. *Light in August* is as inward looking as his first two major books are. Capturing the sensibility of existentialist thinking, *Light in August* presses the issues over one's identity. Sartre, late in his career, states that he has "never ceased to believe that one is and one makes oneself of whatever is made of one." (qtd in Solomon 32). To be sure the language is convoluted as often with many philosophers, but the idea behind it is rather simple. Akin to Nietzsche, Sartre is suggesting the idea that our identity must be the fruit of a process of self-creation. This process, though it be can arduous and complex, is perfectly embodied in *Light in August's* Joe Christmas and Byron Bunch. Who are they and what are they to do with who and what they are? These questions loom large over their characterization, signaling Faulkner's existentialist interest.

Passions are also important catalysts in Faulkner. Quentin dies because of his passionate incestuous feelings for Caddy. Benjy moans the most torturous feeling of loss because of how he passionately misses his sister. Faulkner, like Nietzsche acknowledges about the Greeks, fully recognizes the power of passions. *Light in August* follows suit and shows how passions are crucially important elements of human life. There is a sense for Nietzsche that to really live is to live passionately. Passion, as he understands it, is to commit oneself to a certain way of life. The passion he seeks is the one Faulkner weaves

in *Light in August*. It is a passion of inwardness rather than an outward force that fully explodes on the stage. It is, in other words, a passion that is felt rather than shown. The passionate individual is thus not the one who is dramatically visible to everyone, but rather the one who is inwardly contained.

Much of these issues have something to do with freedom which is a concept that is no less important in Faulkner's work. Indeed, *Light in August* delves deep into the issues of determinism and fatalism, since Faulkner is interested in the role of fate in the lives of individuals. It shall be seen how Nietzsche's rejection of the so called free will problem is embodied in Christmas's arc. For Faulkner, as for Nietzsche, there is a sense in which the idea that the self is detached from the causal nature of the universe is but an illusion. One must ask then, is this view fatalistic? Freedom, as Faulkner seems to perceive it, has to do with making choices and deciding how one lives with the predispositions one gets. Freedom, then, is to accept the consequences for what follows. Faulkner thus seems to apply Nietzsche's determinism but the essence they both give this view is not fatalistic. It shall be seen how Faulkner imbues the deterministic view of nature with an alternative that is redemptive.

All these themes coalesce together and structure the novel to give it an existentialist nature and a sophisticated vision of events. This notion of existence that preoccupies Faulkner so much cannot be overstated. What is it to truly exist? Is it to live one's life to the fullest, and does simply getting by count as existing as well? These are the concerns that Joe Christmas drives the reader to think about. Evidently, all existentialist thinkers seem to agree that existing spells out taking hold of one's life and realizing what one's

virtues and sense of empowerment consist of. There is a sense in which, as Nietzsche argues, one must "become" who they are. The question, of course, is whether Joe Christmas can take hold of his life and defeat his deterministic characterization. This idea of contingency versus transcendence revels in the novel. Indeed, it shall be seen how Faulkner implements an implausible and impossible idea of the body, but is it one than can be transcended? There is a sense in which there could be a metamorphosis, at least in the thought experiment that it presents. Both Camus's and Faulkner's existentialist dilemmas plunge the reader into the absurd, but one of the existentialists' aim is to find meaning and to find who one is in these strange and absurd situations.

## 2. Faulkner's Existentialism: The Issue of Free Will in *Light in August*

It has already been noted how characters such as Quentin and Darl have great existentialist undercurrents, but the strongest use of Faulkner's existentialist themes is to be found in his *Light of August*. Existentialism is evidently best known as a twentieth-century movement kickstarted by the French philosopher Sartre. As history shows, however, no movement or trend are born out of the blue. Existentialism can be traced as back the Ancients. The movement's strongest influences, however, lived in the nineteenth century. Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche are often regarded as the precursors of Existentialism. The movement itself, as Robert C. Solomon does well to point out, is "not a set of doctrines." Rather, it is a "sensibility." (4). In his *No Excuses: Existentialism and the Meaning of Life (2000).* Solomon locates three central themes to the Existentialist movement. First, there is a "strong emphasis on the individual." Secondly, there is a "central role of passions," because for existentialists "to live" is to "live passionately." (4). Third, there is a "pervading importance on human freedom." (4). Issues such as free will

or political freedom have a central place in existentialist works. Needless to say and as already shown, Faulkner is concerned with all three themes. *Light in August's* Joe Christmas, however, is deeply acute to all three issues that Solomon denotes.

There is a large amount of literature that has been written on the issues of race and gender in *Light in August,* but nearly all of them take ideological readings as opposed to existentialist readings of these issues. The first great theme Solomon signals as existentialist is an emphasis on the individual. To know and study oneself is particularly cherished by existentialists, and it is a venture that follows Christmas's story. Out of all four books discussed in this research work, Christmas is "Faulkner's most marginal and existential character". (Kazin 33). Appearing as a white man thanks to his Caucasian skin, Christmas suspects himself of having black blood. He is an existential character mostly because he is an alleged, putative black man. Neither he nor the reader know for sure that he is. In an early telltale scene in the orphanage that hosts Christmas, one already gets a vivid sense of the great existential issue that surrounds his character. The discussion the young Christmas has with the yardman is written as follows.

> 'What you watching me for, boy?' and he said, 'How come you are a nigger?' and the nigger said, 'Who told you I am a nigger, you little white trash bastard?' and he says, 'I ain't a nigger,' and the nigger says, 'You are worse than that. You don't know what you are. And more than that, you won't never know. You'll live and you'll die and you won't never know. (303)

Here, the great existential dilemma is expressed in explicit terms. It is not to ever know oneself, that one's identity is not something factual or measurable. Instead, it is a question mark and a construct that is very often formed by other people. This traumatic scene will haunt Christmas in ways that are tragic. This interaction will shape his understanding of the self, that one is the toll without connection, and perhaps without purpose in the universe. Time and again, Christmas understands himself to be a mirage whose nature is porous and fliting.

Christmas as a mirage displays the cluelessness that individuals may experience in their external world. It shows how people sometimes misunderstand, mislabel and misgauge the events that occur in front of their eyes. It raises the question on how does truly know the meaning of the events that transpire in relation to other people when they do not know any depths the very same people. And if one factors race into this, like Faulkner does in this novel, what could a white person possibly know about a black life? Indeed, there is no real metric when it comes to gauging the lives of others. There is always the risk that one might misconstrue or misinterpret things. One most take in consideration the possibilities and likelihood of getting it wrong. All of this has to do with individuals being on the outside and not knowing or being private to the inner logic and feelings of other people. To this regard, these white people that are labelling or mislabeling Christmas are utterly clueless about the recesses of his emotions.

Consequently, readers find themselves facing a story of immense and tragic dignity. It is a story of a suffering and confused black man who has no words for his pains, but he thinks plenty. He symbolizes the Dionysian storm of the mind. When given an intense writerity, the mind can make it nearly impossible to maintain one's balance or one's

identity. Christmas has long been haunted by the words of others, and how these words gave definition to what he was an individual. He finds himself playing the role cast by others. Now, he is supposed to rectify much of that, but seems unable. Faulkner thus shows that a part of his calamity has to do with the social role he is supposed to play. Yet, he is also imbuing him with inner Dionysian equipments that are trying to break loose.

How Christmas is seen and how he is treated is Faulkner's modernist thread and his tragic element in this book. It is about white and black as nominal and not essential terms. They are presented as words thrown around and as codes that are used to trigger and help create "specific behaviors and conducts." (Bleikasten 73). Indeed, Joe Christmas is defined by a negative image. He himself sees his own entity as a negative one. He even uses this negativity to taunt the people around him. When he has intercourse with white women, he confesses that "I have a little nigger blood in me" simply to see what kind of heated reactions he could provoke out of them. When around black people, he also picks fights throughout the short life that he has. These are the elements of his storyline that constantly converges around who he is as an individual. His second great element as an existential character is his embodiment of Nietzsche's rejection of free will.

For Nietzsche, there is a sense in which individuals are born with personalities and a "proto-character." (qtd in Higgins 40). Consequently, there is not much one can do to change themselves, because there are no choices to be made to infer or exercise some supposed freedom. Instead, there is an understanding in which individuals are products of fate. In this sense, Nietzsche drives individuals to ponder over how much control do they have in their lives and to what extent are they are "victims of fate." (Solomon 4). It is no

surprise that Nietzsche harbors such views against free will, because his notion of fate is directly linked to the Ancient Greeks. Nearly all Greek tragedies known to scholars advance the same view that one's life is largely molded, shaped and determined by the larger forces of culture, society, history and even biology. Faulkner once more fuses his work with Nietzsche's philosophy in the deterministic characterization of Joe Christmas.

One can indeed explore the reaches of the deterministic view that Christmas embodies by having a glimpse at his helplessness and passivity throughout the book. From his infancy onward, the reader sees him treated as if he were an objected being moved, carried, altered and named. We see him being taken from this orphanage to someplace else as if abducted. Arnold Weinstein notes the "powerlessness" (14). surrounding Christmas that Faulkner wants to flesh out in as many ways as possible. In an interesting passage where he has a violent encounter with two men that have beaten him up, Faulkner puts forward Christmas's powerlessness and alienation.

> He and Max might have been brothers in the sense that any two white men strayed suddenly into an African village might look like brothers to them who live there. His face, his chin where the light fell upon it, was still. Whether or not the stranger was looking at him, Joe did not know. And that Max was standing just behind him Joe did not know either. And he heard their actual voices without knowing what they said, without even listening: Ask him. *How would he know*. (Faulkner's italics; 169)

Not to know is a tipping point for Christmas throughout this book. “Joe did not know,” because “how would he know”? There is a sense in which he does not exist for other people, because his estrangement is constantly worked out in this text. Indeed, Faulkner seems to signal the distance that separates people from their fellows even though they are able to see that they inhabit the same space. In this light, Faulkner goes to great depths to figure out Christmas’s isolation and disconnection. Being constantly out of sync with his surroundings, Christmas becomes a “mere machinery made for processing information, but its communication misfires.” (Kartiganer 101). How does one lose their own agency? How does one transcend out of their own sentient abilities? Faulkner shows in Christmas what it is like not to be in control of oneself.

> “I’ll be there soon as I ...” Apparently he was not aware of what he was saying nor of what was happening; when the woman turned suddenly in the door of the car and began to beat him in the face he did not move, his voice did not change: “Yes. That’s right. I’ll be there soon as I—” Then he turned and ran, while she was still striking at him. (163).

One can notice the lag effect and the dislocation in all of this. He is currently being beat up, yet he is not processing what is happening to him. The repeated and fragmentary phrase “I’ll be there as soon as I…” signals that it is as if his awareness follows rather than leads the events he experiences. Furthermore, the most striking image Faulkner uses for him is that of “severed wireends.” This is when he is knocked out by the men beating him up. As he lies on the floor, Faulkner writes

> He did not know how long he lay there. He was not thinking at all, not suffering. Perhaps he was conscious of somewhere

> within him the two severed wireends of volition and sentience lying, not touching now, waiting to touch, to knit anew so that he could move. (174)

Christmas is described in terms of a cut chord waiting to be fixed again so he could move. Owen Robinson notes in his "*Creation of Joe Christmas's in Faulkner's Light in Augus*t" (2003) that this is a "neurological picture of the human subject as wired." (5). Indeed, Faulkner seems to take this notion quite literally and shows what could happen to a figure that could be "plugged and unplugged." (5). Having no measure of control whatsoever over the events that he experiences, and entirely at odds with the things happening to him, the "severed wireends" does stand as an image of Christmas's life. He is being beat up and Faulkner continues to describe the whole affair almost in terms of a broken electrical circuit. Christmas is completely out of sync with the things he experiences. It is a view of the human body that is a severe view because it suggests that wires can be faulty, neurons can fail, and its most horrifying, that individuals can entirely lose their sense of agency. The brain, in other words, can misfire. What one gets with Christmas is the strong feeling that some things are artificial or misplaced. His own body is out of sync and goes on its own wildings and mishaps. His mind is thus only but a powerless item that is prey to mishaps beyond its control. Christmas's own helplessness, in some sense, is thus a parable that informs us how of a blessing it is to be able to speak, move and see with one's own volition. This text has thus an acute sense of how precious it is to be in control of things.

Another scene that instills the deterministic view of Joe Christmas is an early one that is catalyzing in the behavior one finds in him later on. It is a scene that takes place at the orphanage. He sneaks at the dietician's office to steal some toothpaste. When doing

so, the dietician comes into the room with her boyfriend to perform intercourse there. We learn that she and her partner always sneak into the room in a rush to tend to their libidinal needs. This scene is in fact the epitome of how sex is described in Faulkner's fiction, because sexual intercourse is most often hectic. If two adults are having intercourse in Faulkner's world, it is always done in a hurry so as to get over with it as soon as possible, because they are afraid of getting caught.

> He squatted among the soft womansmelling garments and the shoes. He saw by feel alone now the ruined, once cylindrical tube. By taste and not seeing he contemplated the cool invisible worm as it coiled onto his finger and smeared sharp, automatonlike and sweet, into his mouth. By ordinary he would have taken a single mouthful and then replaced the tube and left the room. Even at five, he knew that he must not take more than that. Perhaps it was the animal warning him that more would make him sick; perhaps the human being warning him that if he took more than that, she would miss it. (98).

Hiding behind the curtain, Christmas at first does not realize what is happening. He is then stuck in a delicate situation whereby he could not do much but to simply keep eating his toothpaste while watching their physical romance unfold. Usually, Faulkner writes, Christmas would only steal a mouthful. His current predicament, however, makes him take much more than that. "Even at five [mouthfuls], he knew that he must not take more than that. Perhaps it was the animal warning him that more would make him sick." (98). Consequently, he starts sweating. The next delayed reaction that Faulkner notes in

Christmas is once more detrimental in understanding his characterization. “Then he found that he had been sweating for some time, that for some time now he had been doing nothing else but sweating. He was not hearing anything at all now.” (98). This is the lag time that is instilled in Christmas, that he has to catch up with himself because in some sense he is permanently late. In some sense, his life is a belated condition because he sees things only after they had happened, including one’s own things and one’s own self. At last, Faulkner describes Christmas’s sorrow in the most explicit and telling term possible: that of fatalism.

> Motionless now, utterly contemplative, he seemed to stoop above himself like a chemist in his laboratory, waiting. He didn’t have to wait long. In the rife, pinkwomansmelling, obscurity behind the curtain he squatted, pinkfoamed, listening to his insides, waiting with astonished *fatalism* for what was about to happen to him. Then it happened. He said to himself with complete and passive surrender: ‘Well, here I am.’ When the curtain fled back he did not look up… You little rat!” the thin, furious voice hissed; “you little rat! Spying on me! *You little nigger bastard*!” (98, italics mine).

His mishap at the orphanage is almost his baptism, because he waits for the rest of his life for a punishment he thinks he must receive for having observing this scene. There is a remarkable amount of close attention to what is happening to Christmas in this particular situation. The toothpaste imagery seems be twofold: first, it symbolizes the inevitable danger that Christmas is coming across; secondly, it acts as a sexual catalyst because of “the rife, pinkwomansmelling, obscurity.” Indeed, this moment is a formative moment of

his own sexuality, because one can hardly miss the phallic dimensions of the toothpaste that he ingests inside his mouth. At the same time, he is hearing the lewd sounds that this sexual affair is producing. Finally, it provokes this overthrow or eruption that comes out of him which leads him to utter, "here I am." (98). He was at the wrong place and at the wrong time, witnessing adult sexuality. There is a deep damage done to this young person who has seen the forbidden. He also spends the rest of his life reflecting and becoming the "little nigger bastard" that he is called in this scene. As if this were his transformative moment in which he has become scripted and fated, this scene is the one in which "the deterministic formulation is revealed." (Bleikasten 13). Christmas frequently uses passive phrases such as "here I am." Another one he uses is "I am going to do something." (213). As if he is saying that something is going to happen to him, Christmas does not know what it is. This is why Faulkner has used the word fatalism, and why Christmas embodies Nietzschean determinism; because he is the victim of forces that are larger than him. It is about recognizing that he is not in control, and that he follows the experiences of his reality. The pejorative name calling he receives as well as his "well, here I am" are forms of initiation to the determinism he embodies. Indeed, as Weinstein points out: "Joe' Christmas's misadventure at the orphanage stands as his own crucifixion. This is his *Ecce Homo*: this is the man." (Weinstein 15). Christmas's passive phrases are thus our entry point into both his mind and body as victims. It is recognizing that he is not in control of either, that they both have their own autonomous and integral realities, and that he simply follows them. The image of "severed wireends" is now becoming clearer and clearer. It is one of a man that is apart from himself, cut off from his own processes, and it is in that one sees that this man who is disconnected from his life will also be entirely dismembered in his death.

## 3. The Thematic Dionysian Dimensions of Joe Christmas

Joe Christmas's dysfunctionalities mirror the dysfunctionality Faulkner attributes to modern life. One of literature's best known credos is its ability to make the reader relate to the material presented, but there is seemingly nothing relatable about Joe Christmas. Characterized by a behavior that would be seen as despicable by most, how does one deal with his vile prospects? In his *What Nietzsche really meant: The Apollonian and Dionysian (2018),* Scotty Hendricks makes a valid point about the horror displayed in Greek tragedies that parallels Christmas's despicability.

> In Greek tragedies like Oedipus Rex, dreadful concepts like death, fate, and unfairness were expressed in a beautiful and ordered way through plots and dialogue. The audience viewed these concepts in a Dionysian way since they were watching an unrelatable main character experience them as explained by the chorus. The chorus' unity and detachment from the action helps the audience to separate from themselves and consider the ideas in the play in a depersonalized way. This allows the viewer to deal with unpleasant ideas in a way that is gentler than frank, Apollonian discussion. (1)

In signaling how the chorus allows the readers to experience atrocities in a "depersonalized" way, Hendricks touches upon the point that has been raised in the very first chapter of this research work. These various "dreadful concepts" expand the reader's sense of relatability. They are to be considered as entry points to worlds that may not look like theirs. Likewise, Christmas's distress, chaos and violence are to be seen as a bridge

that stretches the reader's horizon. To be sure, neither of the tragic elements one finds in the Greeks' or Faulkner's are entirely fictive. Dreadful acts such manslaughter or repulsive racism and misogyny do exist in real life. Faulkner, like Nietzsche, does not shun the terrible. Rather, he tries to understand it and to accept it as an integral part of one's life. In this light, Christmas is the Dionysian balance of this work. Both his actions and language shock the reader's sensibilities. In his *Dionysian Joe Christmas (2007,*) Hitoshi Yokomizo asserts that "Christmas's subversive nature, the Dionysian, can never be veiled or verbalized by the community's prescriptive power… he is the very Dionysian that always resists verbalization/signification." (8). Though Yokomizo is right, his analysis is reductive in the sense that he only sees Christmas's in view of the community he lives with. It lacks a further analysis of his past traumas that could explain his present-time Dionysian state.

Faulkner instills many elements of Dionysian frenzy in Christmas. The first evidential aspect of this frenzy is his relationship to women which is utterly volatile. Whenever a female offers him food in the text, he shuns it as "woman's muck." (187). It is also significant that one of his early relationships is to a waitress for whom he has a lot of trouble - beating her up twice. His sexual life is not any better, because it is problematic and violent from the get go. For instance, Faulkner writes the moment Christmas loses his virginity with a young girl, and it is coded in incredibly violent terms.

> At once he was overcome by a terrible haste. There was something in him trying to get out… But he could not move at once, standing there, smelling the woman, smelling the negro all at once; enclosed by the womanshenegro and the haste, driven, having to wait until she spoke… Then it

> touched her again because he kicked her He kicked her hard, kicking into and through a choked wail of surprise and fear. She began to scream, he jerking her up, clutching her by the arm, hitting at her with wide, wild blows, striking at the voice perhaps, feeling her flesh anyway, enclosed by the womanshenegro and the haste. (125)

Besides the obvious racism and misogyny that are part of the dysfunctionality of this character, one must also note the motion of his acts. Faulkner describes how something in him wants no part in all of this, but he is following and going through with the process although he is not willing to. As if dazed after the fact, he is in some sense, like the reader, watching it happen to him. His violence does not stop here. Indeed, it is placed through all kinds of symbolic gestures, and it is often a figurative violence done women. “With his pocket knife and with the cold and bloodless deliberation of a surgeon he would cut off the buttons which she had just replaced.” (87). This is doubtless a portrait that has distinctively a troubling and violent overtone that is dominated by his distaste for women. In another passage that has the same violent, figurative lines, Faulkner shows how Christmas, as many other white males in his work, is terrified of female sexuality. He is Particularly afraid of female genitalia and how their body works. For instance, menstruation terrifies him and provokes in him a deep existential crisis.

> the temporary and abject helplessness of that which tantalized and frustrated desire; the smooth and superior shape in which volition dwelled doomed to be at stated and inescapable intervals victims of periodical filth. (147).

Christmas, in this light, is very reminiscent of Quentin whose father bequeathed him the same terror of women's bodies. Furthermore, this is the nature of Christmas's dreams. "He reached the woods and entered, among the hard trunks." (150). 'Hard trunks' stands for the "male imagery" that suits him. (Weinstein 15). Faulkner continues to write…: "the branchshadowed quiet, hardfeeling, hardsmelling, invisible. In the notseeing and the hardknowing as though in a cave he seemed to see a diminishing row of suavely shaped urns in moonlight, blanched." (150) Here comes the symbolism of urns again. It shall be seen that the urns are always identified with Lena Grove, his Apollonian counterbalance. The urns act out in this novel as vessels with feminine characteristics. Faulkner writes that none of these urns were "perfect." Instead, "each one was cracked and from each crack there issued something liquid, deathcolored and foul." (150). The urn turns into an "unclean vessel… that no longer fulfills its luring purpose." (Bleikasten 286). Bleikasten is of course contrasting the integrity and wholeness of Lena Grove's urn with Joe Christmas's bleak rendition of his urn. It is becoming clearer how these two figures are entirely antipodal, and that they frame the novel as two distinct attitudes towards life, the self, gender and sexuality. It is also becoming clearer that Faulkner is framing this dichotomy in such a way that it drives the reader to question if Lena Grove's harmony can conceivably heal Christmas's sickness and disarray.

His frenzy is also showcased in his relationship with the man he lives with, Lucas Burch. Living with Burch is not accidental for Christmas. It turns out he is only comfortable with relationships with men, even of these are sadistic. His foster father, for instance, used to beat him routinely. Faulkner gives these scenes that are quite brutal. His foster mother, on the other hand, loved this child, tried to give him food and affection. Even though she is a repressed and brutalized woman, she does not shy one bit from

offering young Christmas love and kindness. He still refuses and shuns it away, and actually rationalizes that "she is trying to make me cry." (134). In Christmas's view, this translates to making him soft, mush and "liquid." (Weinstein 15). He is, instead, much more comfortable with the man that beats him religiously. This imagery of being liquid surfaces again later in his life with his roommate, Burch. On one occasion he goes by Burch's whiskey stacks, and in a destructing act, he "laid the tins on their sides and with the sharp edge of the shovel he pierced them, the sand beneath them darkening as the whiskey spurted and poured." (91). There is a measure of violence in taking these tins which are, as Philip Weinstein points out, "containers and vessels," (40). which then become punctured so that the fluid comes out. In destroying this stack of whiskey that is constituted of liquid, Christmas is essentially destroying the only female element he sees in this household. Indeed, Christmas's horror of "of flow and connection" (Sherazi 10). is "the obverse side of his evidential preference for man-to-man binary arrangements."(Weinstein 15).

With Christmas there appears to be a double incantation: a birth cloaked in racial mystery yet followed by an upbringing at the hands of his Protestantt foster father, McEachern, that is all too clear in its distorting influence. It is as if Faulkner wanted to massively overdetermine Joe Christmas's fate—first ungrounded, then ground down—to explore degrees of separation from the human and social order and the violence that results. Indeed, Christmas is as much headed towards perdition as Quentin was, and that perdition is repeatedly imaged in this novel along racial, gender, sexual lines as "womanshenegro," a pit where the male goes under. In Christmas, Faulkner has shaped his fullest representation of a misfit—a mix of fury and fear regarding the making side of life, especially when it comes to women's fluids but extending all the way toward food

and sex in general. His delayed responses and his violent impulses also make clear his out-of-sync neural abilities.

> This man may have no redemptive spiritual vision (he has none at all), but he does come across as an exemplary victim, held hostage by his ambiguous skin color, his firing and misfiring neurons and synapses, his horror of all that is soft, his formative "othering" stint in the orphanage, his further (mis)shaping via McEachern's loveless iron discipline, his being maniacally scapegoated by his frenzied grandfather Old Doc, his ultimate cold-blooded execution/castration by Percy Grimm in the name of an entire racist culture: not to put too fine a point on it, a systemwide hounding Faulkner himself calls "an emotional Roman barbecue."

In this light, Christmas's story is that of a man against all odds, it is a tale of how not to: how to fail every social test, how to refuse all adaptation, and how to turn your life into a nightmare. Joe Christmas seems like a nightmarish creation because he embodies everything Faulkner has thought of as diseased and dsyfunctional in modern life. His Dionysian frenzy is further showcased in his relationship to Joanna Burden, the woman whom he murders in the novel. His relationship is extremely tempestuous, and this is how Faulkner describes it.

> Remembering the hard, untearful and unselfpitying and almost manlike yielding of that surrender. A spiritual privacy so long intact that its own instinct for preservation had immolated it, its physical phase the strength and

> fortitude of a man…It was as if he struggled physically with another man for an object of no actual value to either, and for which they struggled on principle alone.

In other words, even Christmas's violent tendencies even when has sexual intercourse with his partner. What the reader sees is Christmas acting out his relationship with his foster father, McEachern; a relationship in which one man beats up another. His relationship with Joanna thus becomes a physical contest of prowess. Furthermore, this violent physical bond that affects his relationship is further noted in the relationship he has with Lucas Burch, the man he lives with. When the sheriff is looking for Christmas to investigate the murder of Joanna, he also learns that he has been living with Lucas Burch. The sheriff then compares Burch to Christmas's male husband. There are a lot of implications in this the sheriff's remark. To the very least, at least figuratively, his remark implies that what Burch and Christmas have is a homosexual arrangement. Then near the end of the book, when Percy Grimm, the self-styled truth seeker, learns that the priest Highertower has been giving refuge to Christmas and makes a crude observation. "Jesus Christ!" Grimm cried, his young voice clear and outraged like that of a young priest. "Has every preacher and old maid in Jefferson taken their pants down to the yellowbellied son of a bitch?" He flung the old man aside and ran on." (366). Once more, one may note the homosocial or homoerotic terms that surround Christmas's character. These are to be sure related to the part of the South that Faulkner comes from, whereby men get to experience a form of intimacy that they do not experience with women. Ultimately, all of these traits contribute to the neuroses that one finds in Christmas's characterization.

## 4. Joe Christmas and Nietzsche's *Übermensch*

Joe's Christmas arc is undoubtedly brutal in the way it is framed around the discovery that one is doomed to be just consciousness that floats through the world, never truly knowing oneself, never knowing what one is. On the far side of this discovery, however, Faulkner imbues Christmas with a new ethos, a project of self-making and full awareness endowed with a new responsibility. This entails a Nietzschean transcendence that involves a project of freedom and self-acceptance. Nietzsche is interested in getting individuals to move away from imitation that which upholds the tradition of the past. Instead, he wants people to reach a state that allows them to make something new and creative, but one cannot reach such a state by respecting the rules in place, because those rules circumscribe what one could and could not do. The creative spirit would create his or her own rules. Just like Nietzsche's *Ubermench*, Christmas is finally accepting the plurality of life, its challenges and is ready to overcome them. Welcoming challenges and moving towards them, as explained earlier, are requisites for self making; so that one faces life, they face it on their own terms. Nietzsche also argues that one must move beyond passivity and failure of imagination. This, indeed, took a long while for Joe Christmas to register. He has been living for the longest with his surrounding's assumptions on what he is as an individual. For him to consider himself a free man, a higher man, he must break free of those assumptions and let loose of his instinctual energies. As Nietzsche promotes, one must overcome his predicaments by reaching out to new horizons and challenges. For Christmas to experience true growth, he must thus take the risk.

Christmas's "frightening" behavior is the first elemental angle of his Dionysian characterization. (Parini 200). To entirely grope his Dionysian aura, however, one must also look at the ways in which he transcends himself beyond his current predicament. In

*Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche reviews his account on the rise of Greek tragedy and adds a caveat to the Dionysian state. It is not, he explains, merely about seeing and accepting the terrible. It is also about transcending and elevating oneself to a new status. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche introduces his concept of Übermensch. The latter represents a new form of man. The Übermensch, in simple terms, signals a new spirit fueled by a new vitality. To reach this ultimate state, Nietzsche explains, one must go three stages of "metamorphoses." (25).

Nietzsche describes the first phase as the "camel" stage. (25). In it, the individual bears and takes on tradition. He/she learns it thoroughly and is willing to carry it. With the camel stage, the individual spends a livelihood carrying on things that have been transmitted from tradition. As Nietzsche sees it, this is certainly the starting point for a spiritual development. It is only at stage two that the individual starts questioning most of it, which Nietzsche labels it the "lion" phase. (27). The individual starts to evaluate and develop a skeptical attitude towards tradition, asserting individuality by questioning the things that had been carried on as the truth. There is a certain measure of maturity that is reached at which point questions can be asked. It is no longer about serving the tradition, but it is about challenging it. The final stage moves beyond this no-saying stage where the spirit is rejecting to a new form of affirmation. Nietzsche describes the final phase as that of the "child." (28). It has a boundless energy for what is new and experimentation. There is a willingness to regenerate oneself and one's activities. It is no longer about obeying and serving tradition, but it is instead about having a new energy that comes from oneself. The image of the child for Nietzsche is one of creativity and of a new innocence. To sum it up, the evolution of the spirit involves learning the tradition, rejecting some of it, and then start over by dealing with the world in one's own way.

Joe's camel stage lies in formative trauma that experiences at the orphanage. Sneaking in the dietician's office to steal some toothpaste, he has seen that which he is not supposed to see. Consequently, the dietician labels him as a "little nigger bastard." (98). This name calling is the first revelatory moment in Christmas's transforming journey. For the rest of his life, he will adorn this guise of a "little nigger bastard." It haunts and daunts him for the remainder of his days. These words are the tradition he inhabits and embraces. He then accepts it. As Alexander Cummins points out in his *Becoming Faulkner*, "identity in this novel involves not who you are but how you become penetrated by the names others have called you." (120). Joe's lion stage then plays out in which he rejects these stereotypical assumptions. The act that signals his spirit's transformation into the lion is his murder of Joanna Burden. Believing that Christmas is partly black, Joanna views her sexual relationship with him to be sinful, an "outrage against God." (Parini 180). Consequently, she asks him to kneel and repent for the forgiveness of God. Feeling immensely humiliated, Joe's murder is his ultimate act of rebellion. Joanna feels her relationship to him is sinful not because of its unwed nature, but because Joe is black. They must repent because she had sex with a man who harbors black blood. Like Nietzsche's lion, Christmas finally transcends himself beyond these relegating views. Murdering Joanna is Joe's way of saying "I will not bend and I will not kneel." To have done so would have been, as Parini points out, a "wickedly symbolic gesture of weakness." (181). Thus, Joe rejects the relegating view that places him as a "nigger bastard" and refuses to repent because of his skin.

Nietzsche's last transformative stage, that of the child, is embodied in Joe's death. To be sure, Joe Christmas gets as much as he gives. Yet, what happens to him in the book is a fate no one could wish. Because of a murder Faulkner never quite explicitly narrates,

Christmas gets symbolically crucified by a white man called Percy Grimm. Once it is learned by the community at large that Joe has black blood in him they also suspect him of raping Joanna, the killed woman. It is in this sense that Percy Grimm, a "proto-Nazi" (Weinstein 44). character, filled with vengeful sentiments, chases and hunts down Christmas. It is then that Christmas meets the white man's punishment for the transgression that he has committed. In many ways, some have been tempted to read his death as a poetic justice bequeathed to an impetuous and "frightening" character. (Parini 200). The scene of is death is just as gruesome as his acts, and Faulkner writes it as follows.

> But the Player was not done yet. When the others reached the kitchen they saw the table flung aside now and Grimm stooping over the body. When they approached to see what he was about, they saw that the man was not dead yet, and when they saw what Grimm was doing one of the men gave a choked cry and stumbled back into the wall and began to vomit. Then Grimm too sprang back, flinging behind him the bloody butcher knife. "Now you'll let white women alone, even in hell," he said. But the man on the floor had not moved. He just lay there, with his eyes open and empty of everything save consciousness, and with something, a shadow, about his mouth. (366)

Grimm, whom Faulkner calls "the Player", unleashes his hateful and murderous wrath on Christmas. It is not before too long that the reader realizes what Grimm is up to. In "flinging behind him the body" with the "butcher knife," Grimm is castrating Christmas which leads blood to gush out. What Faulkner presents next is Joe's child stage in which he is born a new. Indeed, Faulkner supplies Joe's death with an image of ascension. Joe

becomes a figure that seems to "soar" up, but where? In their "memories forever and ever." (Faulkner 366-367). Faulkner takes Joe's death and gives it a new dimensionality. On the one hand, he presents the deterministic fate of Joe that the book has been pointing to. On the other hand, Faulkner gives a Nietzschean completion. In the religious imagery of ascension, Joe acquires peace which plays out as a "black blast." (366). Faulkner gives Joe's acquired peace a space-like language, in which his spirit is soaring up into the havens and into the memories of the community that has killed him. He is indeed dying but everything about him is pulling up. Faulkner then continues to describe his memory as "serene" and "steadfast." (366). There is a sense in which Joe begins to acquire Lena's characteristics which have been denied to him in life. He is the tortured figure of the novel that acquires his wholeness in his end. Faulkner has thus extended his reach as an outsider who is entering "forever and ever" the psyches of the community. Bleikasten eloquently renders Joe's transcendence: "Christmas has turned into *pharmakos*, a collector of communal guilt and agent of purification, and at the point of death he is transfigured and reborn into myth." (328). Joe has first carried the Southern tradition, embraced it and lived with it. He then challenged it and denied it by murdering Joanna. Lastly, he has ascended into a new child acquiring a new innocence, a serenity and calmness he has not had before. It is the completion of a curve of a life and the completion of Nietzsche's three phases of metamorphoses.

Faulkner seems quite invested in giving this man's failed life and spectacular death alternative meanings. Subsequently, his castration here symbolizes a moment of miraculous salvation and even rebirth. It is as if murder, death and love have been fused together. "And from out the slashed garments about his hips and loins the pent black blood

seemed to rush like a released breath. It seemed to rush out of his pale body like the rush of sparks from a rising rocket; upon that black blast the man seemed to rise soaring into their memories forever and ever." (367). The following words that Faulkner uses to describe Christmas's posthumous state are serene," "steadfast," and "triumphant." (367). One immediately notices that these are terms best ascribed to Lena. The notion of fusion is thus more potent than ever at this point in the novel. It is as if Christmas has been wedded to Lena by the associative logic that Faulkner employs in his writing. Both Lena and Christmas symbolize the two exiles of the community—one giving birth, one being castrated—seem to have both become otherworldly, to come together, as Faulkner's fusing language approximates that of the divine. It is as if Christmas new ethos is such that he is able to transcend death and is able to send Lena a new future. As a former outside, Christmas is now inhabiting the minds and dreams of the same community that ostracized him, thus completing his ultimate metamorphose.

Christmas's metamorphose thus provides us with some final considerations on some of Nietzsche's doctrines that playing out in this novel. Indeed, Christmas potently supports Nietzsche's assertion that suffering, self-loathing, mistrust, and the rejection of past tradition are the staples of human renewal. The process of suffering is, as seen with Christmas, essentially inevitable. One has to go through a striving and suffering that includes "the misery of him who is overcome." (qtd in Robinson 36). The lived life is thus a life that first needs to be defeated. One must recognize the hold of past values, and how they have been wrapped in unauthentic theater piece scripted by others. It is in the depths of suffering that one may find redemption, one that is only reached by rejecting everything that has given substance to an inauthentic life. Once individuals come to grips with that it

is in their unconsciousness that has true clams on their lives, and that they have repressed it and sublimated those in ways that are treacherous to themselves, it is only then that they could claim a real acceptance of life. Christmas's camel, lion and child stages signal that this is what is right and true for him. To know oneself is to know the divided essence of life in which the best thing that could be done about it is to suffer with dignity. Then, and only then, one could make themselves worthy. Christmas has thus led himself to a stance that transcends the predetermined moral system which had in him in shackles. He has made for himself new himself new values that he can truly engage back. He has, in other words, fresh ways to shape his life.

*Light in August* thus reprises the theme of self as vacant discussed earlier in *The Sound and the Fury* where notions such as harmony and control are anything but hegemonic. An entirely marginal figure, Joe Christmas characterizes this marginality that haunts many of Faulkner's stories. This theme of unclear identity and having an unclear sense of self, however, is cherished by most American modernists. Indeed, identity is a theme that haunts much of twentieth century fiction in general. *Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby*, often seen as one of the great texts about self making, also presents a stark picture of the hollowness that surrounds the notion of a self. Gatsby, like Christmas, seems to have unclear origins. Indeed, Gatsby is often rumored by other characters to have multiple origins. Consequently, both he and Christmas turn into ghosts. While Christmas has been told that he will never know who and what he is, Gatsby is told that he is "Mr. Nobody from Nowhere." (Fitzgerald 123). In this light, Christmas and Gatsby are "nobodies" that epitomize the doom of not knowing oneself. This is the great existential void, riddle and

enigma that are sometimes present at the core of things. It is the flip side to the clarity that Apollonian structures provide in one's life.

*Light in August* is also a raw portrait of community violence, prejudice, and hatred—all the forces that weigh against growing up—but its very violence is transformed into Faulkner's a parable about family, union, children, and the round of life. At that poetic level—and only there—the story of carnage, misfit, and even pariah status undergoes a sea change, yielding a vision in which the wild child finds a home. One way to follow Faulkner's lead in imagining the fate of the wild child would be to use a pairing strategy—one "wild," that this research work has described time and again as Dionysian, and one "straight" which would be Apollonian. Doing so allows the reader enough maneuvering room to gauge what it means to belong and not belong in a particular culture. The ramifications behind this are all on show in *Light in August.* Yet, Christmas's characterization informs us even more about one of Nietzsche's most difficult doctrines: the eternal recurrence. As enunciated before, for one be fully human one must fully embrace life and say yes to the latter in the following way. If Joe Christmas had the possibility of taking his life and having a close look at it, making sure to also look at the bits that are painful and brought him suffering, would he accept to live again still? To experience true growth, the answer must be yes. Having undergone his transformative experience, Christmas did, in some ways, embrace life in its fullest joys and horrors. He said yes to all of, and not despite of it. Only then, has he become an Ubermench of his own.

## 5. The Pagan and Apollonian Qualities of Lena Grove

Lena Grove, the other essential character of this book, is the one who Faulkner opens his book with. Her narrative is outfitted with a sort of moral generosity The novel begins with her coming to Mississippi while being eight months and a half pregnant. Her swollen belly and lack of engagement ring is enough for the people of Mississippi to give her a fatal judgment. Moving around, she says she is looking for her husband Lucas Burch who is supposedly awaiting her arrival. She is confident that he will be there because "the Lord will see to that." (22). The people around her quickly realize that all of this is mere wishful thinking, because this man is most likely never going to show up. The women around her are enraged, and the men are mocking, for they believe Lucas Burch is never going to show up, because he has cleared up a long time ago. Yet, she is certain that she is going to find this man.

If Joe Christmas is shaped by his traumatic past, Lena is on the other hand by shaped her future, which means finding a father for this soon-to-be-born child of hers. A figurative one will do as well as the biological one, so that Byron Bunch becomes the book's figurative fther, exiting the community at story's end with Lena and baby to recreate some form of the family, at once curious and holy. Lena's child symbolizes "nature's sovereign answer to cultural rules." Indeed, despite the outrage of the community at large that surrounds this baby, Lena remains unwavering and integral. In turn, the set of responses she meets at large then strikes the reader as weightless and capricious, given the success with which she is crowned at the end of the story.

She is Faulkner's very powerful image of nature, for she represents a pagan life force that is unconcerned with moral or racial codes. She is an entirely distinct figure in

Faulkner's repertoire, and the language he uses for her signals how her characterization stands as an almost timeless figure compared to others. In a passage where she is on a wagon coming through that hot August day in Mississippi, Faulkner writes:

> Backrolling now behind her a long monotonous succession of peaceful and undeviating changes from day to dark and dark to day again, through which she advanced in identical and anonymous and deliberate wagons as though through a succession of creakwheeled and limpeared avatars, like something moving forever and without progress across an urn. (8).

The "urn" appears once more. André Bleikasten suggests that Lena "moves in the timeless time of eternal recurrence." (276). Using Nietzsche's concept of eternal recurrence, Bleikasten seems to suggest that the urn symbolizes the timelessness of human feelings and desires. Indeed, this interpretation is detrimental to the reading of Lena as an Apollonian character. There is a serenity, an impetuous calmness and a terribly obvious innocence that characterizes her that is in drastically different from the restlessness Joe Christmas provides. Instead, she imbues this book with an unflinching faith and an almost ceremonial peace. Despite having no learning at all, Lena Groves is endowed with a gracefulness and stillness no other character discussed so far has ever shown. Indeed, for Lena "time flows smoothly, following its predetermined course." (8).

The smallest of details Faulkner attributes to Lena show something of her Apollonian gracefulness and innocence. Eating sardines that she calls "sour-deens" with her fingers, she still manages to do it in an effortless and ornate way. Likewise, Lena Grove

finds no difficulties later in the novel delivering a child for the first time. There is no crackup, nor is there the "biological prison" one finds in Dewey Dell. (Kartiganer 40). Instead, it is done as gracefully and as harmoniously as her eating a box of "sour-deens." Lena, in this novel, stands as a pylon of endless love. She seems to be beyond gender, and is the proponent that unites species. Her language, too, is graceful and light. In turn, these distinctions lead her story to be one of creation, of a marriage of boundaries, and of speaking and hearing. The catch, however, is that she has no inner life to speak of, no consciousness to immerse in. She seems monotonous and bovine. Faulkner seems to present her in exclusively somatic terms, and it her characterization can be very arrested at times. Nonetheless, Faulkner writes her into the book as "the life principle." (Weinstein 189) Indeed, Lena's childbirth is the second great plot of this novel. In some sense, this is one of the oldest plots that the human species know of; that humans have a beginning, a middle and an end. This is what the cogency of life is about. Lena herself knows that this is bound to happen, and she is quite prepared for it. She keeps repeating that "my, my… a body does get around." (26). Faulkner uses her to open the book with, gives a prominent role in the novel's midpoint, and finally closes the story with her character. The gambit of this book is thus rendered evident: can Lena, which stands as a paragon of the natural process filled with bodily serenity, get around the Joe Christmas phenomenon? Is there a sense in which nature could contain culture? Could Lena be the antidote or humane, alternative figure that gives harmony to the neuroses and violence that Joe Christmas personifies. In some sense, this would be the structural challenge of the novel, that she would be nature to his culture, and he, culture to her nature. And it must be said that everything that she does is what he cannot do. Food, as shown earlier, is disastrous to him

and he discards it as muck. Sexual intercourse, which Faulkner presents as effortless and pure in Lena Grove, is problematic and extremely violent with Christmas. Lena is thus presented in entirely different terms. She is the harmonious principle of this book that will challenge the hectic nature of Christmas.

Lena's childbirth, a central event in this book, is the ultimate Apollonian manifestation in this novel. As implausible as it is remarkable, this event unites nearly all characters of this book in a strongly evocative way. In a passage that follows Lena's childbirth, the preacher Hightower comes in and finds a very confused Lena. In this remarkable sequence, she is having this interesting conversation with an old couple, Mrs. and Mr. Hinse, who we will learn are Joe's grandparents. This is precisely when the story starts to coalesce. Looking at Hightower, Lena shares her confusion:

> She keeps on calling him Joey. When his name ain't Joey. And she keeps on ..." She watches Hightower. Her eyes are puzzled now, questioning, doubtful. "She keeps on talking about— She is mixed up someway. And sometimes I get mixed up too, listening, having to …" Her eyes, her words, grope, fumble. "Mixed up?" … She keeps on, and then I get mixed up and it's like sometimes I can't—like I am mixed up too and I think that his pa is that Mr.—Mr. Christmas too—" because she keeps on saying it and saying it, and maybe I ain't strong good yet, and I get mixed up too. But I am afraid. (323).

This is one of the revelatory moments of the book. Mrs. Hinse keeps on calling Lena's baby by the name of Joey, and Lena's confusion signals how things are getting unglued.

Lena Grove knows she has not met Joe Christmas, and this in itself is a remarkable phenomenon. Conventions of literature would have it that two main characters would always meet, but Lena and Joe never lay eyes on each other. Yet, this passage somehow asserts that Joe is the "pa" of this child, and that the unnamed baby becomes Joey. It is not possible physically, yet it is said nonetheless. This is where the ascending Apollonian logic manifests itself. It is about the somatic reality that is beyond the determinism noted in Joe Christmas. With Lena's confession that she is afraid, much is coming undone. Indeed, she is being told that there is a figurative and symbolic encounter, and that she has had a sexual act with a man she has never seen or heard of before. Could there be a symbolic, figurative act of kinship? It is indeed what Faulkner seems to suggest. Lena and her child act as the Apollonian counterbalances of this novel, because this sequences makes everything different. The child is then "the life principle" of this text, and it is a glimpse of what lies beyond the determinism and death principle that Christmas embodies.

Lena and her child bring forth the affective Apollonian logic in this book precisely because the child is a communal entity. It is so because it unites all of the isolated, discreet and alienated characters. Like Apollo, the child bears symbols of unity, order and connectedness. It does not unite only Lena and Joe, but it brings into the mix other characters like Hightower, the defrocked priest who comes out of his hiding in order to deliver Lena's child, and he hopes that the child might be named after him. Byron Bunch, who ends up as Lena's partner, also gets involved with this baby. In fact, Faulkner keeps attributing "Byron Bunch borning a baby" to him. (310). It is as if in some sense he, too, is involved in the birth of this child. Finally, Joanna Burden pretends that she is pregnant in order to keep Christmas by her side. We learn later on that she was in fact in menopause,

and he would partly kill her for that. The point, however, remains the same: Joanna also wanted to have Lena's baby, so that she, too, is involved in this mesh. Thus, nearly everyone seems involved in the birth of this child. This baby is part of a relational and communal web, because everything is drawn together from it. Lena, in this sequence, becomes the "light in august." The child is the principle of harmony and connection where everything comes together. It is a vision of ways being related to each other that are not simply that of the flesh.

This child who has a father that cannot be named is what Faulkner is reaching out for. This premise is what the Mississippians have seen when this woman with a protruding belly without a ring came in. The community's questions, such as who is the husband and who the father, were inevitable. A question both the community within the novel and readers alike must face, however, is what kind of identity would this child carry? Lena herself is told by Mrs. Hinse that she is participating in a play related to people far beyond the ones that she knows. We then understand the Apollonian logic that is associated to Lena and her child. They both act as connective threads that ink this novel as a story about the creation of life, about the creation of something that goes far beyond the novel's characters. Understandably, these ramifications scare and confuse Lena herself. Interestingly, however, this sense of merging between birth and death predates Faulkner's fiction. Indeed, it is something that has preoccupied novelists and poets a like for quite a while. The most explicit example is to be found in modernist poet T.S. Eliot. In his *The Journey of the Magi*, Eliot also gives us a meditation about birth and death. It is about a Magi that has come to witness the birth of Christ, and who is unhinged by it.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

The Magi thus tells us that the birth he has witnessed has alienated him and changed his dispensations. Therefore, it is his death that he sees. A new ethos, similar to the one finds in Light in August, thus comes to life. The Magi informs us that he had seen "birth and death," and that he had "evidence and no doubt." Evidence and doubtlessness are the very terms most worldviews are geared to. These are very premises that make for a certain kind of cogency. This research work shall thus now take this premise of evidence and contrast it to the implausible ramifications behind Lena Grove's childbirth and Joe Christmas's death.

## 6. Fusion and Redemption in *Light in August*

The key simple gesture of this novel is touch; both literally and figuratively. It is the touch of human flesh with other flesh, as in fornication, murder and touch as in emotionally and spiritually marking the other. All of these are underpinned by one thread: an inherent story

of desires. These include Joe Christmas's desire to transcend his condition, Lena's desire to retrieve her husband and the desire of Byron to gain her love. Faulkner uses all of these desires to thread his story via one immense fusion. He takes these figures that are initially divided by all sorts of factions and then taps into a new sort of language that invokes biblical imagery.

Now that Lena's childbirth has been presented as a life affirming principle, it must be explored further on how it redeems the sometimes dark material Faulkner presents. Light is brought about in this text in its making of a family. When Lena Grove opens the book with "the Lord will see to that," every Mississippian laughs at her. When her child is given birth, however, she is surrounded by people. Doc and Mrs Hinse, Byron Bunch, Hightower, the doctor; all of these people regardless of their previous views on Lena were present for the birth of child, a birth that proves the Misssissipians wrong. It is Faulkner's ultimate representation of symbolic kinship: to go beyond the individualistic self by a display of communal relationships.

The life principle in this, as Apollonian, brings light and unity, but what are its larger ramifications? Lena is essentially being told by Mrs. Hinse that she is participating in a play related to people beyond those that she knows. Faulkner is providing a challenging picture that this sequence is about the creation of life, and that it is something that goes far beyond these complex characters. Lena has time and again shared confusion in the sequence following the birth of her child, but Faulkner is perhaps pointing fusion rather than confusion. In some sense these people in the room, who are somatically and physiologically not related whatsoever, are being brought out together in communal and

spiritual ways. It does not make sense physically but it may create cogency morally and spiritually. The birth of this child utterly deracinates these people and changes their dispensations, as if signaling a new era and a new ethos.

When Mrs. Hinse tells Lena that her child's "pa" is Joe Christmas, she is going right beyond the world of evidence. Her statement has to be doubted mentally and logically by the readers and characters alike, yet she is saying that it is true nonetheless. What Faulkner is introducing with sequences like this is his effort to come up with what Bleikasten calls "a might have been" world. (280). It is about coming up with a symbolic, spiritual and moral set of arrangements or connections that would be different from the "botched and physical" (280). world Faulkner attributes to modern life. But what would be the difference between a symbolic kinship and a real one? Evidently, Faulkner is writing a novel in which the characters themselves are both directly and indirectly related. Lena and Joe's relationship is an almost fictive one, but Faulkner fuses them together. Lena, the life cycle and life premise of this book, is joined and fused to the sense of cessation that Joe Christmas embodies. *Light in August* tries to redefines birth and death, by offering a picture of a life that goes beyond the flesh and the social turmoil that individuals could experience.

Alfred Kazin calls Christmas "the loneliest figure in American literature," yet there is a sense in which Faulkner tries to halt his loneliness by wedding two complete strangers. (Kazin 30). It is no easy task, because Christmas is all at once cut off from everything: his self, the white community, the black community, his own life and even his own responses. Faulkner, in other words, is "imagining and figuring some new constellations of

connection and harmony." *Light in August's* dark material of murder and not knowing oneself is then trumped over by its ultimate reflection of trying to think of redemptive ways that provides an alternative vision that could save its characters. Insofar, there is a clear pattern in which Faulkner never entirely succumbs to the Dionysian. In all three books discussed so far there is an undeniable sense of turmoil and chaos at first glimpse. But it has been shown that in each novel Faulkner is also depositing an Apollonian picture of harmony and unity that would redeem the violence presented. Moving from death to birth is the ultimate redeeming manifestation in Light in August, because Faulkner makes it imaginable and conceivable. Mrs. Hinse, who has lost her grandson Joe, has this to say.

> I never saw him when he could walk and talk. Not for thirty years I never saw him. I am not saying he never did what they say he did. Ought not to suffer for it like he made them that loved and lost suffer. But if folks could maybe just let him for one day. Like it hadn't happened yet… Like he had been on a trip and come back, telling me about the trip, without any living earth against him yet. (307)

The "might have been" world that Faulkner is promoting is once more put forth. It is the very reprieve of Light in August, that there is an alternative to the deterministic record. Sure enough, the alternative here is presented as an epiphany that not going to be literally actualized, but it is Faulkner's way of saying that there is an alternative to the social and physical determinism that has tainted Joe Christmas's life. Mrs. Hinse meeting her grandson "without any living earth against him yet" is to suggest connectedness rather than divisiveness, because he weaves an alternative that challenges and reconceives fate,

doom and determinism. It is not to avoid them, but to reconceive them so as to make death something open, mutable. Imagining together can be an act of love, because it brings people as different as day and night and drives them to think, talk, and construct together versions of the past and future. In so doing, the act stresses love and brotherhood instead of volatile hatred. *Light in August* thus presents Faulkner's ways on how this could be carried out.

The ultimate act of fusion and mutation in this book is of a character's that has not been discussed much up to this point. Byron Bunch is the character that falls in love with Lena Grove the moment he lays eyes on her. Confusing him with the man she is looking for (Lucas Burch) the Mississippian community guides Lena towards Byron. In love with her, Byron tends to her needs and follows Lena's journey in which he himself makes an extraordinary metamorphosis. Byron is the man who becomes the father of Lena's child. He becomes, in other words, Lucas Burch. As implausible and as surreal as it sounds Faulkner weaves it this way, because this is what it means for Byron to love this woman. How does Faulkner change Bunch into Burch? More than a mere semiotic change, Byron's change is related to his identity. First, Byron comes to terms with Burch as a male rival. Desperately attempting to connect with Lena, Byron attends the birth of her child and it is at that point that he takes seriously the rivalry of the man that has seeded this child. Up to this point, Byron referred to Burch's mention as a "bunch of words," that meant nothing much. Eric J. Sundquist reflects on this passage and makes a holistic point about narrative fiction in general: this is the gambit of any piece of literature, to stop being just "words" and be what the words say." It is, he continues, "to move beyond the linguistic prison and get into the real world of spirit, flesh or emotion." (50). How would Byron become the

words? In a spirit of gallantry, Byron hunts down Burch. He feels like it is his job to bring down this man who has abandoned his pregnant woman. Unfortunately for him, Byron gets beaten up badly and it is at this moment that stumbles into the actual density and reality of this rival male. This, too, is a way of changing and going beyond. Byron is on his way to become another, because it is his moment of epiphany and vision.

> The hill rises, cresting. He has never seen the sea, and so he thinks. 'It is like the edge of nothing. Like once I passed it I would just ride right off into nothing. Where trees would look like and be called by something else except trees, and men would look like and be called by something else except folks. And Byron Bunch he wouldn't even have to be or not be Byron Bunch. (334).

Byron reflects on how he could stop being himself, thereby depositing a logic that would have the names we go by are but an illusion, a façade. Suggesting more than an alphabetical change, Byron posts his meditation on the illusory nature of identity. His is a logic whereby it is possible to leave the body, its shell, and its name. "In Byron Bunch," Sunquist writes, Faulkner "creates a language and space of transmutation, transformation and transfiguration." (41). These metamorphoses and transmutations are in line with what has been discussed so far, and especially in the discussions that pertain to Joe Christmas. Bunch's transformation, in other words, adds itself to the long list of transformations that are found in Faulkner's work. This is indeed how Bunch becomes Burch. This is the realm beyond any plausible notation of evidence that characterizes Joe's union with Lena, the Mississippians' as godfathers of her child, and now Bunch's transformation into Burch.

Apollonian unity has then come into manifestation through these various fusions. There is a form of slippage taking place here. Indeed, things will not be kept apart. Instead, they will be merged and blurred. The lines that are meant to divide gender, emotions, desires and families will be erased and leave place to a potent fusion.

> It is worth pausing a moment to consider the nature of this name change, because it says a good deal about Faulkner's writing practice. Verbally Bunch and Burch are so alike as to be taken for each other Yet the poetic logic of this novel is such that this initial confusion will become a fusion, in that Byron Bunch will, in a crucial sense, become Lucas Burch, become the missing husband and father —or at least try to. (Weinstein 183).

These incessant fusions render *Light in August* as Faulkner's passion play. In interweaving the stories of a child that cannot be named, of a love that is uniting rather than dividing, Faulkner is aiming at something that is larger than life. Among the things that are "death oriented", Arnold Weinstein explains in his *Nobody's Home*, is "literature itself." (3). When the story "is known, the pages remain, and the sentences end… closure and finality is the nature of writing." (3). As early as Aristotle, he continues, "scholars have taught others that there is a beginning, a middle and end." (3). Indeed, from this point of view it may be said that literature conceptualizes death. In this sense, Joe's death becomes full of symbolisms that stretch the meaning of one's death. Words are often seen as a set of conventions, but Faulkner seems to perceive his themes as things that cannot die. He creates a language where everything that looks confused is fused, things that seem separate

become connected. Death, then, is asserted as a birth in itself. These things however have to be constructed by the readers themselves, but such is the nature of reading: it pairs those who read to the text being read. This would be the ultimate reprieve and vision that would come up at play in the novel's final reconstruction; that what appears most implausible would be actualized. Light in August's thematic of fusion is one that sheds light on a narrative motif that has been stressed time and again in this work. Faulkner is undoubtedly very careful in his work to join together what initially seems apart. In The Sound and the Fury, the chanting transcended the need for words and united in a collectivist way the scattered community of Jefferson. *Light in August* in no different in its attempt of offering new linkages by virtue of its symbolisms. These linkages express the need for Apollonian creation and light that transcend the atrocities and pettiness that some of the novel's characters have experienced. Lena Grove's arc is thus the story's enabling device that allows other characters to move beyond the strictures they encounter in their lives.

In many ways, *Light in August* depicts Faulkner's quintessential story about his America, one that is full of whispered and bruised figures that are longing to retrieve an innocence of sorts. It is a novel that reprises key issues that have been discussed so far. These include marginal figures whose life seem to be unknowable to others and entirely uncared about. Time and again, Faulkner writes the pith of characters whose voices seem utterly bruised and tortured. The requiem that Faulkner seems to give his characters that he lends them, textually speaking, voices that can be heard. While they are being cut off from their society and surroundings, their pathos and internal suffering is wall transmitted to the reader. Joe Christmas, initially encountering his own status as neither black nor white, transcends himself beyond his outsider reality. But he only does so when facing that initial

racist challenge that he had faced in his childhood. His founding trauma is what generated all of the energy and passion that characterized him next. The scene at orphanage is critical because it was the catalyst that would drive him to fix this failure and dehumanizing experience that did not even recognize him as a person. In short, *Light in August* is a story of doors not of physical surfaces, but of larger doors of time and barriers. Indeed, Joe and Lena's narratives both demonstrate the reach and value of internal and external monologues. Lena opens up the book and moves throughout the story without meeting Joe Christmas. Yet, both show the way in which they move through life and into one another by dent of memory and of desire.

Ultimately, *Light in August* displays Faulkner's immense imaginative energy which is expressed in the dual universe he has created for Lena Grove and Joe Christmas. In some sense, this juxtaposition of a graceful and tormented characters articulates his deep American side. Indeed, *Light in August's* themes tell its readers something about the vast historical chronicle that Faulkner is trying to map out. It is a chronicle that overflows in its interlocking stories of families that are set against the terrible racial and political history background of the American South. Faulkner's Light in August is part of Faulkner's investigation which aims at dissecting the South as he knows it. More specifically, there is a sense of illness and decay across Faulkner's South. In his work, the South is the only region of the country where the American dream and innocence do not appear to be attainable. His native country has always been defined by conflict and defeat. The world and ideals of the South are disintegrating, forcing its residents to adapt to appalling. In other words, they are experiencing the painful lessons of sacrifice and rebuilding.

# CHAPTER V:

# Nihilism in Faulkner's Sanctuary

This fifth and last chapter of this research work deals with William Faulkner's *Sanctuary*. Even though *Sanctuary* was published before *Light in August*, it has been left last in the present study. The reason for this is that Sanctuary is a distinct work in Faulkner's body of work. Faulkner himself has stated on numerous occasions, as it shall be seen in the first section devoted to the novel's form, that has aimed this novel to be a bestseller. In so doing, *Sanctuary* loses some of Faulkner's cornerstone features. In this light, this present study has kept *Sanctuary* last in order to differentiate it fully from the three previous novels that have been discussed so far. Its structure, which departs from Faulkner's known fragmentariness, is argued to be Apollonian. Indeed, the relative ease with which readers experience this novel is linked to Apollonian elements of beauty and clarity. The chapter then moves on to discuss the story's thematic dimensions. It is argued that Horace Benbow, filled with Apollonian traits of justice and harmony, faces as a standalone figure the Dionysian society that surrounds him, and which is characterized by important flows of hedonism and nihilism.

## 1. *Sanctuary*: Parting Ways with the Dionysian Narrative Formula

William Faulkner's sixth novel, *Sanctuary*, marks a new trajectory for the American novelist. In a rather scathing introduction to his book, Faulkner writes: "to me it is a cheap idea, because it was deliberately conceived to make money." (321). This introduction, written in 1932, added to the already "scandalous" reputation of the novel. (Canfield 2). This declaration has often been taken at face value. It is not uncommon to find many works that discredit and relegate Faulkner's sixth novel use this notorious quote. Noel Polk, Andrei Bleikasten, and more recent scholars such as Philip Weinstein and Arnold Weinstein, have bothered to dispute and contextualize Faulkner's confession. Sanctuary, to be sure, has a lot more to offer than a soap drama.

> 'Faulkner's narratives, particular the more involute ones, are known for their ability to problematize their own structures and movements, and it is through such problematics that we may work toward concrete humanity that escapes and exceeds the contours of narrative and of character… Sanctuary confronts us with suffering of the other and with various kinds of violence done to the other (DeShong 1).

As for André Bleikasten, he argues that the notorious introduction ought to be read as a "mischievous provocation" on Faulkner's part. (213)/ Be that as it may, it is known today that Faulkner did indeed revise the first manuscript of *Sanctuary.* The "cheap idea" as he conceives it lies in the pages of the unpublished first version. Years later, in 1955, he reconsiders his famous introduction. "The one you read was the second version… I did everything possible to make it as honest and as moving and to have as much significance as I could put into it." (334). *Sanctuary*, then, is anything but an obvious "potboiler" (Bassett 93). it is sometimes reputed to be, and deserves as equal of a literary scrutiny.

As published in its final manuscript, *Sanctuary* is Faulkner's most straightforward narrative. Its initial draft, however, told a different story. In line with Faulkner's infamous disjointed style, there were many shifts in time and perspectives. The final manuscript, however, gives a rather linear progression of the story, and it coalesces the different points of view and perspectives through a third perspective narrator. Faulkner's decision to restructure his novel would be a sound decision. Though the initial manuscript has its writer's trademark, it lacks the "internal necessity" (Kinnry 121). that his previous works have. As André Bleikasten notes, the original *Sanctuary* is "carelessly cobbled together," (236). which makes it nearly unreadable. Consequently, *Sanctuary*'s rearranged narrative

sequences are more chronological and unfold at a slower pace. In the progression of Faulkner's prose, *Sanctuary* represents a new path taken. His sixth novel is among his fewest works to have an exclusively Apollonian structure. It stands as a "new fictional strategy deployed." (Toles 120). Faulkner is, at this point in his career, deeply convinced that there needs to be some change for him as an writer, and that it is "out of the question" (Bleikasten 236). to do again what he already has done before.

What would it take for Faulkner to 'make it new'? Doing so requires him to come up with a new subversive subject, a relatively conventional writing technique, an incorporation of a more linear narrative structure, and "an adoption of a more mass-oriented mode of fiction." (Toles 121). Indeed, out of all novels examined in this research work, *Sanctuary* is by far the most unapologetically melodramatic. Horrific situations, criminal violence that involves rape and murder, theatrical escape attempts – all of these contribute to the melodrama of *Sanctuary*. Despite its "mass-oriented" appeal the novel succeeds to transcend the generic restraints within which it is expected to work. Faulkner takes it upon himself to take a genre of popular fiction and use its tricks and thrills to serve his own purposes. The overemphasized gaudy tale of sex and violence aims to appeal to the readers' fantasies surrounding their most "primitive fears and desires." (Adamowski 33). Yet, the novel exhibits a sense of outrage and derision hardly ever found in popular fiction. "Formulaic melodrama" as Bleikasten explains "is black and white." (237). *Sanctuary*, he continues, "is black down to its humor." Indeed, there seems to be no innocent glimmer of hope to redeem the corruption the novel exhibits, no virtues to be rewarded. The faceoff between good and evil seems here to take a Sophoclean formula whereby every character in the story is doomed to end up unhinged.

Dooming his characters to an unhinged state, Faulkner displays an unfettered excess of harshness that no other work of his comes near. *Sanctuary* also exhibits a "furious impatience" (Canfield 5). which leads to a limitation and hardening of its writer's novelistic manner. In turn, these lead the novel to have some visible reductions. The panopticism and multiplicity of *The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying* and *Light in August* give way to a single narrative voice, a single eye "exorbited by horror or revulsed with disgust." (Bleikasten 238). The characters likewise feel flattened and lack inner lives and an inner consciousness. Instead, they are stylized in a sensationalized and caricatural way. Time in this novel flows smoothly and the plotline is a succession of highly dense moments. Faulkner's distortion of space, noted in his previous works, is quasi inexistent in *Sanctuary.* To be sure, most readers would feel grateful to get some respite. But it must be said that an exclusively Apollonian structure feels strange and almost unnatural in *Sanctuary*. Perhaps it is due to its heavy revision, but it is undeniable that the structure feels foreign to Faulkner's usual formula. The usual Dionysian structure, as frenzied and as confusing as it is, gives Faulkner's other works depths and qualities that *Sanctuary* does lack. Though the themes themselves are certainly as intricate and as complex, the layers by which the reader discovers them are not nearly as intricate.

Nonetheless, Faulkner's new simplified approach in which he concentrates and compresses effects evokes the "dream mechanisms" that Nietzsche signals in his dichotomy of the Apollonian and Dionysian. In his *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche talks at length about the images individuals experience in their respective dreams. Though Nietzsche reduces dreams to the Apollonian state, it is best seen as a general picture of what his dichotomy stands for. Indeed, dreams are, to say the least, very intense. They leave the dreamers with deep and raw sensations. In this light, this reshuffled and reworked

narrative structure seems undoubtedly close to dream patterns. Trying to emulate the intensity of dreams, Faulkner tries to assail his readers with a dark tale of evil.

## 2. The Agonistic Characterization of Horace Benbow in *Sanctuary*

Nearly all of Faulkner's novels nourish the sense of anxiety as they deal with restless struggle, outrage and rejection. This sense of *agon* that he instills in his characters, one must emphasize again, is detrimental to how Faulkner conceptualizes his tragedy. To live, Nietzsche argues, is to accept life – with all its joys and pains. In this light, Horace's *agon* is perhaps the one that readers sympathize the most with. "The Apollonian in *Sanctuary* is best imaged in Horace, with his Oxford education, his books, his constant appeal to justice and civilization. He is what Nietzsche describes as "a Socratic man, he who rationalizes, systemizes…" (Canfield 12). Indeed, Horace is the only character that seems like a goodhearted person endowed with a pure will to enforce justice. From the get go, Benbow starts out as an Apollonian character who cherishes values such as law and order. As mentioned earlier, however, Faulkner instills every evil, every ink of corruption imaginable to the remainder of the characters. In this sense, one must ponder whether Benbow's Apollonian currents can withstand the frenzy and chaos of *Sanctuary's* Dionysian "underworld."

Benbow's opening confrontation with Popeye already presents the dichotomy of good versus evil. Every detail given to Popeye is in sharp contrast with Benbow's characterization. Benbow is a "tall" man whereas Popeye is described being "undersized." (1). Benbow wears no hat while his counterpart wears a "straw hat." (1). The latter's hands "emerge out" of his "coat" whereas Popeye's remain hidden. Benbow's trousers are

seemingly clean while Popeye's are "caked with mud." (1). Popeye's demeanor, his silence, his gaze, his presence "hidden and secret yet nearby" – all of these features make up the ominous aura that emerges out of him. (3). Benbow, on the other hand, an "intellectual" with a book inside his coat, is only by the spring to enjoy the stillness it provides and drink some of its water. Evidently, there is a calmness and nonthreatening aura attached to one character, and a menacing quality to the other. This confrontation's symbolism is finally confirmed when one learns the identity of the two figures. Benbow is a lawyer, and Popeye a vicious criminal. "Sanctuary," Arthur Kinney observes, juxtaposes the worlds of [the South]; as they are embodied by Popeye and Horace Benbow." (109). The dichotomy is thus complete: good versus evil, Apollonian need for law and order versus Dionysian frenzy and chaos.

There is seemingly nothing to draw them or to hold them there, yet Faulkner frames it in such a way that they remain two hours staring at each other. By virtue of these gazes, Faulkner is foretelling the reader that something out of these exchanged glances is fated to happen in the near future. Indeed, this confrontation is but the first instance that challenges Benbow's Apollonian world. Initially, Benbow starts out as a character that despises evil, and is willing to fight its forces. Yet, the novel "asks us in what ways Popeye and Horace are doubles and in what way their confrontation serves as an introductory emblem passage to the novel." (109). Kinney's question raises valid concerns, because Faulkner is clearly interested in seeing how much of Benbow's integrity and sense of justice and naïve innocence can remain. His innocence is so striking in *Sanctuary's* rotten society, that Lee Goodwin mockingly asks him "what sort of men have you lived with all your life… in a nursery?" (192). Seeing the shady business that takes place at Goodwin's

place, Benbow's sensibilities are utterly shocked. The criminal activities perspiring there leave him perplexed, challenging once more his sense of lawfulness. In light of the general mayhem taking place in *Sanctuar*y, his trust and faith in law and justice becomes almost absurd and grotesque to the reader. Benbow's "pathetically shallow" (Kinney 110). thinking is evident when he assures Goodwin, now his client, that his will win the case because there is "law, justice, civilization." The moment is once more echoed when a day before the trial he expresses similar sentiments. Conversing with Goodwin's wife, Ruby, he tells her "not to wory… God…is a gentleman. Don't you know that?" (192)/ Showing an absolute faith in the judicial system and God's justice, Benbow's characterization highlights once more his faith in Apollonian structure, and that which Nietzsche discards as the "otherworldly." Completely oblivious to the reality surrounding him, Benbow harbors a naïve hope of defeating an evil which he does not take full measure of.

The extent of evil in Sanctuary, however one may be oblivious to it, is nonetheless impossible to ignore indefinitely. Benbow does ultimately come to the conclusion that the forces of evil are neither accidental nor ephemeral. Developing a new insight near the end of the book, Benbow realizes that "perhaps it is upon the instant that we realise, admit, that there is a logical pattern to evil, that we die." (152). Gradually, the unhinging pattern that which is noticeable in so many other of Faulkner's characters takes place. Benbow is no different and progressively becomes unglued, losing bits and pieces of his integrity. To this regard, his confrontation with Popeye seems to act like a catalyst that kickstars his own revaluation of values. His relationship to his sister and step daughter become complex, as Faulkner gradually blurs the line between family and incestuous ties. Nonetheless, his incestuous feelings are kept in and do not transgress the state of romantic

daydreaming. This is not due to his ethics overcoming the predicament, but because he knows "incest can only be fantasized and realized in the respectable society he knows." (Kinney 111). Nevertheless, Benbow's metamorphosis is now well on display. "Benbow is as much on train in Jefferson as Lee Goodwin, and, acknowledging this, Horace grows more secretive, more defensive in his actions, and more rigid (in his blind, dumb faith in justice): he grows toward Popeye's posture in the opening passage." (111).

Kinney assessment is valid, because in keeping silent about the criminal activities he has witness at the Frenchman's Bend, Benbow becomes an accomplice criminal himself, "an accessory after the fact." (111). To seal his metamorphosis, Horace accepts giving bribery to Clarence Snopes for information regarding Goodwin's trial. Popeye and Horace thus become "two sides of the same coin of inherent human evil." (Canfield 12). Indeed, these elements of Benbow's characterization display his own corruptibility. On one hand there is Popeye who aggressively carries out evil acts, and on the other hand there is the corruptible Horace who compromises with evil because of his inability to avert it. It can thus be said that the Apollonian in Horace does not withstand the pressure that besieges him. In showing the likeness of Horace and Popeye, Faulkner's *Sanctuary* becomes a close examination of the reaches of human evil. Horace thus represents "the Apollonian gone awry." (Canfield 12).

### 3. The Tragic Dionysian in Temple Drake

By virtue of the same Nietzschean dichotomy, James Canfield locates the Dionysian in the novel's "deafening cicadas… the withing honeysuckle… the force that drives relentlessly through Temple." (12). This Dionysian driving force must be look at more thoroughly.

Though different than Popeye's force, Temple is the second Dionysian counterpart to Horace. In a sordid passage that shows her thought processes during her rape, it is made known to the reader that Temple is "thinking of the old man, thinking that this is what he lives in, as tho it were a home, a room: then she couldn't see either." (67). As Canfield further explains, the reference for "this" is "at once her womb and the cosmos itself – a Dionysian image of the blind, pulsating anonymity and mindless of the life force… constantly creating, finds satisfaction the turbulent flux of appearances." (12). This life force has not been an inanimate one that has been brought to life by her rape. Instead, it has been in motion well before.

The psychological chaos within Temple can be first noted in one of the nightclubs she hangs out at. At this particular juncture, one must remember Nietzsche's assertion that "music and tragic myth are equally expressions of the Dionysian capacity of a people, and they are inseparable." (144). Inside the nightclub, Temple's being is embraced by the "music beat, sultry and evocative, filled with movement of feet, the voluptuous hysteria of muscles warming the scent of flesh, of the blood. (160). Something ominous and lewd is playing out here. The sensuality of the music that induces a Dionysian state frightens Temple as she screams "Oh God; oh God, she said, her lips scarce moving." (160). Despite her efforts to resist and leave the place, she succumbs to the Dionysian within and remains on the dancefloor. Popeye, the very man who rapes her, turns into her dance partner in one swift motion. This sequence once more signals how music and myth "both transfigure a region in whose joyous chords dissonance as well as the terrible image of the world [and] both justify the existence of even the "worst world." (Nietzsche 144). Whatever suffering and abuse she has had at the hands of Popeye, it now all fuses within their dance and

rhythm together. The Dionysian, Nietzsche explains, elevates the individual to a higher collective by means of "singing and dancing." (44). In an orgiastic sequence where she elevates herself to the nightclub's collective, Temple "feels the dancers, the music swirling slowly about her in a bright myriad wave." (Faulkner 164). Her body, as Bleikasten explains, ultimately "drifts away from the self." (19).

Ultimately, Temple ends up as utterly drunk at the night club. The Dionysian "stirrings" awaken best, Nietzsche believes, "under the influence of the narcotic draught… pervaded by lust for life." (48). Alcoholism and the state intoxication are two recurrent themes in *Sanctuary*. Temple's own adventure at the nightclub was not her first bout with alcohol. Early in the novel, when she attends a baseball game, her "stirrings" awaken again.

> She watched hands: a brown one in white sleeve, a soiled white one beneath a dirty cuff, setting bottles on the table. She had a glass in her hand. She drank, gulping… The music started… She had another drink. They danced again. When the music ceased she had another drink. When she set the glass down she realized that she was drunk. She believed that she had been drunk for some time. (164)

This passage shows Temple's belated condition whereby she has to catch up with herself. Her awareness, like that of Joe Christmas's, follows rather than leads. Temple's intoxicated state reveals the "outpouring of primal pleasure and delight." Oblivious to the fact, Temple is now reveling in the Dionysian state that is "bent on expressing itself." (60). Her awareness, which experiences a lag effect, is thus "acted upon." The "lust for life" is

felt “going over her in wave after wave, involved with the music and the smell of her own flesh.” (Faulkner 164). Her adventure at the nightclub can thus be said to be her most explicit Dionysian display.

> The music was playing. She moved up the corridor, staggering a little. She thought she was leaning against the wall, when she found that she was dancing again; then she was dancing with two men at once; then she found that she was not dancing but that she was moving toward the door between the man with the chewing gum and the other with the buttoned coat. (166)

In a quasi-orgiastic state, Temple is “unleashing the most savage natural instincts, including even that horrible mixture of sensuality and cruelty.” (50). She has thus become one with Dionysus. She cares not that she is dancing with one man to another, because the orgasmic pleasure it provides her with erodes any kind of *moral a priori.* As Thankful Sullivan concludes, Temple “is no longer an artist;” rather, she has become the work of art: all nature’s artistic power reveals itself here, amidst shivers of intoxication, to the highest, most blissful satisfaction of the primordial unity.” (10).

Temple Drake crystallizes Nietzsche’s liberation and celebration from the strictures of life. In the nightclub, she is transcending to her Dionysian state. She is demonstrating what the Ancient Greeks had labelled “enthousiasmos.” In its original conception, enthusiasm meant to be possessed by something, akin to the way Temple is being possessed by her Dionysian fervor. She is indeed abandoning and stepping outside of herself. She has left enough room for Dionysius to step in her estate. She is also, as expressed earlier, in an

ecstatic and orgiastic state. Ecstasy, as Nietzsche understands it, is not simply being in a swoon, but is it to be removed from oneself. It is akin to a death experience. Ecstacy – it is not only being in a swoon, but it is to be removed from oneself. It is akin to a death experience whereby the logic is that one must die to be reborn.

## 4. Bleak Determinism in *Sanctuary*

In *Sanctuary*, Faulkner deposits the same deterministic view one finds in *Light in August* whereby he subjects his characters to forces that are beyond their control. Taken to new extremes, however, Temple Drake's lack of free will presents a bleaker and starker vision of a fate that cannot be redeemed. To this regard, the opening scene of this book is a telltale sequence that foreshadows the ominous fates awaiting some characters. On the one hand, there is Horace, the Apollonian character that symbolizes order and justice; and on the other hand, there is Popeye, the Dionysian character that wreaks havoc and frenzy. Their opening confrontation makes for an eerie sequence. In a dire and haunting atmosphere that is not uncommon to the thriller genre, Faulkner sets the ominous deterministic tone. Indeed, the novel starts with a scene "dominated by gazes and silence." (Weinstein 5). The reader, privy to this moment thanks to the panoramic third voice perspective, already senses a feeling of menace and malaise. "From beyond the screen of bushes which surrounded the spring, Popeye watched the man drinking." (3). Popeye, the Dionysian force of this text, is present right from the start. He is "hidden and secret yet nearby." (3). Popeye is already described in mysterious and menacing terms. Moreover, Faulkner introduces his piercing gaze that watches over Horace who is presently drinking water from a spring that separates them as an "eternal-like" type of vision. (Adamowski 36).

Indeed, Popeye is there as if he had always been present, an ambushed onlooker, concealed and impregnable, patiently waiting for his next victim. Terrifying Horace with Popeye's gaze, Faulkner already puts the antagonist in a position of power. Horace who on the other hand is vulnerable and exposed is in a position of weakness. The characterization of both figures could hardly be more sharply differentiated. Whereas Horace as simply "the other man" (Faulkner 3). is yet to be given a full individuated personality, Popeye, who is named as soon as introduced in the opening paragraph of the novel, is "already entirely present." (Bleikasten 240). His ominous and menacing presence makes itself felt straightaway through the "double privilege of name and gaze." (240). Thus Horace is already peering into the other side, leading one to sense that something is going to happen to him.

Temple Drake, whom the story revolves around, is also prey to an ominous fate. The issue of free will and whether individuals have any measure of choice is further cemented in her characterization. Her early scenes foretell her inability or illusory nature to make decisions. In a sequence where she is thinking about her running away from her household, Faulkner intrudes this force that seems to pull her right in. "In the hall she whirled and ran. She ran right off the porch, into the weeds and sped on. She ran to the road and down…then without a break she whirled and ran back to the house and sprang onto the porch and crouched against the door." (34). Her own agency seems to be entirely discarded, there is no mention of fear or volitional decision-making. Instead, she is "whirled" back into the house, as if being "flung into this choice." (Williams 19). In another scene that follows an accident she has had, Faulkner writes that "she saw the tree blocking the road, but she only braced herself anew. It seemed to her to be the logical and disastrous end to the train of circumstance in which she had become involved." (26). Once

more, the specific language Faulkner uses to describe her predicament is very telling. The "train of circumstance" that surrounds her symbolizes the train of "choices that have already been made." (Williams 11). It is the same fatalism Faulkner lends to Joe Christmas's toothpaste scene in *Light in August*; that everything has been predetermined and fated to follow a certain course of action. Temple's life, in other words, is in a collision with fate. Faulkner writes her character showing someone who has for her entire life avoided choices. Her father is a judge, and her brothers are lawyers. Temple has thus been living in a protective web where other people have been making choices for her. It is then worth asking: what could possibly be more unvolitional than rape? In undoubtedly her most unfortunate turn of events, Temple's rape signals her cruelest lack of choice.

> She snatched it [her hand] up with a wailing shriek, clapping it against her mouth, and turned and ran toward the door. The woman caught her arm . . . and Temple sprang back into the kitchen. . . . "Let go," she whispered, "let go! Let go!"… She sprang from the porch and ran toward the barn . . . Then suddenly she ran upside down in a rushing interval; she could see her legs still running in space, and she struck lightly and solidly on her back and lay still . . . Her hand moved in the substance in which she lay, then she remembered the rat . . . Her whole body surged in an involuted spurning movement . . . so that she flung her hands out and caught herself upright . . . her face not twelve inches from the cross beam on which the rat crouched… She fell toward the opposite corner, on her face in the hulls and a few scattered corn-cobs gnawed bone-clean . . . Then she got to

her feet and sprang at the door . . . rasping at the planks with her bare hands. (64).

The entire passage renders Temple's rape which always remains implicit rather than explicit. None of the items Faulkner writes into this passage can seem to accommodate contact with Temple's skin: kitchen and barn doors, the hand of the woman, her body's own legs and hands, and the detrimental corncobs. These items seem bound to go haywire at any moment, capable of "rasping her." Aligned with the rat, these entities seem to be "full of enmity." (Williams 12). To make matters more nightmarish, the rat is only a few inches away from Temple's face and does not miss the opportunity to leap against her. Entirely prey to the elements surrounding her, Temple can escape nothing that enters her space. *Sanctuary's* deterministic view lodges further in passages such as this. What is being done to Temple in the dark corners of Frenchman's Bend is the culmination of events that seemed to fate her story into the violent world of rape. Layers after layers, the protective "sanctuaries" that protect her body and identity are taken away. Neither her body nor her psychological state can withstand the pressure. "My father's a judge," (36). she cries, as she seeks to maintain her composure or visualize her way back into security. But it is evident that her web of safety has been ripped apart. Her fate gets from bad to worse as she becomes a prostitute in one of Memphis's brothels, signaling how her unvolitional rape has initiated her into the "underworld." (Faulkner 164).

Faulkner's experimentation in seeing how much his characters can bear is akin to what he does in *As I Lay Dying*. He thus submits Temple Drake to all the horrific assault he could imagine for her. While he uses biblical imagery of flood and fire for the former novel, it is the "underworld" of Frenchman's Bend and the town of Memphis that amplify

Temple's *agon*. One of the purposes of this Greek-like succession of infortunes is to discover what the individual will become out of it. In a detached manner, Faulkner experiments with his characters, pushing them "past the conditions that sustain their coherence, making them stumble out of their familiar identity." (Canfield 4). Temple thus finds herself entirely helpless against the predicaments that besiege her. Everything that happens to her seem to challenge the privileges of the protected world she is accustomed to. In this light, all sanctuaries of hers becomes violated, doomed to have their supports destroyed and lead to an inevitable insanity.

> Then I said That wont do. I ought to be a man. So I was an old man, with a long white beard, and then the little black man got littler and littler and I was saying Now. You see now. I'm a man now. Then I thought about being a man, and as soon as I thought it, it happened. It made a kind of plopping sound, like blowing a little rubber tube wrong-side outward. It felt cold, like the inside of your mouth when you hold it open. I could feel it, and I lay right still to keep from laughing about how surprised he was going to be. I could feel the jerking going on inside my knickers ahead of his hand and me lying there trying not to laugh about how surprised and mad he was going to be in about a minute. (150)

Temple's *agon* is further textualized in this passage. Faulkner breaks away from the third person perspective to let Temple speak her suffering. Her tormented monologue reveals the assault and agony she is undergoing. Every material item that has assaulted her takes a matter of great importance: the violated body, the corncob she has been raped with, and

the "jerking flesh." In a disturbing way, she "reconfigures" the whole affair. (Williams 5). That is, her defense mechanisms are re-narrating the story to allow her to survive. This is reminiscent of Quentin fantasizing in *The Sound and the Fury* to be Dalton Ames's mother and withdrawing from sexual intercourse to kill Ames before he has existed. The trauma speaks for itself, there is a deep longing for both Temple and Quentin to erase events they are utterly helpless against. Instead, they both find themselves fantasizing impossible scenarios. "Faulkner dwells less on what is done to Temple than on what she frantically does with what is done to her." (Bleikasten 244). Faced with the impossibility to escape Popeye, her undoing becomes mental and psychological by choosing to create new ways of escapism; a form "psychic fantasy." (244). Indeed, the outrage Temple feels translates itself into a language of fantasy constructed by her defense mechanism. In a state of shock and horror, her very core breaks and psyche finds ways that allow her to imagine herself as a man. This is Temple's utterance of the *agon* she is undergoing, a kind so painful that only humans on are on the very edge are capable of feeling. Faulkner's aim is to show the disorder and frenzy that lie beyond the fictiveness of stability. Providing a deeply disturbing picture of identity, he undoes the protective sanctuaries and forces that individuals are attached to.

Temple's own undoing can also be seen in the sense of rupture Faulkner gives to her reactions. After having Temple experiencing a car accident, Faulkner writes "still running her bones turned to water and she fell flat on her face, still running." (40). Or when feeling entrapped in Ruby's kitchen, she has been "feeling her lungs emptying long after all the air was expelled." (54). Or when she stands and "watched herself run out of her body." (64). In each of these descriptions, there is a notable sense of rupture, a delay of

consciousness and collapse of perception. There is, in other words, an entire "loss of coordination and control." (Bleikasten 245). Temple's helplessness is once more evident as she is losing all hold of her own agency. Consequently, she turns to her fantasizing act and hallucinates "feelings into facts" (245). in loose hope of keeping composure against these events. Whatever she does, however, she always remains "out of phase with the present moment." (Williams 10).

This inherent sense of inability to get beyond such helplessness is further instilled in the novel's forces of evil. Indeed, there is a prevalent pattern in *Sanctuary* whereby evil overcomes and overthrows everything it rivals. Everything succumbs to its sweep as nothing can seemingly withstand its sheer violent and corrupting forces. Horace Benbow, who represents the closest thing to a character endowed with integrity, symbolizes the fatalism Faulkner instills in *Sanctuary*. For for all his respectable attempts, Benbow "cannot overcome the phalanx of corrupt and selfish people," because "evil inheres in virtually everyone he must confront." (Parini 134). Consequently, Sanctuary's dark determinism unfolds because there is no justice to be had in Faulkner's world. The trial of Lee Goodwin is a sideshow as the jury gives its verdict in less than eight minutes. The Southern code of honor endowed with a sense of vigilante justice soon takes over as Lee Goodwin is soon burned to death by an angry mob waiting outside of the court. Faulkner then writes how Horace "couldn't hear the man who had got burned screaming." (202). Neither could he "hear the fire, though it still swirled upward and unabated, as though it were living upon itself." (202). A fire that is "soundless… a voice of fury like in a dream, roaring silently out of a peaceful void." (202). Like the fire's, Lee Goodwin's voice of innocence remains soundless and perishes to the furious voice of the mob that has burned

him alive. He thus has more than any other character in this book succumbed to Faulkner's bleak determinism.

## 5. Nietzsche, Nihilism and Faulkner's *Sanctuary*

Faulkner presents in *Sanctuary* a grim picture of the society it depicts. By fits and starts, nearly every turn of the story paints a collapse of morals and ethical values. Faulkner thus delivers Nietzschean views on how Christian morals are falling apart, leading to an inevitable void where evil reigns supreme. To understand the nihilistic undercurrents of *Sanctuary*, however, one must take a look at Nietzsche's basic thoughts on nihilism. Following his critique on art in his *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche turned his interest to the human condition. The bulk of his philosophy in an insistent critique of the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Nietzsche ascribes a state of hollowness to modernity. He believes that European society has taken on false values, and this falsehood has itself taken a guise of normalcy. This sense of normalcy, he believes, is one of the greatest dangers to mankind and one of the prime motors to the inauthentic life that he diagnoses. In a similar fashion, Faulkner diagnoses a deep malaise in Southern society, one which appears utterly immoral and decadent in *Sanctuary*. To understand the nihilism that is playing out in the novel, however, one must first examine Nietzsche's four propositions on the nihilism that looms over Western civilization.

> First proposition: the grounds upon which 'this' world has been designated as apparent establish rather its reality – another kind of reality is absolutely indemonstrable. (38)

Nietzsche argues in his first proposition that as soon as an individual considers his or her senses to be deceptive or feeble, they immediately turn towards another kind of reality. This unstated reality is, of course, spiritual and religious. Because it pertains to a matter of faith, Nietzsche argues that it is not even "demonstrable."

> Second proposition: The characteristics of which have assigned to the 'real being' of things are the characteristics of non-being, of nothingness – the 'real' world has been constructed out of the contradiction to the actual world. (38)

When individuals characterize the other reality as transcendent, eternal and divine, Nietzsche argues that they are essentially fueling futile aspirations. His argument rests on the belief that individuals are characterizing something imagined out of thin air. Mankind is consequently valuing not something divine, but "nothingness." In simple terms, humans are heading towards the nihilism they created themselves.

> Third proposition:To talk about another world than this is quite pointless, providing that an instinct for slandering, disparaging and accusing life is not within us… (38)

Nietzsche argues that this belief in the next world, also called the afterlife, is the primary cause why modern Western civilization keeps disparaging into an inauthentic life. It is "pointless," he argues, because individuals are inventing a world that does not and cannot exist. This world, he argues, has only been created to comfort their servitude in this life.

> Fourth proposition: To divide the world into a 'real' and an 'apparent' world, whether in the manner of christianity or in the manner of kant is only a suggestion of decadence – a symptom of declining life. (39)

The human desire to find a greater reality and locate value, significance and eminence outside real life and the world that individuals inhabit is simply irrational and "decadent." Once more, he stresses his argument that there is no evidence of the existence of a reality that is awaiting humans. Moreover, Nietzsche believes that this belief in a metaphysical world is a cowardly way of not taking responsibility of who we are. To believe in an afterlife is to repudiate oneself and one's life – thereby succumbing to a profound and a dangerous nihilism.

There is undoubtedly a Darwinist echo in Nietzsche's arguments, because he views humans as animals first. Consequently, when animals move into the religious realm they are essentially denying their naturalness. Conversely, it is by being natural that one best recovers from one's unnaturalness and one's spirituality. Once more, for Nietzsche, one must recover from the spiritual realm because thinking in religious terms is deprecating. Is man "only God's mistake or God only man's mistake?" he tasks. Indeed, Nietzsche's construct of nihilism is a deep display of his own rejection against Western religious traditions. Religion, as Nietzsche views it, is a retreat from reality. Furthermore, Nietzsche argues that there is no virtue in positing a god in this life, because of the problem of evil. "After all, if there's a god, then the problem of evil is completely unavoidable. Nietzsche is pointing out that we are terribly unperfect, and we thus have to blame our creator for that

since he, on grounds of religion, is omnipotent." (Garfield 100). Nietzsche is undoubtedly raising an interesting problem here, and it shall be seen how Horace Benbow's vision - towards an omnipotent god that can do no wrong – will be called into question by Faulkner.

> All that philosophers have handled for millennia has been conceptual mummies; nothing actual has escaped from their hands alive. They kill, they stuff, when they worship, these conceptual idolaters – they become a mortal danger to everything when they worship. These senses, which are so immoral as well, it is they which deceive us about the real world. Moral: escape from sense-deception, from becoming, from history…And away, above all, with the body, that pitiable idée fixe of the senses! infected with every error of logic there is, refuted, impossible even, notwithstanding it is impudent enough to behave as if it actually existed!'…

Nietzsche continues to stress how Western society keeps on focusing on dead ideas that should have been left long ago. The endless hope and belief in faith, progress, and even science and reason have become a nuisance. In turn, Westerns have shaped their own idolatry towards lofty and unattainable ideals. This idolatry, he thinks; leads to deprecating our senses, our passions, and the real world in favor for abstract ideas and principles. Life consequently loses all its values because it has become hollow. This too, it shall be demonstrated in Faulkner's Sanctuary, in on full display. Horace's unshaking belief in the judicial system to do what is right will be profoundly challenged. Subsequently, the disillusionment that marks his character towards the end of the book signals the further hollowness that is to come.

One of his main concerns revolve around the decline of morals of his contemporary society and the resulting "meaninglessness of life." (Abel 5). Consequently, society has become, he thinks, "decadent." (Portable Nietzsche 644). The decadency of a society needs to be understood in light of the system that previously upheld any given values. Paraphrasing Nietzsche, John B. Foster explains that "a culture is decadent so long as it offers a system of values that can shape experience to some extent, even though its capacity to affirm life and directly has slipped to a marked degree or has never existed." (85). Nihilism, Foster continues to explain, is the logical occurrence that takes place when the system that provides meaning or values collapses. If this happens, as Nietzsche is certain it has by the time he penned his ideas, people are doomed to "confront the essential chaos of the universe from which all cultural meaning has disappeared, and they experience a total loss of coherence." (85). A first parallel that can be made with *Sanctuary* is Faulkner's description of the hideout called Old Frenchman's place:

> It was a landmark, known as the Old Frenchman place, built before the Civil War; a plantation house set in the middle of a tract of land; of cotton fields and gardens and lawns long since gone back to jungle, which the people of the neighborhood had been pulling down piecemeal for firewood for fifty years or digging with secret and sporadic optimism for the gold which the builder was reputed to have buried somewhere about the place when Grant came through the county on his Vicksburg campaign. (6)

In denoting the crumbling state of the manor, Faulkner is also symbolizing the place as "the decline of the Old South, pulling a vast quantity of history in its rhetorical sweep."

(Parini 134). For Nietzsche, the system that has currently collapsed is evidently the Jude-Christian one, and modern society is failing to recognize its fall. The cheerful notion of progress promoted by religious forces that supposedly lead towards a perfect afterlife is, in Nietzsche's view, nothing but a long heralded myth. Instead, the Judeo-Christian tradition is a destructive mechanism that comes at the expanse of real creation. And whenever human creativity is disregarded, Nietzsche argues, then the specter of nihilism looms large. The rationalism of the Enlightenment and the slave-master morality of the Judeo-Christian tradition have come together and made humans forget what had truly and deeply moved them. By succumbing to these past traditions, Nietzsche claims that humans had lost the art of living authentically, and have been accustomed to live in servitude. Christianity, especially, has set a limit on human progress and a limit on human emotions. Inevitably, this would lead towards a state of nihilism in modern society that would be nothing short of ravaging whereby all values are called into question.

*Sanctuary*, in this light, is comprised of the same nihilistic specter that haunts the modern Southern society. In Faulkner's dark tale, one finds "the highest values devalue themselves." (Nietzsche 43). In a world in which rape and murder are sanctified, "nihilism has taken over." (Solomon 64). Indeed, this is precisely the nihilistic proposition behind *Sanctuary*. Popeye, the character symbolizing malefic evil, comes out almost as a winner in this story. The girl he rapes, Temple, chooses not to justify against him but instead convicts an innocent man who is then killed unjustly. He also does not answer to the murders he has committed. What do these prospects leave the reader with? Such demise must be analyzed in light of Nietzsche's religious and moral assumptions. For one thing, it needs to be clarified that Nietzsche is neither amoral nor nihilistic. Instead, he attacks

the Judeo-Christian system as one that strips one's true values away. For the German philosopher, there is without a doubt an assertion of values, and if there is one to be absolute, it is that of life itself. Mere than an evolutionary proposition or a matter of survival, Nietzsche is depositing a critique against what he calls "the otherworldly." (139). For Nietzsche, to simply wait for an afterlife to rectify the flaws and atrocities of the living world is in itself a nihilistic belief. Indeed, as early as his *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche asserts that "only as an aesthetic phenomenon is the world justified." (3). Running against the many prevalent religious notions of his time, this leads Nietzsche to declare the collapse of God. Much individuals that call themselves Christians are so, he thinks, out of force of habit that have adopted a "herd" behavior. (Nietzsche 149). Many so-called Christians, he notes, go on with their lives stealing, lying, and committing all kinds of crimes and still call themselves Christians. Similarly, when reading *Sanctuary* one does sense that there is a large hypocrisy of the Southern society it depicts. Drunkenness, mindless sex, theft, murder – how do these sustain Christian values?

> In *Sanctuary*, obscenity displays itself on almost every page: it is in the grotesquely frozen postures of fear, in the hysterical convulsions of anguish and lust, in the ignoble abandon of humiliated and defeated bodies, in the rigid immobility of corpses.

The obscenity that permeates *Sanctuary* is part of the more general nihilistic transgression Faulkner is trying to depict. There is a clear breach and violation of social, moral and religious laws in Faulkner's novel. To breach these laws in this story is "the act par excellence," (Bleikasten 250). to which point it becomes nothing short than a "narrative

paradigm." (250). Indeed, synthesizing *Sanctuary* would amount to depict the transgressive trend going on in its pages. There is hardly a character in this book that, at one moment or another, does not become a transgressor. The Dionysian entirely takes over. Socially speaking, social transgression manifests itself as an intrusive act. Boundaries of what may be considered good and evil are broken and any moral compass is breached. Thus, the male citizens of Jefferson "know well where to buy the bootleg whiskey and where to gratify their sexual needs." (Parini 135). Places such as the Goodwin hideout (in which alcohol is stocked and sold illegally,) the Memphis brothel where Temple becomes a member prostitute, would not be well active if it were not for their customers. These places, in other words, provide their clients with the commodities which "official morality disapproves." (135).

The utter lack of morality in this novel is further displayed in the other elements of violence it makes use of. To this regard, one of the most disturbing scenes involves a black woman whose throat is being cut with a razor. Her "whole head" has been "tossing further and further backward from the bloody regurgitation of her bubbling throat." (118). Slit throat, gushing and bloody would – this is but one of the ghastly scenes present in this novel. This primal and gruesome scene could serve as a metaphor for the immorality of a society that allows deeds such as this. Like the mutilated body, the society's morality is displaced and dislocated. This frantic act, the reader learns, is neither surprising nor a one-time incident. Faulkner is thus showing "the fright and violence of a society that volatilely indulges itself in violence." (118). In accordance with Nietzsche's views on nihilism, *Sanctuary* displays a lack of willpower and a lawful horizon that the society's moral compass shows no longer. Instead, one is left with the prospect that the individual will is

tainted, and that "action does not originate in the mind, it just registers in it." (Bleikasten 251). Consequently, every moral good and restraint are threatened with "obliteration at any moment." (Toles 4).

This ominous sensation that everything is prey to "obliteration" is indeed recurrent in *Sanctuary*. The treatment women find in this novel is rather telling on how the novel's title is rather ironic, because the seemingly protective sanctuaries in this novel are just as threatened with distortion. Fighting evil in *Sanctuary* nearly amounts to becoming evil. It has been already noted, in the discussion pertaining to *The Sound in the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*, how the South has a strong sense of vigilante justice. Caddy and Dewel dell are supposed to be protected by their brothers by preserving their chastity intact. It has also been noted how that mission can be self-destructive and how it can reveal selfish motives behind it. Women, in *Sanctuary*, also serve as excuses for other motives. Commenting on Goodwin's unfounded indictment, a driver in the novel exclaims: "served him right… we got to protect our girls." (204). This vigilante remark instantly turns into a gaudy implication when he continues: "might need them ourselves." (204). This is a terrifying picture of a potential use of these girls. Faulkner once more establishes Nietzsche's point that although some believers falsely wear the guise of good Samaritan people, they nonetheless use whatever means necessary to establish, not justice but to serve their "commodities."

Nietzsche's specter on the devaluation of values looms in even larger terms than sexual commodities. As Parini observes: "Everyone seems corrupt in Sanctuary." (135). There is hardly a character that is motivated by self-interest. Instead, every character is in

quest of vain accommodations. The district attorney, Eustace Graham, wants a conviction against the murder of a disabled boy named tommy only to show off his record and help his run for Congress. Horace Benbow's sister wants the murder's trial to end as soon as possible because she is ashamed her brother is affiliated to such a case. She is in fact more outraged by the fact that Goodwin (the man accused of murdering Tommy) has a partner out of wedlock than the potential murder itself. Another shady figure is Senator Clarence Snopes, who is willing to provide Horace some crucial information about the case for a hefty price, showing yet another character's corruption. Faulkner is thus implementing Nietzsche's thoughts on the state of modern society that is rotten to its core with false and hypocritical ideals. Indeed, these figures and members of the judicial system take an oath on the Bible simply to revel in an inexorable amount of corruption - displaying Nietzsche's emphasis on these valueless values.

The final symbolization on the valueless state of society lies in the book's irony that it presents in its very end. In a twist of events, Popeye is arrested for a crime he did not commit. He is hanged of course, but for the wrong killing. This once more reveals Faulkner's tendency to show a "life that is a cruel and senseless progress of fools and knaves." (Parini 135). Faulkner thus shows that there is no inviolable sanctuary, not for the honest man nor the criminal. In *Sanctuary,* Henry Seidel Canby notes in his *The School of Cruelty*, "sadism has reached its American peak." Like Nietzsche's Dionysus, Faulkner has said yes to the terrible; and nearly everyone in his novel suffers from it.

## 6. The Greek-Like Theatrical Elements of *Sanctuary*

It has been noted how Faulkner is much indebted to the twentieth-century French intellectual circle. When it comes to *Sanctuar*y, the closing statement of André Malraux's preface is perhaps the most succinct description one could lend to Faulkner's novel. "Sanctuary," he says, "is the intrusion of Greek tragedy into the detective story." (3). Showcasing the elements of Ancient Greek tragedy has been one of the aims of this research work: Quentin's suffering in *The Sound and the Fury* with all its incestuous melodrama reminiscent of *Oedipus*, *As I Lay Dying's* and its *Elektra*-like dilemma for what to do with the body, and *Light in August's* Greek-like elements of metamorphosis and regeneration. All of these have been shown to work within the Apollonian/Dionysian framework. *Sanctuary*, too, has something of a Greek tragedy. Until now, the tragic dimensions of *Sanctuary* have been shown in terms of its deterministic and fatalistic undercurrents that display "a sense of irreparable destiny." (Canfield 12). The analysis must now turn to the theatrical dimensions of that revolve around Temple Drake. Canfield's further reading on Temple's characterization is particularly relevant:

> The Dionysiac is imaged throughout the novel as the deafening cicadas or the writhing honeysuckle or the stifling wisteria or especially the "wild and waxlike bleeding" of the grape blossoms, the force that drives relentlessly through Little Belle and Temple do madden Horace – and also the mindless force of Temple's salmonlike mouth, "graped and ugly like that of the dying fish." (12)

Canfield's analysis though touching on valid points remains nonetheless only a suggestion, as he does not delve deeper in Temple's "Dionysiac" features. He does, however, lay the

grounds for a deeper examination. Frederick Karl, in his *William Faulkner: American Writer*, further solidifies the assessments made by Malraux and Canfield. "Even in *Sanctuary*. Faulkner probes the incapacity, but does so without naturalistic stress on decline – he internalizes it, so as fate and will meet, we have something of the gradual change we sense in Greek drama, or in Nietzsche's sense of *amor fati*, love of fate." (326). Though Karl bridges Canfield's gap by signaling another Nietzschean concept present in Faulkner, he, too, "focuses so narrowly on this one aspect of Nietzschean theory (*amor fati*), that he misses an opportunity to connect Greek drama." (Sullivan 6). *Sanctuary's* tragedy, then, must be looked at holistically. Nietzsche's idea of fate, present in the novel as the irreparable destiny, the Apollonian characteristics of Horace Benbow and the assessment on nihilism have been discussed at length, but there are other tragic elements present in the novel – these are instilled in the trial scene.

Court trials are by nature dramatic. This has always been the case at any given period in history. Socrates's trial had the Ancient Greeks on their edges and still has historians debating the nature of his indictment[5]. In more recent history, the trial of O.J. Simpson in the United States has kept an entire country glued to their seats watching the trial motions unfold.[6] Tragedy is imbued with the same sense of drama found in trials, because these are "performative and sometimes even scripted." (Sullivan 7). The characters become "the roles they play." (7). The audience and jury scrutinize every word

[5] In his *Ancient Greece: A New History (2018*), Jeremy McInerney argues that Socrates's trial was not, like the conventional view would have it, a religious trial. Instead, he argues that the Athenian elite wanted him politically inapt.

[6] Simpson's trial, which took place in 1995, still fascinates today's audiences. As recently as 2020, American channel **Court TV** produced a 25-part documentary on the trial. In 2016, American channel FX released a 10-part multi-awarded series depicting Simpson's trial. Media adaptations such as these signal the appeal of such trials to mainstream audiences.

of the witness and names are replaced by titles. Eustace Graham becomes The District Attorney. “As every reader of the novel knows, the whole timbre of the trial changes with the entrance of Temple Drake.” (Watson 59). Her presence seems to have a shock effect on Horace, because he understands that she is here to testify in Popeye’s cause and not against it. Having made it clear that Temple is in the trial to indict the wrong person, “the narrative itself acquire[s] a dimension of theatricality.” (59). The District Attorney’s acting-like performance and Temple’s perjury, the reader discovers “Dionysiac, with the primal pleasures it perceives even in pain.” (Nietzsche 114). Indeed, to induce a maximum effect possible on the audience, the narration moves “into the supple dramatic rhetorics of pose and gesture.” (Watson 60). The entire courtroom thus becomes a Greek theater. Between Faulkner’s portrait of the gallery and the room itself, one has a glimpse of the drama that is unfolding between the audience, the protagonists and antagonists, and the judicial corpus.

> Above the seat-backs Horace could see their heads—bald heads, gray heads, shaggy heads and heads trimmed to recent feather-edge above sun-baked necks, oiled heads above urban collars and here and there a sunbonnet or a flowered hat…. The windows gave upon balconies close under the arched porticoes... The breeze drew through them, bearing the chirp and coo of sparrows and pigeons that nested in the eaves, and now and then the sound of a motor horn from the square below, rising out of and sinking back into a hollow rumble of feet in the corridor below and on the stairs. (192)

When Horace offers Temple some moments of privacy, the latter informs him that she "is not afraid to tell," and that she will "tell it anywhere." (148). Temple's testimony is described as "one of those bright, chatty monologues which women can carry on when they realize that they have the center stage." (148). In her Dionysian state, Temple experiences "the phenomenon that pain begets joy." (Nietzsche 52). Listening to her testimony, Horace realizes that "she was recounting the experience with actual pride, a sort of naïve and impersonal vanity, as though she were making it up, looking from him to Miss Reba with quick, daring glances like a dog driving two cattle along a lane." (48). As Richard Perrill Adams argues, the notations of "vanity" and "pride" suggest Temple has "deliberately, though not consciously, offered the temptation that provoked the violence done to her." (qtd in Canfield 63).

The courtroom performance is now set to continue. "Tragic myth," Nietzsche explains "to be understood only as a symbolization of Dionysian wisdom through Apollinian artifices." (134). It in this light the district attorney addresses the members of the jury with an exaggerated set of revered salutations. Appealing to the Apollonian emotions of "these good men, thesefathers and husbands," the attorney relies more on imageries of good versus evil than any pieces of evidence. Justice and order must be restored, regardless if the person paying the price for it is innocently convicted. The Apollonian will "to bring rest and calm to individuals" is thus permeated. Consequently, Judge Drake and the attorney can then be described in terms of Apollonian impulses that "serve to protect and insulate the citizens from such Dionysian stirrings." (Sullivan 13). Using a false piece of evidence, testimonies from a chemist and a gynecologist, the trial ends with Temple's own perjury to end this façade of a trial. "In the same way that the

sexual encounter of the Apollonian and Dionysian engenders tragedy, the District Attorney's orchestrated (re)rape of Temple directly generates her perjury. Thus, Temple's perjury illustrates the need for tragedy itself." (Sullivan 22).

Horace's efforts to save Goodwin, which have led him to his own corruption, finally collapse. The suppressive forces of his society, led by the performance of the attorney himself, have been too much for him to overcome. In the end, Temple "actually suffers [as a full-fledged Faulkner heroine." (Weinstein 132). As the prime Dionysian figure of the book, she emerges out as the "true hero of the stage and centre of the vision." After listening to Temple's perjury, the attorney speaks to the audience: "Your Honor and gentlemen, you have listened to this horrible, this unbelievable, story which this young girl has told." (288). Reminiscent of an Ancient Greek chorus, the attorney's closing statements signal the fall of the curtain and the end of this trial's theatricality. As Nietzsche points out, "the tragic chorus of the Greeks is required to see in the figures on stage." It must be noted that the audience, entirely convinced of Goodwin's conviction, fulfills Nietzsche's response to tragedy: "the chorus which shares in suffering is also the wise chorus which proclaims the truth from the heart of the world…. to hear and at the same time long to get beyond all hearing." (142). Ultimately, the audience does more than hear the performance of the courtroom, because it is the very same audience that takes it upon itself to burn Lee Goodwin alive. Even before the fateful fact, the audience had been in awe against the performance of the persecuting attorney. Their breaths were "held," and their emotions struck when they had seen Judge Drake with her victimized daughter, Temple. At every turn, every statement proclaimed by the attorney the room had "expelled its breath, sucked it quickly in and held it again." (198). Cautiously scrutinizing every

gesture of Temple, the audience fuses with her predicaments. As Michael Gresset remarks, "watching" is "an explosive activity with Faulkner." (197). The reader, like both the chorus and audience present in the courtroom, witnesses this case's progression and thus becomes invested. By the end of the trial Horace's disappointment is unmeasurable and Temple turns into a victimized freak. Agony, as Anne Goodwyn Jone argues, reaches its peak. "It seems impossible for [Faulkner] to imagine a conclusion that is not, however agonizing it may be, tragic for these [characters.] (qtd in Sullivan 71). To this regard, the final scene of the novel is all too telling.

> She seemed to follow with her eyes the waves of music, to dissolve into the dying brasses, across the pool and the opposite semicircle of trees where at somber intervals the dead tranquil queens in stained marble mused, and on into the sky lying prone and vanquished in the embrace of the season of rain and death. (216).

The specter of death lingers in *Sanctuary*, and there is an unsettling stillness about it. It has this imperviousness that seems to render it inanimate, immutable. *Sanctuary* opens with ominous visions and ends by the perpetuation of death. In this "season of rain and death" Faulkner could not have indulged in more violence if he wished to. Yet, just like in *The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying and Light in August*, life goes on. But like André Bleikasten wonders: "What kind of life?" (270). What remains in Sanctuary is a startling picture of what it looks like to remain alive in Faulkner's stories. Goodwin's family will forever live with the knowledge that their kinfolk has been taken innocently. Temple has been subdued to every evil possible by having both her psyche and body violated. Horace

has not only failed to prevent injustice, but has himself succumbed to his own corruptibility. Like Jason in *The Sound and the Fury*, those who survive in *Sanctuary* show that it is as frightening to live as it is to die in Faulkner's world.

Ultimately, Faulkner's examined novels in this study demonstrate quite a lot. As a modernist, Faulkner certainly challenges the American literary tradition in quite some ways. That being said, he still picks on traditional themes. He deeply examines and challenges some the of the most spread out American myths that imbue Americans with longing dreams of self-improvement. Faulkner approaches this dream with a twist of his own, however. Indeed, his work is filled with tragic figures whose wills and appetites are going to stand as their flaws and errors. Further still, they find their perspectives to be limited. Faulkner is thus inventing a new kind of American fable, one that is deeply damaged. To this regard, his characters are all driven by Southern obsessions to break away from social and cultural limitations and gain entrance to new terrains. These limitations often stem from the past, a concept that is very much so a living entity in Faulkner's work. Clearly, Faulkner weaves speculative narratives that are packed with guesswork. As a novelist, this is the method that he comes up with to assert that the past is a tissue made of assumptions. In other words, the past is full of possibilities and the might have beens. The novel, as an art, reflects this in its confliction with uncertainty. Faulkner thus presses his readers to constantly imagine and re-imagine the past; that one can never truly know for certain what has happened in past times. Ultimately, this drama of the telling is his legacy as a modernist writer. Storytelling, as he sees and understands it, simply has to change and mirror the shifting nature of human life. Consequently, the readers are now involved every bit as much in dealing with the enigmas of the past.

Because of remarks Faulkner made about this book being written solely for financial gain, it has been heavily criticized over the years. Nevertheless, Faulkner still intends for an excellent tale to be finished, even though some portions and situations in this book do not quite match the sheer resonance of his previous texts. Instead, he uses hyperbole to create a dramatic effect. It can be challenging to follow, but the novel is endowed with a much easier plotline than most of his work. The conversation and scene descriptions in this novel avoid the stream-of-consciousness storytelling approaches used in several of his novels, but they nevertheless need a careful and flexible reading. In sum, *Sanctuary has* much to offer in terms of analysis than what it gives to be. Its themes remain undoubtedly complex and disturbing. The 'potboiler' veil that the novel has worn for many years conceals a number of profound and challenging views on human nature and the state of American society.

# CONCLUSION

Faulkner's fiction makes it clear that the subjective worlds of self, desire, fear, fantasy, and memory, the incessant verbal and static noise that goes on inside our minds all the time, have been outside the precincts of traditional fiction. The signature move of great literary texts is that it offers readers an entry way, a bridge into lives that are not theirs or lives that the culture at large ostracizes. These lives create realms of their own by constructing great undiscovered countries, and Faulkner, as a modernist writer, is one of its colonists. Faulkner invents in *The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying*, *Sanctuary* and *Light in August* narratives with capacious syntaxes containing both spoken and unspoken words, revealing the dense underlay of sensations that accompany all discourses so that even the most commonplace topics become significant. He is attuned to his character's emotions, wills, their hurts and wounds. Faulkner provides an unvarnished account of what life was like in his South. In all selected four novels, Faulkner does not gloss over things. An unfettered account may sometimes hurt the sensibilities of readers, but it cannot be denied that it helps readers see what life had truly felt like. To make sense of the disjointedness that characterizes his work, this research work has relied on Nietzsche's philosophy. The German's analyses on Greek tragedy in his *Birth of Tragedy* have been particularly helpful in understanding Faulkner's associative logic.

Faulkner's use of stream of consciousness and the way he hurtles his readers into the inner thoughts and feelings of his characters is, from a Nietzschean lens, what life at its most basic is like. Life, on the surface, is deceivingly linear. Humans have a beginning, a middle, and an end. But is it this simple? Nietzsche's dissection of the Apollonian and Dionysian argues otherwise. Life simply cannot be linear because the mind itself works by free association. The mind itself, as depicted by Faulkner, is fluid, mobile and jumps

from place to place, time to time. This is, in fact, the very nature of human thinking. Indeed, the human mind is not a docile entity that behaves according to a set of mental rules. Both the mind and heart move sideways. In this sense, the formal and thematic difficulties that lie behind Faulkner are in fact the difficulties of thinking itself. These issues stand for the dark truths about how one feels and thinks. Faulkner thus perpetuates Kierkegaard's "we live life onwards, but we understand it backwards" (qtd in Solomon 33). To live life forward means to live life in the murk of things. One can later on establish patterns and order, but one must go through the dark first. In this sense, Faulkner's characters are most often behind the curve and belated. Life *happens* to them, and only later can they make sense of it.

The aforementioned flux and restlessness found in Faulkner allows to conclude that his novels are indeed perspectivist. This research has established time and again, both formally and thematically, clear perspectivist elements in *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, *Light in August* and *Sanctuary.* In the examination of the first novel discussed, it has been shown how all four chapters coalesce together to essentially tell the same story: the loss of Caddy. Though the endpoint is the same, the accounts differ in their intensities. Benjy's account is that of an utterly incapacitated idiot who could not give words to his pain. Instead, his suffering finds a language of moaning which allows him to express his burning ache. This inside picture of loss, it must be understood, is one that only readers are bearing witness to. Quentin's section, on the other hand, brings to life his desires that cannot be articulated. Quentin and Benjy have both lost their sister, but each loss bears its own bruises. The perspective one finds in Quentin is that of forbidden incestuous feelings. Because he cannot actualize his burning desires for his sister, Quentin's fate is that of

suicide. Jason, the third Compson brother, is the book's third perspective. His is a perspective of vendetta and selfish motives. Distinctly different from the poetic moaning of Benjy and Quentin's philosophical predicaments, Jason's pragmatism offers a more accessible perspective to the novel. Finally, the Dilsey section closes the book by yet another perspective, though this one moves away from the interior monologues of the first three. In *As I Lay Dying*, Faulkner's perspectivism is even more rampant. Indeed, the book presents a staggering number of fifty-nine chapters that are divided into fifteen perspectives. To map out all different points of view is extremely delicate, and this once more informs us about the perspectivist nature of Faulkner's work. Nearly every single character named in the book has a chapter of their own. So much so that even the dead mother speaks out of her own coffin. *As I Lay Dying* can thus be said to be a violent manifesto of internal monologues. Indeed, the reader moves from one mind to another. It has also been shown how Faulkner relies on this technique to render the noise that exists in an individual's own mind. The constant tumult one finds in the fifteen perspectives is similar to the tumult one finds in real life. *Light in August* also provides the same associative logic. Joe Christmas's arc is as disjointed as Benjy's, Quentin's or Darl's. Readers find themselves constantly shifting from past to present, present to past. Christmas lives, it can be said, lives his life backwards. Finally, Faulkner's structural perspectivism seems comes to a halt with *Sanctuary*. Narrated through an omniscient voice, the book departs from the restless flux of the other three books discussed.

Faulkner's formal use of perspectivism is also accompanied by his thematic perspectivist tendencies. Indeed, if Faulkner is willing to go as far as mapping out fifty-nine perspectives in one book alone, then he is trying to get at something that has been

hinted to a number of time so far. Indeed, this thematic use of perspectivism informs us about the Nietzschean treatment on the issue of truth in Faulkner's work. Indeed, the findings reveal that Faulkner suggests through his stories that truth must be understood in terms of plural interpretations. In other words, one must always see and examine the world from different perspectives. Individuals, in their real lives, adopt and embrace various perspectives – these may be scientific, religious, cultural and so on. The point to bear is that the world is always accompanied by a shift in perspective. Hence, there is always a shift in truth. Faulkner's plethora of perspectives are thus relativizing the absoluteness of a given truth or perspective. Instead, he embraces Nietzsche's assertion that one must always appreciate a truth from a certain point of view which itself hides another. In other words, Faulkner's perspectives do not exclude each other. Rather, he simply expresses various possibilities surrounding one event or one truth.

Perspectivism is only the first element of Nietzsche's thought present in Faulkner's work. The second has to do with the main problematic of this research work: The Apollonian and Dionysian. Indeed, I have set to examine whether Faulkner's four selected novels are constructed around this latter dichotomy. The findings reveal that they are indeed structured around Nietzsche's theory. In his *Birth of Tragedy,* Nietzsche detects these two currents in Greek tragedy, both formally and thematically. Likewise, the examination of Faulkner's novels has revealed the incorporation of Apollonian and Dionysian elements in a similar fashion. *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying* and *Light in August* can be characterized as structurally Dionysian. Though they do contain bits and pieces of Apollonian clarity and neatness, they remain mostly Dionysian because of their overwhelming disjointedness and sudden cuts. *Sanctuary*, on the other hand,

provides the same clarity and structural "beauty" that Nietzsche identifies with the Apollonian current.

The thematic dimensions of the Apollonian and the Dionysian have also been brought ahead. When examining the theoretical underpinnings of Nietzsche's theory, it has been shown how the German asserts that good tragedians must involve both currents. An even greater tragedian, however, must revel in the Dionysian. To this regard, Faulkner certainly does not shy away from embracing Dionysian energy in his work. Quentin Compson, Darl Bundren, and Joe Christmas all experience their own speciousness. They experience the erosion of any solidity or ground for self. The corrosive self-questioning of *Hamlet* has in Faulkner been rendered with an unprecedented narrative power turning readers into witnesses for the prosecution. In his *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner imbues a number of characters with the chaotic release of Dionysus. Quentin's internal suffering has been established the most important Dionysian release in the book. Indeed, Quentin's section is characterized by an ominous sense of trouble. As the great hope of the family, Quentin finds himself in constant need to measure up to the community and family standards set upon him. Yet, he ends up as a young man who runs amuck because he simply cannot keep up with the set of expectations that befall him. Quentin, who is supposed to govern and monitor Caddy into behaving the 'right' way fails short of doing that. Instead of upholding the Apollonian code of ethics that surrounds him, he instead feels a burning and destructive Dionysian desire for his sister. Quentin's struggle (his own *agon*) between upholding respectable etiquette and perpetuating his incestuous feelings for his sisters eventually leads him to his fatal fate. Quentin's brother, Jason, is no less Dionysian in his characterization. Indeed, almost every attribute given to Jason strikes the

reader as distasteful or evil. These include his racial and gender prejudices, his thefts, manipulative personality, and his crude language. Jason thus brings a Dionysian frenzy and fury to a book already packed with disjointed frenziness. On the other hand, the thematic Apollonian aspects of *The Sound and the Fury* are apparent in the culture at large. The Southern chivalric code is one example of Apollonian portrayal in the novel. Dilsey's family, which brings harmony and order, to a completely disjointed Compson family, is another one. But the most important Apollonian thematic scheme of *The Sound and the Fury* lies in the crucial sermon of Reverend Shegog. The selfishness and torments of the first three sections are moved aside and transcended by a spirit of unity and coexistence that goes "beyond the need for words."

Likewise, the findings emerging from the analyses devoted to *As I Lay Dying* and *Light in Augus*t provide the same insight. Darl's unraveling in *As I Lay Dying* is one of a Dionysian character that has kept rebelling against the conventions of his Apollonian society. Darl characterizes everything that is "terrible." He first taunts his family with knowledge that he is not supposed know, and he finally denies his mother's corpse from a proper burial. Darl thus brings havoc and unrest to the rest of Bundrens. Because he has been denied the love of his mother, Darl's own *agon* translates into his sadistic tendencies. The society he faces, on the other hand, stands for the Apollonian entity that seeks to restore order. In sending Darl away, the Bundrens and Jefferson's society acknowledge that he has trespassed the Apollonian norms and rules. Darl therefore becomes entirely ungrounded and homeless. The Apollonian and Dionysian also play themselves in a similar fashion in *Light in August*, whereby the Dionysian Joe Christmas faces the Apollonian society that tries to restrain him from his urges. One of Faulkner's most violent

characters, Christmas quintessentially depicts the mayhem that can be brought about by Dionysus. Murder, bootlegging, racial tension and sexual violence all coalesce to create a terrible persona in Christmas. Lena Grove, on the other hand, is not given a drop of frenziness in her characterization. Instead, she acts as the Apollonian counterpoint to Christmas. Her softness, orderly nature, kindness and natural gracefulness are at antipodes with the grim characterization of Christmas. Faulkner once more fuses the Apollonian and Dionysian to paint a fuller and larger picture of the forces of life.

Faulkner's framing of the Apollonian and Dionysian has also shown that his work gives emotions an important place as far as the living experience is concerned. In line with the thoughts of Nietzsche and Solomon, Faulkner presents emotions as the connective tissue that links behaviorisms. Time and again, Faulkner's characters have shown what may be referred to as "emotional intelligence" (Solomon 1). In a nutshell, this is a way of saying that emotions are ways for individuals in dealing and engaging with their world. Faulkner's work, however, does not satisfy itself with simply mirroring and reflecting emotions. Instead, it tries to examine and encompass what are usually discarded as the lesser and more outrageous emotions. These, of course, pertain to the Dionysian current. Nevertheless, Faulkner depicts the ways in which emotions, too, are influenced by culture; and how some of these emotions are deemed to be acceptable and socially convenient or vice versa. The emotions that fail to fall within the socially acceptable category, however, are made to be hidden or concealed. Such a presentation of emotions is profoundly Nietzschean. That is to say, there is an assertion that people are inherently carrying different temperaments and "intelligent" emotions. This has been shown in the way the various tortured characters engage with their feelings and desires.

Nietzsche's influence on Faulkner seems to take even greater implications when examining other facets of his philosophy. These have been shown evident in the fourth and fifth chapters, whereby I have emphasized on the existentialist features of Faulkner's work. First, it has been made clear that Faulkner abides by Nietzsche's views on the issue of free will. This is made particularly evident in the characterization of Joe Christmas, who seems utterly helpless against forces that are beyond his control. Secondly, Christmas's characterization is comprised of Nietzschean determinism. Thirdly, he also embodies the German's concept of *amor fati* and the *Ubermench*. It has been shown how Christmas goes through a number of phases in which he begins by accepting the prejudices that befall him, and then ends up rebelling against them. In so doing, he transcends himself to the status of an *Ubermench* that has accepted his fate.

Nietzsche's assumptions on nihilism and his critique of language are also present in Faulkner's work. Indeed, most of his protagonists are linked to fictitious and unclear names and an unclear sense of their history. In larger terms, the contours of human relations, the contents of identity – all appear to take different understandings. Instead, they seem to be fictive, produced, never achieved and never forgotten at the same time. Consequently, Faulkner imbues his work with a sense of "doom", failure and a sense of being condemned to live as a ghost being inhabited by other ghosts. This, of course, goes distinctly against the grain of American optimism and American social mobility. If there is any mobility in Faulkner's work, then it is terrible and corrosive. It is uncontrollable because it sweeps its characters into areas and into selves that they had not reckoned with, and places they cannot escape from. This sense of doom is further made evident in Faulkner's *Sanctuary*, whereby the society within the story shatters itself into an immoral

world. Nietzsche stipulates that Christianity is bound to bring about a virulent kind of nihilism. In *Sanctuary*, everyone becomes corruptible. Horace Benbow, the character that has strikes the readers as Apollonian, also indulges in acts of corruption and bribery. Temple Drake has been subdued to very evil possible. These include kidnapping, rape and being forced into prostitution. Furthermore, the man convicted for her rape has been falsely convicted, and unjustly killed by an angry mob. The final drop on the valueless state of *Sanctuary's* society is found in the book's irony that it presents in its very end. In a twist of events, Popeye is arrested for a crime he did not commit. *Sanctuary* thus depicts the same kind of nihilistic society that Nietzsche has feared Christian values would bring. Nietzsche's critique of language, on the other hand, is best rendered in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying.* Addie, as if inhabited by Nietzsche's spirit, delivers a scathing indictment on language. She arrives at Nietzsche's conclusion that words are evasive, and that they could not possibly contain an ultimate meaning.

All the points above lead towards one safe deduction: Faulkner certainly was familiar with Nietzsche's ideas. The similitude between their thoughts is too uncanny to be a simple coincidence. Indeed, Faulkner employs Nietzsche's perspectivism to narrate his stories, weaves his plots through Apollonian and Dionysian measures, and depicts similar ideas on existentialist themes such as free will and determinism. Faulkner, just like Nietzsche, is undoubtedly reflexive and conscious about the possibilities that emerge from his craft. As examined thoroughly in the various analyses of this work, Faulkner is incessantly interested in art as a potential resource that could deal with the issue of trauma - an issue that is so front and center in his work. Indeed, there emerges a possibility on Faulkner's end that art itself is being enlisted as a therapeutic resource that could be used

to come to terms with things that could hurt and torture individuals in their actual lives. There is a profound sense in Faulkner's craft of the abyss being placed between the private and the public. There is an even clearer display of the hidden inner story that needs for its telling a new view of narrative.

It has also been demonstrated in the four selected novels that there is a clear effort in trying to get clear of constraints and culture. Joe, Darl and Quentin, by fits and starts, all try to coerce the nature that surrounds them so they could bring the self into plenitude and fulfillment. To this regard, Faulkner is undoubtedly keeping a long American tradition that seeks a reprieve from the social order at large. Thoreau, Faulkner and Vonnegut, among many others, imbue this desire to get free of conformity. This impetus towards freedom is in fact the very pulse of American thinking. Nevertheless, Faulkner's fiction raises profound concerns on the accessibility of this freedom. The philosophical quandaries of Quentin and Joe's racial blurriness raise an interesting question – namely, how difficult is it of the self to be fully autonomous? Indeed, Faulkner displays the immense trouble one may find in being free one's birth, the markings of one's race and even one's gender. These quests, of course, have been discussed with the Apollonian and Dionysian frame. Quentin Compson, Joe Christmas, and Darl Bundren have all faced Apollonian forces that have constrained them. Quentin's dilemma was that he could not abide his society's code of honor. Darl's actions were misunderstood and labeled as evil. As for Joe, his very identity was shaped by the perceptions and prejudices of others. Faulkner shows in what ways social manners and arrangements imbue human character and how they immensely influence how human relations are shaped. Indeed, through the

use of perspectivism, Faulkner displays how all aspects of life, private or public, are colored by these conditions.

Italo Calvino's suggestion in his *Uses of Literature* that a literary production must then be considered in terms of its historical context is thus more relevant than ever. Literature is indeed always environmental. Modernist art, in particular, frequently shows us that what we take to be natural, universal or even transparent is in fact cultural and even constructed. The views and values of society that individuals inhabit and absorb, often without knowing or realizing it, become invisible. Even larger still, they are placed beneath and beyond their scrutiny and even consciousness. Narrative fiction always reveals how the selves that seek freedom always belong to societies, families and cultures. It shows us that they are part of a larger societal system in which there is bond that links everyone. Indeed, the issue of social constraints present in Faulkner display how his novels are informative and educational in the sense that they paint a picture of a historical moment and of particular sets of social attitudes. His characters represent symbolic projects, but they nonetheless paint a picture of specific historical conditions that have their own ideological underpinnings. Faulkner, however, gives redemptive qualities to his characters. There is a clear effort in Faulkner's fiction to bust free from the constraints of history and create a new associative logic through art and through language. This, to be sure, is related to the American dream that will not have that life is entirely coerced by determinist forces. It is an ardent belief in freedom, mobility and the subjective world of desire. Here, too, characters find their freedom in a Nietzschean way. It is a freedom not related to free will, but to *amor fati* – that is, accepting and affirming oneself. This has been particularly demonstrated in the *Ubermench* transcendence of Joe Christmas. Furthermore, freedom by

language is also another feature that Faulkner displays, whereby his own writerly language is called upon to somehow craft a world that exists the various prisons and wounds made by racism, misogyny and even religion. He uses his own language to transcend social prejudices and create an alternative world in which language could have its own spirit. This, of course, is a feature of all complex writers that use stories and language to find a reprieve and to find new, suggestive spaces. Faulkner's associative logic is thus part of a long American project that seeks to actualize and free the indwelling forces of the self. Emerson's "Self-Reliance" and Walt Whitman's self as "cosmos," had expressed it staggeringly well in the nineteenth century. There is indeed a search and desire in American literature for an indomitable and brazing freedom. Needless to say, it is one that comes with its own challenges and obstacles. Then again, freedom has always had been difficult to obtain for a number of people. Further, the ways that are adopted in this quest for freedom are not always orthodox. Some of these methods, as shown with Darl Bundren and Joe Christmas, may as well be considered transgressive and deeply troubling.

Faulkner's Dionysian narratives have also informed this study about their larger and contextual implications. Schooled on Joyce and Conrad, among other modernists writers who were deeply grounded in their hostility towards literary linearity, Faulkner finds in their example an incitement to pursue two of his deepest concerns. First, it is the often unrecognized importance and peculiarity of the mundane in people's lives. Each moment, as commonplace as it may seem, has in fact its own consequential weight. Faulkner revels so much into these ordinary details of one's life that it has become a Faulknerian trait in his fiction. Benjy's ordinary but symbolically torturous pasture, Quentin's mundane encounter at the pastry shop with the little girl, Cash's tools, and Lena's sardines all display

Faulkner's profound interest the commonplace. Secondly, Faulkner also aligns himself along other modernists in his depiction of language as something treacherous. This, of course, has been linked to Nietzsche's own views on language. "Words are no good," Addie says in *As I Lay Dying* (Faulkner 76). Despite this radical suspicion of language, however, Faulkner also revels in the Apollonian possibilities of language as something not only rich, imaginative and powerful, but also as a redemptive feature of human experience. This has been made evident in Dilsey's section in *The Sound and the Fury*. As with Joyce and Woolf, one also finds a delaying aspect to the element of storytelling. Indeed, this has been characterized as Dionysian due to the complex and disjointed approach that Faulkner adopts. To be sure, there is "an impulse to circle back, to linger in the rush of cadence, words, and sentences" (Thorburn 37). This narrative method, which opposes the clarity of Apollonian structures, is a typical modernist aesthetic dimension that rivals traditional prose. Faulkner, however, seems to take things their extreme levels. Clearly, the selected four novels are difficult texts, multi-voiced, and aggressively experimental. They demand from readers a tenuous active reading that signals the new realms of twentieth century fiction.

Tenuousness, freedom, memory, subjectivity, and desire all constitute the new realms of fiction that are found in Faulkner's Apollonian and Dionysian framing. The reward in reading literature is that these realms are for us readers to access. These inner realms make us discover just how capacious the subjective world is. It is precisely what we do not have in life that we cannot see into one another's skins, hearts, minds, and inner recesses. We simply do not have a sort of remote control to see into the Dionysian impulses of others. To see one another's inner vision remains an impossible task. By the same token,

we cannot read each other's past. In our external world, one is doomed to remain on the surface and on the outside, because individuals are by nature locked out. People have very little maneuvering room in truly seeing and grasping others. Faulkner's modernism provides his readers a crucial access, though it may be fictive.

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**Résumé**

Il n'y a que très peu de disciplines qui arrivent à capturer l'effet de l'esprit humain comme le fait la littérature. Le monde du roman, en particulier, déploie tous les moyens possibles pour transmettre l'expérience interne. A ce sujet, l'œuvre de William Faulkner nous donne tout un réceptacle de la vision interne. La thèse qui suit propose une perspective philosophique de cette vision interne telle écrite par Faulkner dans ses romans Le bruit et la fureur, Tandis que j'agonise, Lumière d'aout et Sanctuaire. L'esprit, chez Faulkner, n'a jamais de répit. Cette sorte d'hyperactivité textuelle et narrative est le fruit de ce que les grecs ont nommé *l'agon,* un état de conflit interne continu. De ce côté, ce travail a pour but de démontrer les nuances philosophiques derrière les tendances dites agonistes de Faulkner. Afin d'achever ce but, ce travail utilisera les théorèmes du philosophe allemand Friedrich Nietzsche. La philosophie de Nietzsche nous permettra en premier lieu d'analyser les dimensions Apolloniennes et Dionysiennes de l'œuvre de Faulkner ; et en second lieu de noter la présence de la philosophie nietzschéenne dans les romans sélectionnés.

**ملخص**

نادرا ما لخص جوهر العقل كما يلخصه الادب حيث ان الرواية استكشفته و اعطت نبدة عما يدور في الصميم .سيسمح لنا عمل ويليام فولكنرباعطاء لمحة عن ذلك حيث انه مبني علي منضورفلسفي لنلك التجربة الداخلية في الصوت و الغضب, بينما انا احتضر, نور في اغسطس, و الملاء. تبين لنا روايات فولكنر تلك الاضطرابات و القلق التي هي وليدة الام الغير منتهية. يمكن استنباط من كل هدا ميول فولكنر العدوانية و الصراع الداءم داخله صراع بين الخير و الشر,الارادة الحتمية مقابل الارادة الحرة و مفهوم الهوية. جب ان يتطرق اليها. بصفة عامة, هذا البحث يقوم توفر ,بجمع هذه المسائل لاضهار ان فولكنر يأسس قصصه حول الثنائية الابولونية و الديونوسية. في هذا الصدد نضريات فريدريك نيتشه في كتابه مولد التراجيديا تحليل بأدوات نضرية اساسية لفحص هذه الثنائية. زيادة على ذلك, هذا العمل يضهر ان جزءا كبيرا من فلسفة نيتشه موجودة في اعمال فولكنر. نظرة فولكنر حول اللغة مثلا, مؤشر جيد على تاثير الفيلسوف الالماني على عمله. أخيرا, التحليل النيتشي يهدف لاضهار كيف لا ينغمس فولكنر في العدمية, و .لكن في تقدير الحياة الى أقصى حد